



PREGNANCY
RESOURCE CENTER

A place to find help and hope, care and compassion

Devotional Series:
**Standing Strong—
God's Best for Life's Journey**
- Spring 2022 -



Standing Strong Means to SURRENDER

LUKE 9:23

"And He said to all, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me."

When I think about my position with Christ, I often reflect on this well-known picture by Thomas Blackshear.

This picture symbolizes to me that moment when we come to the end of ourselves, our resources, and our fleshly attempts to solve the issues in our lives. God then uses this as a platform to work on our behalf. But not only that... **we are forced to look at our reflection and see who we are and see who God really is.**

God often allows us to get to the very end of ourselves in our current situations. He watches us struggle until we come to the very end of everything...our strength, our fortitude, our hope, and even our ability to cope.

He wants us at the place where we finally conclude it's too much, where we just can't take it anymore. It's when we finally give up our reliance on our own strength that God is given the opportunity to take over and do His work, show His solution, and reveal His salvation.

Just like the parable of the prodigal son, we as children are prone to wander and squander our time, our talents, our treasures, and the gift of the relationship that our heavenly Father freely gives. But as our God is a profoundly good Father, He



allows us "what we want" and waits for our return. He does not wander. He does not change. He waits and loves us all the same.

You see, surrender sounds so vulnerable, so weak, so defeated...but, oh how very wrong that assessment is when we are speaking of our good Father.

Surrender is like this picture. It is taking an honest look at who I am, a broken person who cannot stand, and is being held by the One Whose hands

I pierced. It is looking at this One and saying: I will trust You; I will let You hold me- all of me- and heal every broken piece and mend every part of my broken heart. This is me giving my all to You and saying: hold me Jesus because I cannot do this on my own anymore.

Standing Strong through surrender is acknowledging that every bit of who I am is being overseen by every bit of who my God is.

Scripture Reading: Luke 15: 11-32

Worship Song:

“Hold On To Me” by Lauren Daigle
<https://bit.ly/HoldOn-LD>



About the author

Leanna Simpson is currently the executive director of Agape Pregnancy Resource Center. Her foremost passion is being a follower of Jesus Christ. It is out of this passion that she desires to provide opportunities for people to know and love Him more.



Standing Strong Means **BEING PREPARED**

MARK 13:32-33

"No one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son Himself. Only the Father knows. And since you don't know when that time will come, be on guard! Stay alert!"

The Boy Scout motto is "Be prepared." Robert Baden-Powell, the English soldier who founded the Boy Scouts, wrote **"You are always in a state of readiness in mind and body to do your duty."**

On every camping trip, a scout's level of enjoyment is based upon the level of his preparation. Scouts who did not bring their uniform, tent, sleeping bag had nothing short of a miserable time. The scouts who had come prepared with the necessary tools have the best experience at every camping activity.

Preparation means to be: **Watchful, Awake, and Working.**

A watchful life means that we are looking at the sky. Living a life with our eyes focused "vertically" will ensure that we are continually anticipating the return of Christ and living a life reflective of this anticipation.

In Luke 12, Jesus tells a parable about preparing for the second coming. The parable states that the master is coming at any moment to receive the attendees for the banquet. The master received all who were ready for his banquet feast with open arms. Those who were not fully ready did not receive the full blessing. Those who were not ready at all were condemned.

Being awake means that we are looking at the cross. Living a life with our eyes focused "horizontally" will ensure that we are continually learning and growing in our faith. This life requires that we are continually placing ourselves under Biblical teaching and discipleship.

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul states that we should mimic spiritual leadership that mimics Christ. When seeking mentors and leaders to disciple us, we should seek individuals that are showing overt evidence of Christ-like characteristics and knowledge of who Christ is.

A life of working means *servicing and discipling others*. As we live a life of continual maturing and sanctification, we should become a living testimony of how God can transform a life to a reflection of Him.

In Matthew 28, Jesus says that we are to make disciples of all nations and teach all that He has commanded. He ends with this comforting phrase that He will indeed be with us until the end of the age. If we are doing the works of Christ, Christ is by our side every single step of the way.

Scripture Readings:

Matthew 24:45-51
Luke 12: 13-21, 35-40

Worship Song:

"The Lion and the Lamb" by Big Daddy Weave
<https://bit.ly/LionLamb-BDW>

Standing Strong through preparation means our anticipation to see Christ will grow, our reflection of Christ will grow, and the beauty of Christ will grow.

In the Chronicles of Narnia, C.S. Lewis writes:

**"Aslan" said Lucy "you're bigger."
"That is because you are older, little one,"
answered he.**

**"Not because you are?"
"I am not. But every year you grow, you will
find me bigger."**



About the author

Dawson Simpson is currently beginning his senior year in college and seeking God's leading in his life. His passion is to see God glorified through the testimony of His people.



