

## Faithful, Not Successful

**For it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.** (Matthew 10:20)

**Scripture:** Matthew 10:16–27

**Song:** “’Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus”

Gabriel had such severe asthma as a child that his family thought he was going to die. Like many Cubans, Gabriel’s grandmother practiced spiritism and the occult, but his family came to faith in Christ when God healed his asthma. His home eventually became his community’s first church, and Gabriel felt called to become a church planter.

His first assignment was a town filled with occult temples, alcoholism, and adultery. He was very discouraged by the spiritual darkness of the place and the lack of results of his outreach. Then he read an article about another missionary’s struggles, and it changed his ministry. He realized that God called him to be faithful, not successful. God was asking Gabriel to share the gospel, but God Himself would change hearts and transform lives. Over the next 15 years Gabriel and his team planted 2,500 house churches that grew from Bible study groups.

Sometimes we feel like the evil in the world is more than we can handle, and it is: only God can defeat sin and death, and He did so on the cross. Our job is to walk in obedience. God will use that obedience to work in the lives of those around us.

**Father,** help me be faithful to and fear You, not man. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

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October 27–November 2. **Katherine Robles** teaches agriculture to children with disabilities and writes Christian romance novels.

## Boldness and Blessings

**“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.”** (Matthew 10:32–33)

**Scripture:** Matthew 10:28–42

**Song:** “Doxology”

Thomas Ken was the English chaplain at the royal court in Holland in 1679. He was so outspoken against the corrupt lives of those in authority that he was sent back to England a year later. Back in England, he became chaplain to King Charles II and continued to speak out against sin and corruption. Charles II admired his courage and eventually made him a bishop.

After Charles died, Ken’s boldness in preaching got him imprisoned by King James II and fired by King William III. He lived the rest of his life in comfortable obscurity, but that obscurity gave him time to write many hymns, including the Doxology. Ken was one of the first English hymn writers to branch out from the Psalms.

If Ken had told those rulers what they wanted to hear instead of telling them of their need to repent, he might have gained earthly riches and power. But he chose to fear God, not human kings, and to love his Savior more than family, fear, life, and possessions. Take a minute to think of ways that you acknowledge Jesus before others and thank Him for acknowledging you before our Father in heaven.

**Father**, show me if there is anything or anyone that I love more than You. Thank You for loving me. Help me to find my life in You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

## Saharan Sandstorm

**Trust in the LORD and do good.** (Psalm 37:3a)

**Scripture:** Psalm 37:1–13

**Song:** “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus”

Betty Greene was one of the founders of Mission Aviation Fellowship. In 1951 she was flying a missionary home across the Sahara Desert. The skies were clear, and local weather reports said it was a good day to fly. It was too late in the season for a *harmattan*, an enormous sandstorm. Nevertheless, half an hour into the flight, a harmattan hit.

Sand pelted and swirled around her little plane. Visibility dropped to less than three miles. Betty descended to 2,500 feet to look for landmarks that would help her stay on track. She flew close to the ground, scanning for anything other than dunes. Finally, she saw a thin clay road. She kept her eyes on that road, following it until it widened and came to her destination city and its airport.

Sometimes it feels like evil is winning, swirling around us and filling our vision. It can distract us and make us ineffective for Christ. But if we keep our eyes on our Savior, He will bring us through. He promises justice. The wicked will wither, but He blesses those who trust Him. Just like a harmattan, the illusion that evil prospers is powerful but temporary. God is in control.

**Father,** You are just and loving, and I trust You. I take delight in You, and I commit my way to You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## Life Lessons

**Consider the blameless, observe the upright; a future awaits those who seek peace.** (Psalm 37:37)

**Scripture:** Psalm 37:25–28, 35–40

**Song:** “To God Be the Glory”

One day in the car, my husband and I were discussing the self-inflicted tragedy that had befallen an acquaintance of ours. My young sons asked why he made such a poor decision. My husband tried to explain and then stopped and said, “You know, boys, this is why reading the Bible is so important. It tells you how to live a good life. We believe it tells you how to be saved and go to heaven, and that’s super important. But even when it comes to life here and now, if you obey what the Bible teaches, you’re going to have a better life.”

