
PAGES OF EMPOWERMENT

VOLUME 1: WOUNDED WARRIORS

David McCracken

Pages of Empowerment

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MORE INFORMATION

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OUR VISION FOR PAGES OF EMPOWERMENT

- To see the local church strengthened and its commission to reach this world accelerated.
- To see this accomplished by the empowering of the individual members of that local church to become all that God has called them to be.
- To see the wounded restored, the despondent encouraged, the apathetic challenged, and those already valiant empowered to go to greater heights.
- To see every believer walking in intimacy with the King and daily reaching out to embrace the destiny that He has for them.
- To see the church make the transition from being a sheepfold into an army barracks. Not to neglect the shepherding of God's people but to have, at all times, the clear objective of that shepherding: the raising up of an army of faith-filled warriors to do the work of the kingdom.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

- As an individual devotional, reading one chapter at a time.
- As a group devotional, using the questions supplied as a basis for discussion.
- As a small book, read in one sitting, as a point of inspiration and empowerment.

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INTRODUCTION

I have loved the Lord for many years and have known the challenges and the triumphs of serving Him. I have known the times of victory and the times of defeat. I have known the times of hope and the times of despair.

As a Christian leader, I am grateful that the bulk of my service for the Lord has been an exhilarating and fulfilling journey. Yet, I have also known the loneliness of having to appear the ultimate overcomer when, in fact, I may have been enduring a most difficult season. All of us that are honest know the challenges that such times can bring.

In those times, I would have benefited from some devotional that would consistently lift me from where I was to where I longed to be. I could have been encouraged by a devotional that could identify with my pain and yet would not get down in the gloom with me. I could have been stirred by a devotional that would freshly inspire my heart to reach out and embrace God's grace and empowerment.

Then there are those times of "normality". Times when things are coasting along, and the challenges are minimal but so too are the achievements. In such times I could have been positively goaded by a devotional that would energise me with fresh fire and focus me with a clear sense of destiny and purpose.

In the past few decades, the Lord has graciously increased the prophetic office upon my life and the responsibility that goes with it. Along with that is the stirring to communicate to as many as is possible, and to do so more consistently. I have heard the cry of so many for the prophets to arise and share with them the present burden, the "now" word from God's heart. I believe an inspired devotional can play a major part in achieving all of these goals.

There are times for the reading of great books and such times are to be both commended and encouraged. But there are also moments when time is short, and the pressures are on. There are times when, through discouragement or weariness, we cannot bring ourselves to pick up that which appears a daunting task.

I pray that these short chapters would empower you when you don't have the time or ability to sit down and read a long narrative. Whether you use this resource individually or in a group discussion, my prayer is that Pages of Empowerment would be a divine intervention in your day.

CHAPTER ONE: FROM BONE TO WARRIOR

“SO I PROPHESED AS HE
COMMANDED ME, AND BREATH
CAME INTO THEM, AND THEY LIVED,
AND STOOD UPON THEIR FEET, AN
EXCEEDING GREAT ARMY!”

EZEKIEL 37:10

It seemed impossible. How could bones, bleached in the sun, dry and without life, become alive again? Looking through the eyes of logic and reason, it seemed impossible.

As the prophet surveyed the scene, his heart must have initially been as overwhelmed by the sight, just as many are today as they read the biblical promises of what God intends to make His people.

But he served a God of the miraculous. And so do we! He knew that the Lord who commanded him to prophesy life to those bones was the one that had first created those bones. To him, nothing was impossible.

Across the nations, it is God's intention to militarise and mobilise His triumphant church. His call comes to awaken it with fresh hope that it yet shall be that invincible light in the midst of this darkening world.

Whether or not you feel like it right now, as we journey through Pages of Empowerment together, you will see that you are indeed a significant part of that army. An army of intimate ones who know God's heart and delight in His ways.

I speak of an army that through challenge have discovered their own frailty outside of His grace. Yet I also speak of an army that, through dependence upon Him, have discovered increasingly the authority that He so desires to give them.