Standing Strong Means OBEDIENCE

EXODUS 19:5

“Now if you obey Me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be My treasured possession.”

Dr. Charles Stanley says, *“Obedience is doing what God says, when He says it, how He says it, for whatever reason He says it, or with whom He says it.”* If you are like me, all I hear when someone tells me to be obedient to God is, “Oh no, what if He ACTUALLY asks me to do something?!” I mean, I can be obedient when it comes to things like loving my husband, praying, attending church, and reading my Bible, but what if He asks me to do something outside of my comfort zone?

In September 2019, after several years of feeling prompted but resisting, I picked up an application to be a volunteer at Agape Pregnancy Resource Center. I started filling it out and there was THE question, “Have you ever had an abortion?” WHAT?! I knew this was a mistake. I wanted to run. I wanted to rip up the application and go back to God and say, “Sorry! CLEARLY you have made a mistake. This is NOT where I’m supposed to be!” But He wouldn’t let me go... “Trust Me.”

I filled out the application and told the truth in obedience. *My obedience changed my life.* You see, I thought I was going to Agape to serve others, but God had led me to Agape to heal my shattered heart. He allowed me to grieve my baby for the very first time and then, in turn, help others heal as I lead them.

Now you might think that was a huge step of obedience and it was! What I have learned is that God is never done with His children. He isn’t happy letting you “sit” in a blessing. He always has more blessings to give you and therefore more places to lead you when you obey. The phone rang about a year later... “Jodi, have you ever considered working at Agape?”

“Wow God...BUT...I have great health insurance, IPERS, security, a short commute...and honestly, I loved my job! God wouldn’t want me to walk away from all that. He hasn’t even laid out what the end goal is! He hasn’t told me that it will be alright! He hasn’t given me any specifics!”

Once again... "Trust me." I went to the Scriptures. God led and revealed my path:

Hebrews 11:8 NIV — *By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, **obeyed, and went, even though he did not know where he was going.***

Mark 1:16-20 — *And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." **Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.** Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. Immediately He called them; and **they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and went away to follow Him.***

Scripture Readings:

1 John 2:3-6; 5:2-3 John 13:17
1 Peter 2:12

Worship Song:

"Send Me" by Jenn Johnson feat. Chris Quilala
<https://bit.ly/SendMe-JJ>

That's what God was asking me to do, **get up and go**. Just as Isaiah said, "*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"*"
Isaiah 6:8

No questions, no specifics, no guarantees. Just obey...and so I did.

That first step of obedience has led me to things I could never have imagined and opened doors to serve God I would have **never** walked through. I still don't know all the specifics, but I do know the One leading me. He knows the Way, so I will obey and follow Him wherever He leads.



About the author

Jodi Girard is the office manager of Agape Pregnancy Resource Center. She is passionate about serving God and sharing how God has used her brokenness and shaped her story to glorify Himself.



Standing Strong Means **BEING** **COURAGEOUS**

Suffering. We've all experienced suffering. We all have seen bad things happen to good people. We have all seen the guilty go unpunished and the righteous be condemned to hardship. This world is like an upside-down, mixed-around version of what God says is right and true. We start to question our very thinking and start to pause at the absolutes of God's Word. We start to sip the "drinks" we are offered and we start to take our eyes off the prize.

Our reaction to the suffering, the unpredictable, and our own humanity is to seek the familiar and the human.

We begin to emulate "fake" courage, in other words - control. Controlling our emotions, our image, making plans, controlling schedules, friendships, social circles, jobs, our household,

JOSHUA 1:9

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

food, on and on....it is accepted, even respected, to look like we have it all together. The problem with this "controlled" life is that there is no possible way to keep everything together. This "fake" courage is ultimately driven by fear, anxiety, or pride.

Let me pose a question to you: *What if courage looks nothing like we think?*

What if courage is not being the ginormous athlete who is undefeated and confident...but an ill-equipped 16-year-old boy with no real skills who ultimately defeats an entire army?

What if courage is not being the beautiful girl chosen to be a queen over a country...but the girl who decides to risk her own life to save her nation?

What if courage is not being spoiled and the favorite son...but, when you are unjustly imprisoned for a crime, you still allow God to use you as His messenger?

What if courage is not being welcomed by the crowd waving palm branches...but when you are praying alone, sweating blood, knowing the sacrifice and pain You are to endure for those You have come to save?

What if courage is having the faith of a mustard seed?

What if courage is praying on our knees in the night?

What if courage is knowing God is strong enough for my lack of faith, strength, and belief?

What if courage is being obedient to God even if I don't want to be?

