

God Leads the Way

[God said,] “As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Joshua 1:5).

Scripture: Joshua 1:1-9

Song: “All the Way My Savior Leads Me”

When an exchange student arrived at our home, I showed her around: “Here are the light switches. . . . This is how to turn on the shower heater. . . . All your bath towels and soaps are in this closet.” The young lady had traveled abroad before but never alone, and she needed detailed guidance in her new adventure.

After Moses died, God passed the baton of leadership to Joshua. Previously, when Joshua scouted the land of Canaan, Moses had been leading. But this time, Joshua was directly under God’s leadership. So God assured Joshua that He would be with him and bring success as Joshua listened to and obeyed God.

It can be scary when God calls us to step into unfamiliar territory and do something new. But when He calls us, He also assures us that we don’t need to be afraid. As we obey and follow His directions, He will bring about the success He has planned for us.

Father, thank You for giving me faith to follow You and for the clear instructions and assurance Your Word provides. In Jesus’ name, amen.

December 4–10. **Rebecca Stuhmiller** helps people take practical steps to grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus and wider in loving service to family, church, community, and the world in His name. She and her husband, Jeff, live in Federal Way, Washington.

Raise Your Hand

Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!” (Matthew 20:30).

Scripture: Matthew 20:25-34

Song: “Cry Out to Jesus”

In elementary school I got good grades and tutored classmates who struggled with their lessons. In secondary school I was promoted to accelerated classes, but I didn't feel smart anymore. I was afraid to raise my hand and embarrass myself, lest I ask a “dumb” question. But inevitably another student would pipe up and ask what I had been thinking, and I would kick myself for not speaking up.

As an adult, I sometimes hesitate to “raise my hand” in prayer. I've been told that God isn't a “genie in a bottle.” *Don't ask a dumb question!* I second-guess my petitions in case my motives aren't pure. *Don't ask a dumb question!* But when Jesus passed by the blind men, they dared to speak up—even shout—and ask Him for what they wanted. I wonder how many people in the crowd, upon witnessing the verbal exchange and healing, wished they had been bold and spoken up too.

The men couldn't see Jesus with their eyes, but they saw Him with their hearts. He was the long-awaited Messiah, the one who had the power to give them what they needed. God knows what we need, and He welcomes our every request. He invites us to ask Him and then trust that He will answer according to His will.

Father, help me remember that You want me to boldly ask You for whatever I need. In Jesus' name, amen.

Yes, and Amen

[Jesus said,] “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer” (Matthew 21:22).

Scripture: Matthew 21:18-22

Song: “Breakthrough”

Darin’s parents and some Bible school students went to visit a man who was near death at a hospital in the African country of Burundi. The doctor asked the group not to visit because the man was too weak. Right away, the students began praying for the man’s healing. One said, “If anyone doesn’t believe God can heal this man, they should leave the room now.” Darin’s dad began praying the prayer of the father in Mark 9:24—“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”—and the dying man was healed completely.

Years later, Darin prayed for his dad’s complete healing from cancer, but instead of being healed, his father passed away a few weeks later. Darin testifies, “I know God can heal, but I also know sometimes He chooses not to do so.”

In my own life, I experienced something similar when my brother was in a motorcycle accident and suffered a traumatic brain injury. I believed for a miraculous healing, but my brother died 18 days later. Maybe you’re praying for healing or for a different kind of “mountain to move” in your life. Perhaps you’re imagining what God’s best answer would look like to you; but Scripture reminds us that while we only need to have faith as small as a mustard seed (Matthew 17:20), God’s ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9). We must pray, believe, and then trust in His wisdom.

Father, thank You that You’re worthy of my trust and You answer each prayer. In Jesus’ name, amen.

By Our Side

The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1).

Scripture: Psalm 27

Song: “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

Although I attended public high school, our varsity choir closed every concert by singing Martin Luther’s hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” But even for me, a regular churchgoer, the message of the powerful song went in one ear and out the other. I sang the words by rote, mechanically, without thinking of their meaning. I might as well have been singing a nursery rhyme.

Later in my young-adult life, when I was struggling with trials and feeling overwhelmed, the lyrics of the oft-sung hymn would pop into my head, and the second verse especially comforted me: “Did we in our own strength confide, / Our striving would be losing; / Were not the right Man on our side, / The Man of God’s own choosing: / Dost ask who that may be? / Christ Jesus, it is He; / Lord Sabaoth, His Name, / From age to age the same, / And He must win the battle.”

