



## Finding Marriage's Promised Land *Being Strong and of Good Courage*

BY DEBORAH G. ROSS

*"Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the LORD charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed."*

—1 Chronicles 22:13

**W**HEN YOU THINK OF SOMEONE WHO IS BRAVE, WHAT COMES TO YOUR MIND? DO YOU THINK OF A SOLDIER WHO IS NOT AFRAID TO INVADE ENEMY TERRITORY?

Maybe you visualize a skydiver who thinks nothing of jumping from an airplane. Often times, you may stand in amazement at the person who is not afraid to take on a "bigger than life" project. Or, perhaps your thoughts of bravery include someone who has the confidence to speak before large crowds of people. For some, being brave simply means not being afraid of the dark.

In the Word of God, we are admonished, over-and-over again, to trust the Lord in *all* things. Trusting in God requires faith. When we act

upon our faith—*by obeying the voice of the Lord*—we step out into the unknown, which requires bravery. Then, once we move toward acquiring what the Lord says we can have, we must remain strong and of good courage, so that the devil's sure resistance (which tries to thwart God's promises) won't cause us to back down from our obedience.

Did you know that marriage requires us to be strong and of good courage? From the moment we say "I do" and throughout our entire journey of life's ups and downs, marriage requires bravery!

Let's think, first, about the obstacles in life that tend to cause many marriages to dissolve: communication problems, financial problems, sexual problems, children problems, in-law problems, agreement problems, spiritual/church problems, addiction problems, sickness problems, adultery problems, lack of team work problems—and the list goes on. The devil comes up with nothing new. He throws the same stumbling blocks across the path of every marriage. Why? Because marriage is a sacred covenant ordained of God that brings multiplication to His Kingdom. Godly marriages produce a lineage of faith, and so, the devil tries everything in his power to destroy God's formula for creating generational blessings upon the earth.

*"Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them."*

—Joshua 1:6

So, what is a person to do when faced with crippling hardships in their marriage? The answer: FIGHT! Now, we are never instructed to fight against flesh and blood. Instead, the Lord teaches us to war against principalities, powers, and rulers of the darkness. When we fully understand the Lord's desire for us to trust in His love, we will then be able to free-fall into the arms of our faith, knowing that His promises not only *can*, but *will*, bring healing and blessing to our marriage. God is "for" our marriage. He is "for" our family. The Lord is "for" the salvation of every person and He wants every marriage to inherit a land that is flowing with milk and honey.

In Numbers 13, when Moses sends twelve spies out to report back about the Promised Land of Canaan, ten of the twelve came back with fear and doubt. Yes, they saw a land that flowed with milk and honey just as God had promised. Yet, because they also saw giants in the land, they assumed that it would be impossible for them to ever obtain what the Lord had promised to give them. Ten of the spies allowed fear to overrule bravery; and, therefore, God did not allow them to enter into that place of victory where they could eat of the fruit of His bountiful inheritance.

On the other hand, Joshua and Caleb—who saw the exact same thing as the other ten spies, were not afraid of the giants.

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God's promises were magnified in their hearts and minds above the obstacles that their eyes beheld. Only Joshua and Caleb came back to report that they were ready to fight for their inheritance. These two spies were confident that the Lord would give them what He had promised. They believed that God was on their side and that He would make a way where there seemed to be no way.

Sadly, the tens spies who feared fighting for God's promises encouraged the entire congregation of Israel to walk in terror. They began to murmur and complain about their circumstance instead of speaking to their trepidation according to the word of the Lord. Because of their unbelief, that entire generation of God's chosen people died in the wilderness, having never walked in the Promised Land. Isn't the voice of those doubting spies much like the call of the world today, which says, *"If things get too tough in marriage, just get a divorce?"*

The world says: *"The giant of adultery—or, the giant of addiction—or, the giant of financial pressure is just too overwhelming to ever overcome. God didn't really intend for your promised land of marriage to come with so many battles, did He? You are justified to murmur and complain against your spouse and against the commandments of God. It's OK to vindicate bitterness in your mind toward those who seem to have it so easy in their marriage. You'll never defeat these giants in your life. You'll be better off to die single than to fight this battle of trying to stay married. Patience and forgiveness are just too hard."*

That's why we must listen to the *Word*, and not the *world*. Choosing to enter into battle in order to gain victory requires bravery. In Joshua 1:7, the Lord says to, *"Only be strong and very courageous... turn not from it to the right hand or to the left..."* When faced with marital hardships that seem impossible to overcome, that is *just the time* to trust the Lord in all things. It's easy to trust God during times of peace, but the real test of our faith comes when we can believe him in the times of our troubles.

Remember, God *will* allow His children to choose their path. Then, just as He provided for the children of Israel after they rebelled against His commandments by refusing to fight for their promised Land, He will also provide for His children who bail out of their marriage. Still, there will always be that unknown blessing that could have been obtained if only married couples would be strong and courageous in every battle that is set before them. Like the Israelites who never lived in the Promised Land, those who give up in their marriage will never experience the blessings that only come through entering into battle.

The Lord has a land of milk and honey in mind for every marriage

and every family. He paints a picture of it in His word and then places those desires in our hearts. Yes, He wants His children to have His best and He will be faithful to His word if we will just believe Him and fight against the powers of darkness that try to divert His plan. Marriage takes courage. It requires bravery. But, oh, the prize that awaits those who—like Joshua and Caleb—magnify the promises of the Lord above the obstacles in life.

Some powerful visualizations to help you endure the conflicts that are sure to come in marriage might include: Think of one day sitting in a rocker on your front porch and looking over at your spouse to say, *"We made it!"* Think of the joy of winning battles together and then testifying of God's power working in your lives. Think of growing old with someone who has seen you at your worst and at your best, yet, still finds you the most beautiful creature on the face of the earth. Finally, think of taking your last breathe as you reflect on the memories of your children, your grandchildren, and maybe even your great grandchildren whom you have watched inherit generational blessings because of your obedience to fight for the things of God.

Marriage should be a picture of our relationship with Christ. In our marriage to Jesus, we are confident that He will never leave us nor forsake us—no matter how we sin against Him, and no matter what faults we may have. The Lord is always there for us. In this same way, we should be resolute to our marriage vows as we stand in bravery with our mate (who is sure to disappoint us many times over throughout the course of a life-time). Finally, marriage should be an unwavering commitment to the love story of 1 Corinthians 13, which states:

*"Charity (love) suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth."*

—1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Will you choose to fight for your promised land? Will you choose to be strong and of good courage in your marriage? Because... marriage requires bravery!

*Deborah G. Ross' passion is speaking for women's ministry, marriage ministry, prison ministry, addiction recovery ministry, conferences, retreats, television and radio. To find out more about Deborah, her books and her ministries, please visit [www.DeborahRossMinistries.org](http://www.DeborahRossMinistries.org).*



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