What if courage is facing all the brokenness of this world and believing that my God will someday make all things right once again?

What if courage is knowing that Jesus is all I need?

Hear this clearly: **You don't have to feel brave to be courageous.** God can handle all your hurts,

your pain, your anger, your yelling...God is the God who sees. He sees you and He will see you through.

In 1 Kings 17, the prophet Elijah was told by God to visit a widow. When Elijah got to her house, he asked her to use the rest of her oil and flour to feed him. This was going to be the widow and her son's final meal. "Do not be afraid," Elijah said to her. "Go and do as you have said. But first, make me a small cake of bread from what you have, and bring it out to me. Afterward, make some for yourself and your son, for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be exhausted, and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain upon the face of the earth.'" So, she went and did according to the word of Elijah..."

Being courageous is being scared but doing it anyway.

So today, let us continue to work on learning to wait on God, listen to God, do what He is calling us to do without orchestrating how it goes, spend time with God, seek righteousness, and watch for God to intercede on our behalf...out of this kind of living, our actions will begin to appear as courageous because the One we serve is **strong** and people will see the dim reflection of Him in us.

Scripture Readings:

1 King 19: 9-13 Matthew 6:25-33
Esther 4:15-5:3

Worship Song:

"Passion-Holy Ground" Featuring Melodie Malone
<https://bit.ly/PassionHolyGround>



About the author

Leanna Simpson is currently the executive director of Agape Pregnancy Resource Center. Her foremost passion is being a follower of Jesus Christ. It is out of this passion that she desires to provide opportunities for people to know and love Him more.



Standing Strong Means **HOLDING** **OUR GROUND**

EPHESIANS 6:14

“Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God’s righteousness.”

Last night as I lay in bed sleepless and praying, I thought about Deborah from the Bible. I picture her on a horse, with her sword drawn, and following God’s charge into battle. She was a warrior, resolute in taking ground for God.

In this series, we have talked through how to both be equipped and have a spiritual posture of surrender. The question that I struggle with is: how do we remain strong when facing things that cause us to doubt God, our faith, and possibly even God’s sovereignty?

Let me take you back to our high school days. If you have ever done a sport, or an extreme outdoor activity, how do we prepare? We talk through the mental game, the basics, the rules, the regulations, the parameters, and we learn the fundamentals of our position. Then we move into the equipment - the gear related to the game. We study it, and we become familiar

with how to be prepared for the game or activity that we are setting our sites on.

Now comes the random and seemingly non-sensical part: the line-drills, pull-ups, weight training, distance running, the overall breaking and building of the body for the game or the “end-goal.” We run with team members. We have early morning and after school practices. We give up weekends, sleep, free time, and relaxation. Why? Because we understand one thing to be true: it is this preparation work that will allow us to stand strong in the game and fight for that long-anticipated victory!

The thing of life is this: we are in the “game” (i.e., battle). We are NEVER going to be on the bench. We are the “A team,” whether we have done the preparation work or not. We do not have a seasonal schedule and we are not given a “heads-up.”

In Ephesians 6:13 it says, "Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything to stand firm."

Standing Strong means taking our faith seriously enough to be prepared and ready for the battle by praying, reading our Bibles, developing friendships that push us to spiritual

conversations, worshiping, journaling, and giving up our weekends, sleep, free time, and relaxation **BECAUSE** we are not sitting on the bench.

Are we ready?

Today, get on that horse, take up that sword, and take back ground for Jesus, my friends!

Scripture Reading:

1 Peter 1:1-25

Worship Song:

"Same God" by Elevation Worship
(feat. Jonsal Barrientes)

<https://bit.ly/SameGod-EW>



About the author

Leanna Simpson is currently the executive director of Agape Pregnancy Resource Center. Her foremost passion is being a follower of Jesus Christ. It is out of this passion that she desires to provide opportunities for people to know and love Him more.



Standing Strong Weekend Edition - SATURDAY



PSALM 121

- ¹ I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?
- ² My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
- ³ He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;
- ⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- ⁵ The LORD watches over you—
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
- ⁶ the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.
- ⁷ The LORD will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;
- ⁸ the LORD will watch over your coming and
going both now and forevermore.

Today's Take Away Truth:

Our problem is not that we expect too much from Jesus, it is that we expect too little from Jesus.

Worship Song:

"Surrounded" by Michael W. Smith

<https://bit.ly/Surrounded-MWS>



Standing Strong Weekend Edition - SUNDAY



EPHESIANS 6:10-20

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. ¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Today's Take Away Truth:

There is NO great difficulty without great opportunity.

Worship Song:

"Battle Belongs" by Phil Wickham
<https://bit.ly/BattleBelongs-PW>