Let me encourage you!

Right now, around the globe, there are thousands upon thousands of overcomers who do not realise that is who they are. As such they have not yet begun to experience the wonder of God's empowerment. In coming volumes, I trust this little book will help awaken them to who they really are.

There are just as many who already live victoriously but have a deep yearning for more of God's dominion and authority to be expressed through their lives and ministries. I trust that our times together will help unlock an understanding of what it means to embrace and walk in such authority.

CHAPTER ONE: **FROM BONE TO WARRIOR**

You and I are in there somewhere. Part of the most exciting unfolding of history that this world has ever witnessed. History that we, ourselves, are a living part of.

It is my fervent prayer that your heart will be inspired and your faith strengthened as you now begin your journey through Pages of Empowerment. In future volumes, we will examine so many subjects together, but with them all I have a focused objective. To see that “exceeding great army” stand upon its feet across our nation and across the nations of the world.

I have a passion to see thousands of God’s people, faithful members of their local church, arise and possess their destiny. The first step is for the “bones” to believe that they too can become warriors.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

Think of someone that was once despairingly dry and yet today is so wonderfully alive! What, in your opinion, enabled them to make that transition?

Why do you think it is that God seems to empower more easily those who know their own human frailty?

Where would you honestly place yourself right now in the transition from “bone” to warrior?

We know that our Father does not ever come to condemn, but to give life. Thank Him right now that His grace can cause the driest bones to live again.

CHAPTER TWO: RELUCTANT HEROES

BE OF GOOD COURAGE, AND HE
SHALL STRENGTHEN YOUR HEART,
ALL YOU WHO HOPE IN THE LORD.

PSALM 31:24

CHAPTER TWO: RELUCTANT HEROES

Undoubtedly, there are those who do not see themselves as either dreamers or heroes for God.

Their world has been a disappointing one in which life has told them that to dream is futile and to hope is in vain. You look into their eyes and the passivity concerning life and the resignation of their lot is like a deep emptiness.

Years of shattered hopes and disillusionment can leave a person with the most soul-destroying condition of all, hopelessness.

Some have gone as far to say that when hopelessness enters the human heart, it is the cancellation of any potential for positive change in the future. I do not believe that to be so.

Hopelessness has an answer: the introduction of new hope.

We serve a God who can take the bleakest of lives, seemingly devoid of a future, and see them utterly transformed. He can take the heart that has become infertile, without the capacity to conceive, and awaken it again to the capacity to dream.

It is His words that recreate life where there is no life. It is His truth that overcomes the lie that life has taught us: that we are without hope or potential. His truth sets us free!

Have you ever thought of what it was that so radically changed the very disposition of that man called Gideon? As you read the story in Judges chapters 6 and 7, you see it clearly.

Gideon's confession was: "I'm the very least". That's because that is exactly what life had told him he was. All of his childhood, all of his circumstances, all of his environment, told him that he was an insignificant, fear-ridden loser with no future of promise. Those were the facts!

CHAPTER TWO: **RELUCTANT HEROES**

Yet God's confession concerning him was very different. God called him a "mighty man of valour". Why? Because that is how He saw him! He was looking through those eyes of divine potential, He was speaking into Gideon the creation of hope.

The incredible wonder of the story is that that is exactly what Gideon became. As you read, you discover that he progressively begins to believe that which the Lord has said concerning him. Those words of prophetic potential took root, and faith was conceived. In that moment, Gideon's heart was awakened and he dared to dream of another possibility, a brighter and more victorious experience.

Step by step, he ventures out. At first he does so only by night, then a little more by day. He stops by the "well of trembling" and with shaking knees decides he will continue. Step by step, until finally he stands upon a hill with only 300 hundred men against thousands and roars "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon"! What an awesome transformation!

THOUGHTS TO PONDER

What are some of the events of life that God can use to create hope in a person's heart?

What are some of His promises concerning you, as a member of His family?

