

Having a Tough Time? Let's Celebrate! **Mary Southerland**

Today's Truth You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over (Psalm 23:5, NKJV).

Friend to Friend The thought of hosting a large dinner party makes me want to lock the front door and hide. It's just not "my thing." But my friend, Michelle, is the consummate hostess. She makes entertaining look so easy. To her, a dinner party for 50 guests is a simple feat. Just shoot me now!

One of Michelle's favorite preparations is the dinner table. When I'm expecting company, the first guests to arrive often have the honor of setting the table or stirring something, and ... you get the idea. Not Michelle. I've seen her table beautifully arranged days before a dinner party or holiday meal. When I asked her why she went to such elaborate lengths her answer made me stop and think: "It's part of the celebration for me. I love having the table set early because every time I walk past it, I think of the people who will sit in those chairs and I pray for them. I think of their favorite dishes and look forward to preparing each one. I guess you could say that I enjoy the party long before it begins."

And there you have the idea behind praise. It is preparing a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

Many life battles are lost because our confidence and faith in God are eroded under the persistent battering of daily stressful situations. We often fail to recognize and embrace the truth that God defines and refines us through each battle in life.

If the battle truly belongs to God, we win! We win before the first shot is fired. We win before one step of the battle plan is taken.

I would naturally assume that a victory banquet would be held after the victory was won. However, the Hebrew people blew that idea right out of the water when they held victory banquets before the battle even began.

Had I been there, I would have assumed that the Hebrews were either ridiculously arrogant or people of great faith. The truth is that there was an anointing on their lives, a sign of being chosen by God – just as you and I are chosen.

You anoint my head with oil (Psalm 23:5, NKJV).

And because they were a chosen people, their faith grew strong and freed them to stand on the undeniable truth that they could count on their God. Celebrating the battle's outcome was simply a matter of celebrating God, acknowledging His power on their lives, and walking by faith in the victory provided before the battle was even fought.

I believe our faith is measured by how we handle each battle we face. It may be a skirmish to carry out God's holy vision, a war against those who seek to undermine God's calling, or the age-old conflict of good versus evil.

The battlefield is not nearly as important as our choice to align ourselves with God's plan and step out in faith, knowing that the battle is already won. That's where praise comes in.

We can praise God for what He will do long before He actually does it. We can prepare a victory table before the battle begins, knowing that the battle belongs to our God.

And don't you know that a pre-battle victory party irritates the fire out of the enemy? I love that!

When we choose to praise God, every fear and doubt fades into the background of a battle won before it begins.

Let's Pray Father, I come to You today, praising You for Your presence in my life. I celebrate the victory You have already won in every battle I am facing. I choose against my human fear and tendency to demand proof of Your presence and power at work in my life. I am stepping out in faith and praising You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Now It's Your Turn What battle are you facing in your life today? Set aside time to spend with God, praising Him for the victory He promises.

Read [Psalm 100:4-5](#) (NLT) and make it your prayer today. Enter His gates with thanksgiving; go into His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and bless His name. For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and His faithfulness continues to each generation.