King David faced intense battles and poured out his problems in the Psalms, but he also acknowledged that he was not alone. God was with him and fighting for him. In the same way, when we feel overloaded, we can read the Bible, meditate on its truth, and be assured of God’s presence, protection, and power—no matter what we are facing.

Father, thank You for being a mighty fortress and my helper. I praise You that no one on earth is Your equal. In Jesus’ name, amen.

In Line with Scripture

What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 1:13).

Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:3-14

Song: “How Firm a Foundation”

I once hired a professional to hang wallpaper in my kitchen. As I watched the woman work, I learned about the plumb line, a cord covered with chalk with a weight at the end. When the cord was snapped against the wall, the chalk left a vertical line that served as a guideline to hang the next strip of paper. Without a plumb line, the designer would have to eyeball it and decide what looked straight. The first strip of paper she laid might be close, but it wouldn't be perfect. After hanging a few strips, the paper would end up crooked, and the project would be a mess.

A similar thing can happen in our own lives if we read the truth in God's Word, then rely on our own understanding. We might begin with right perspective, but we hear a sermon or read an article based on a person's opinion, and one decision at a time, we veer off-course and find ourselves unaligned with God's precepts.

Just as a designer uses a plumb line to keep on track, we must consistently measure what we hear against God's plumb line—His Word. Otherwise, we can move far away from God and what is right, not realizing where we went wrong.

Father, thank You for giving me Your Word as a “plumb line” by which I can always measure my thoughts and actions. In Jesus' name, amen.

Underlying Issues

Eliab, David's oldest brother, . . . burned with anger at [David] and asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness?" (1 Samuel 17:28).

Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:1, 3-4, 8, 20-30

Song: "Voice of Truth"

When the Pacific Northwest clouds don't obscure the view and "the mountain is out," I stand in awe of the magnificent, snow-capped Mount Rainier. But as a resident of the surrounding community, I also know that Mount Rainier is a seething, active volcano. Beneath the breathtaking surface lies a smoldering magma chamber that one day may blow, burying the region in lava and ash.

Jesse told David to deliver supplies and check on his brothers, and when David arrived at the battlefield, he dutifully carried out his father's business. But when he heard Goliath's taunts, his attention turned toward his Heavenly Father's business. Everyone wanted the Philistines to be defeated, but no one except the young shepherd stepped forward. At David's interest in the situation, Eliab erupted in anger, his sarcastic reaction revealing a smoldering resentment toward his younger sibling.

Jesus told the Pharisees that "the mouth speaks what the heart is full of" (Matthew 12:34). Sometimes people we know and love blow up and spew hurtful words based on emotions that have been seething beneath the surface. As followers of Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, we can check our initial reaction and ask God to help us respond with grace and truth.

Father, help me take a step back when I'm the recipient of hurtful words and respond with Your patient wisdom. In Jesus' name, amen.

Start with *Why*

[David said,] “I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied” (1 Samuel 17:45).

Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:31-37, 45, 48-50

Song: “My Tribute”

In his *TED Talk* “How Great Leaders Inspire Action,” Simon Sinek draws a target of three concentric circles. In the outer circle he writes the word *What*; in the second circle, *How*, and inside the bull’s-eye, *Why*. Most people striving for success start with *what* they should do, Sinek says. Next, they decide *how* they should do it. However, there’s not much thought given to *why*. He clarifies that making money is a result, not a reason, and often, the attempt to succeed fails because the approach is backward. Sinek asserts that successful people and businesses first start with *why*, a core belief or conviction.

The shepherd boy David was not yet a king, but he had been anointed by God. When he heard Goliath’s threat against God and His people, David knew *what* to do: combat this enemy. David knew *how* to do it: with his slingshot. But ultimately David’s motivation was found within *why* he needed to do it: to defend God’s great name.

As followers of Jesus who are serving in His kingdom, we know *what* to do: make disciples of Jesus. With God’s direction, we learn *how* to do it, using the skills and gifts with which we’ve been equipped. But *why* we do it will be the lasting motivation: we do all things for the glory of God.

Father, living to glorify You is my greatest motivation. In Jesus’ name, amen.