To what degree do you think that the average person makes a conscious decision to believe what God says about them rather than just accept what life is indicating?

Discuss this thought: "Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the conquering of it". Think of real life examples of where this has been evidenced.

CHAPTER THREE: THE FACTS OR THE TRUTH

YOU SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH
AND THE TRUTH SHALL
SET YOU FREE!

JOHN 8:32

What Gideon faced was what you and I are constantly having to deal with today: the conflict between the facts and the truth.

The facts are the physical evidences that indicate that a thing is so. They are our memories and the words of those who saw no potential in us. They are failures of yesterday and the contradictions of today. They are the cruel statistics concerning the learning we do not have and the opportunities that are beyond our reach. They are the brutal lack of relationships or the seeming negativity of our heritage. These are the facts.

The truth is God's viewpoint. It is the declared word of God that is not subject to those facts and has the power to change them until they align themselves with that truth. (You need to read and reread this paragraph until it gets inside of you and you find yourself believing it!)

As Gideon progressively received into his heart the truth of what God had said about him, that word began to change who he was. He experienced the reality of John 8:32 which says, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free".

Defy the lie of failure!

Today, there are way too many of God's people that voice the opinion: "I'm just a failure." Let's take a look at this thought of failure. What, in fact, is it?

Did you know that Walt Disney had several financial disasters before becoming successful? But what is he remembered for today?

Thomas Edison was called a dunce at school. Later, he failed hundreds, if not thousands, of times before perfecting the first electric light bulb. But what is he remembered for: the failures or the light bulb?

They discovered the key of learning from their failures was in fact their mistakes.

CHAPTER THREE: THE FACTS OR THE TRUTH

There is a well-known story about a top, highly successful, executive in the car industry. An over-awed young executive came to him one day and asked him for the secret of his enormous success. He replied: "Good decisions, son. Good decisions!". The young man continued and asked how one got the wisdom to make such good decisions. He replied: "Experience, son. Experience!". The young man pressed even further and asked how one gained such life-changing experience. He replied: "Bad decisions, son. Bad decisions!".

The truth is that everyone will, at some time in their life, experience failure. But we have to learn that failure isn't failure unless you fail to learn from it. So, if you feel like giving up, don't!

Remember that failure is an event, not a person. You can have a failure, but you cannot be one!

Always remember that we serve a God of resurrection, a God of the second-chance. The bible is full of stories that tell of the Lord's infinite ability to restore those whom others would discard.

As we journey together, you will see how wonderfully the Lord has included you in His plan to bring dominion. Yes, you!

He doesn't need the offering of unbelievable intelligence or mesmerising talent. He doesn't need the self-righteous proclamations of those who feel no sense of need. He doesn't need the degrees and the diplomas upon the wall (though I am fully supportive of the diligence that they represent). He doesn't need the smugness of self-approval.

He needs the grateful overflow of a heart redeemed. He needs the trusting steps of faith that replace your ownership with His. He needs the over-awed wonder of our adoration and praise. He needs the full surrender of our will to His.

Dear fellow soldier, He needs our hearts!

CHAPTER THREE:
THE FACTS OR THE TRUTH

THOUGHTS TO PONDER

In what ways can events in our growing-up years condition us to underestimate who we can be in Christ?

How does God see our past failures?

What must we do to see them the same way?

What do you think God is saying to you right now in relation to your availability in the future?

What qualifications do we need to be used by the Lord from this point on?

Why do you think it is that failure can discourage some yet motivate others?

CHAPTER FOUR: A MASK OR A CROWN

AND NONE OF THOSE WHO TRUST
IN HIM SHALL BE CONDEMNED.

PSALM 34:22

I am reminded of the story “The man in the iron mask”. For years and years, from early childhood to adulthood, he wore the mask that his captors had placed upon him. Such a cruel fate. Masks and prisons so often go together.

The startling thing was that, when he was released and the mask removed, he had an amazing reaction. It was one of fear and anxiety. On occasions his friends would see him through the window, placing the mask back upon his face. He had been so long with it, to be without it seemed strange and insecure.