We spent the next half hour listing examples from our own lives of how the Bible’s wisdom had benefited us. Working hard as for God and not for man helped us excel in school and in work. Being generous brought us joy. Being careful about borrowing money and being grateful for what we have instead of greedy for more brought us financial security. Being honest and trustworthy helped strengthen our marriage and our relationships with our children.

The Lord is faithful, and His ways are the best ways—always. This doesn’t mean that everything will go as we desire or that tragedy will never strike, but God will never forsake us. We can thank Him for His wisdom and blessings.

**Father,** You are faithful to the righteous. Thank You for counting me among the righteous because of Your grace. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

## Sojourner and the President

**Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another.** (Romans 12:14–16a)

**Scripture:** Romans 12:12–21

**Song:** “Rejoice”

In 1864, after months of anticipation, Sojourner Truth finally had her chance to meet President Lincoln. She had made a name for herself by traveling around the country to preach against slavery and for women’s rights. There were pressing issues she wanted to discuss with the president, but when it was her turn to be ushered into the Oval Office, she took one look at the president’s weary face and changed her mind.

She decided that he needed encouragement more than another complaint. They talked about the Bible and his upcoming election, and she thanked him for what he was doing for Black Americans. His face brightened as they talked.

Romans 12 can feel like a collection of random commands—be patient and hospitable; don’t seek revenge; do what’s right; rejoice with those who rejoice. But when taken together, these directives show us how to humble ourselves and put others’ needs before our own. Sojourner mingled with powerful leaders but also relied on the hospitality of strangers when she traveled. She chose to forgive those who practiced and promoted slavery, even as she preached against them. She put Lincoln’s needs above her own agenda. Humble yourself before the Lord and ask Him which of these commands to focus on today.

**Father,** I trust You to take care of me. Please give me Your love to put others’ needs before my own. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

## Two Strikes, You're Out

**“This is what the LORD says: ‘Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, famine or plague, but whoever goes over to the Babylonians will live. They will escape with their lives; they will live.’”** (Jeremiah 38:2)

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 38:1–6

**Song:** “Good, Good Father”

When my son was four years old, I told him to clean up his toys. He ignored me and kept playing. I warned him that there would be consequences and repeated my instructions. I waited a few minutes, but he didn't move. I told him that because he disobeyed, he would lose his TV privileges for the day. He looked up at me with tears in his eyes and an expression of genuine shock. “But Mom,” he said. “I get three strikes. That was only two.”

God had warned the Israelites for many years that if they continued to disobey Him, He would send destruction. Now the Babylonians were at their door, and the Israelites were afraid. But even as God was bringing their well-earned destruction, He lovingly gave them a way to live by telling them to surrender to the king of Babylon.

When I disciplined my young children, they had multiple warnings and opportunities to change their behavior. I also made sure to embrace them after their punishment and assure them that I loved them. Our Father does the same for us, His children. Praise God for His mercy and love, even when we disobey.

**Father,** You are good, slow to anger and abounding in love for me. Help me to show my love for You through my obedience. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## Olympic Friendship

**Ebed-Melek went out of the palace and said to him, “My lord the king, these men have acted wickedly in all they have done to Jeremiah the prophet.”** (Jeremiah 38:8–9a)

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 38:7–13

**Song:** “Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus”

Germany hosted the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin. Hitler was hoping to prove the superiority of his Aryan race with athletes like blonde, blue-eyed Carl “Luz” Long, one of the best long jumpers in the world. Long’s biggest competition was Jesse Owens, a Black track star from the United States.

During the long jump competition, these two amazing athletes took turns setting then breaking the Olympic record, until finally Owens took gold and Long took silver. Long linked his arm in Owens’ for the American’s victory lap. Owens later said that Long’s friendship was worth more to him than all his medals combined. Long showed great courage in befriending Owens in front of Hitler that day, and the two men stayed in touch until Long’s death during World War II.

In today’s text, we see that Jerusalem was in trouble. Babylon had already carried off thousands of captives, and the city was under attack again. Evil princes had put the prophet Jeremiah in a cistern, prepared to let him starve. But a good man, Ebed-Melek, stood up for what was right and rescued him.

Good men like Long and Ebed-Melek lived in the midst of evil, but they stood up for what was right. May we look for opportunities to do the same today.

**Father,** thank You for using Your people to stand against evil, and thank You for conquering evil on the cross. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.