He had been taken from a lifetime of imprisonment; a place without friends and filled with loneliness and despair. He had been set free, introduced to wonderful friends, and then acknowledged as the one who had the right to rule the land. Yet his instincts, at times, were still those of a prisoner.

I have met people like that. It is so hard to believe that your whole world can change that dramatically and that it isn't some cruel dream that someone will shatter.

The man in the story is much like a type of you and I, as Christians. The warden has been replaced by loving friends, the prison replaced by the house of the Lord, and our mask has been replaced by a crown!

Yet so many find it easier, less threatening, to wear the mask instead of the crown. So deeply rooted is the deception that they cannot change and that the crown is but a fantasy-promise.

I once walked as a young man in despair.

People today see the preacher and teacher, but I remember those lonely nights of misery and anguish as I contemplated yet another soul-destroying night of failure. Times when the condemnation was so great that I despaired of any hope at all. Thoughts of ending it all would flick through my mind. Yet to all that knew me, I was this passionate, young, potential prophet that looked like I didn't have a care in the world.

I had been brought up in a Christian home, I had been saved, water-baptised, and filled with the Holy Spirit. I was attending a good local church and was considered an active member. I had excelled in the evening bible school. The oversight was now releasing me into ministry and recognition.

I had a passionate love for God and a fervent desire to enter full-time ministry. Yet, not a soul saw the deep contradictions of my heart. The smile on my face so well disguised the vicious darts of moral temptation that constantly bombarded my mind. On the outside, I appeared a success. On the inside, I had a myriad of confusing questions and a paralysing sense of not coping.

Mask wearing can be such a lonely place.

And yet, for so many, mask wearing is the only option. To contemplate our peers ever seeing the true contradictions within is a fearful thing.

As you will see in future chapters, Christ has come to destroy the power of those sinful contradictions.

His redemptive grace opens the way for the Father to lovingly but definitely remove our masks. In the security of His love, we can dare to hand over the key of our surrendered will. That key enables Him to unlock us from the lonely imprisonment that internal isolation brings.

Rest assured, He loves you!

As you dare to trust Him, He will not betray you. He will handle the fragile nature of your exposed emotions with tender care. He will only ever coax you out into the light as He knows you are able. He will find you genuinely caring Christian friends who will help you walk in that light. You will find Him worthy of your trust.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER

Who are the people that have had the greatest influence in the moulding of our lives towards young adulthood?

Without any rancour or unforgiveness, analyse the influences that you now believe were unhealthy in your preparation for life. Make a short list. Then thank God for your freedom from those influences and establish a conviction that Christ has now made you a whole new creation.

Take two sheets of paper and make a mask with one and a crown with the other. Write your list on the mask then screw up the mask and burn it!

Now, with thanksgiving and praise, write “redeemed by grace” on the crown and place it upon your head!

CHAPTER FIVE: SATAN'S STRATEGY - AVOIDANCE

DRAW NEAR TO GOD AND HE WILL
DRAW NEAR TO YOU.

JAMES 4:8

During those days of contradiction and conflict, I discovered that there was a far greater threat to my Christian life than my own miserable sin. It was the condemnation that Satan brought to bear upon my weary and vulnerable heart.

When one is faced with failure, particularly of a repetitive nature, discouragement is never far away. And that same discouragement then begins to blur one's vision and distort the reality of how God feels about us.

This is normally followed by a similar distortion concerning those around us. So many grievances and broken relationships are the result of a person misreading the intentions of others whilst they themselves are suffering a personal disappointment.

Satan is a master strategist and knows exactly how to strike in our weakest moments. The Bible states it clearly when it says of him: "he comes to rob, steal and to destroy".

Fortunately for us all, the wonderful Holy Spirit has covenanted to teach us and so, in the pursuit of my own overcoming, He taught me a two-step strategy of our adversary. Let me share it with you.

His first step is always predictable. He will do everything that he can to prevent you coming to the point of acknowledgement. He knows the incredible power of cleansing that is released when you come to the foot of the cross in honest repentance.

He will try to get you to blame others, to avoid the issue, to excuse the seriousness of the situation. He knows that your freedom depends upon your unqualified ownership of your own condition.

He knows that only the truth working in us can set us free and will, therefore, do all in his power to deceive us from the reality of that truth. He knows the scripture and has read:

1 John 1:8

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

His distortions concerning the truth cause so many to view acknowledgement and repentance as dark gloomy moments of life to be avoided. This is so totally the opposite of God's intention. He meant these moments of truthful response to be times of cleansing, release, liberation and freedom. No wonder your adversary would try to keep you from such an empowering encounter!

It is so reassuring to realise God's promise in **1 John 1:9**

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God never intended repentance to bring you to a point of discouragement and despair but to a place of being overwhelmed by His forgiveness and love. His intention is that you will find Him to be the restoring Father that he really is.

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

When we have times of personal discouragement, we must be careful not to isolate ourselves emotionally from those around us. What steps can we take to ensure that that does not happen?

Why do you think it is that such a positive experience as repentance is so often viewed as something to be avoided?

How would you describe the impact that a significant incident of repentance had upon:

a) Yourself?

b) Those around you? (i.e. what attitudes, relationships etc. were affected?)

CHAPTER SIX: SATAN'S STRATEGY - CONDEMNATION

HE IS ABLE TO AID THOSE
WHO ARE TEMPTED.

HEBREWS 2:18

But what if Satan fails in his attempt to get you to avoid the power of repentance? What if he realises that there is absolutely nothing that he can do that can stop your honest acknowledgement of sin. Does he then accept defeat? No.

His second step is to reverse his strategy completely.

If he cannot prevent genuine repentance, he will then get both feet behind it! He will add to your God-given conviction the weight of his own counterfeit condemnation. The result is that the moment of genuine repentance that the Holy Spirit had successfully brought to bear now becomes days, weeks, and even months or years, of soul-destroying unworthiness. This unworthiness then prevents you from coming to the throne of God's grace at the very time that you need to the most.

The condemnation becomes a greater threat to you walking with the Lord than the original act of sin.

This is not God's intention. That's why He tells us to "come boldly before His throne in our time of need". That's when we need His love the most.

When Satan's accusing finger points our way and we hear his mocking jeer, we need to remind ourselves of what the truth has already declared. Take a moment to read the following scripture passage and ask the Lord to make it real to your heart.

Hebrews 4:14-16

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

What wonderful, confidence-building words of hope! Just imagine it! Jesus Himself, though awesomely God, allowed His chosen humanity to be subject to every conceivable temptation and pressure. How repugnant it must have been, yet so willingly He did so. Why? Because He wanted to be able to identify with you!

He wanted to feel your pain, experience your wrestling, battle the same tormenting thoughts that the common adversary of our souls so mockingly loves to bring. He did this for you.

But what makes this thought so empowering is that He did so without sin. Total identification and yet, at all times, the one that fully overcame. He knows the keys of triumph and has paid the price to now share them with you and I.

Hebrews 2:17-18

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

Notice that it was not the absence of temptation that qualified Him, but rather, the reality of it. The pain and trauma of those assailing thoughts and pressures gave Him forever the compassion for all of us that would be assailed in a similar way. Out of the pain was forged a “merciful and faithful high priest”.

And so it is with you and I.

Jesus suffered such temptation without once failing in any way or to any degree. We, of course, cannot claim that.

However, via the work of His grace in our lives and our own responsiveness to it, we can progressively come to the place that He enjoyed from the beginning. We can come to a place where the word of truth has so transformed us from within that we too can walk in the state of His triumph.

And from there, we too can become a merciful and faithful minister of God's grace into the lives of others. From a position of rediscovered authority, yet still with the memories of our pain and a constant awareness of our own weaknesses, we minister not “dead letter” but identification and compassion.

There are so many people that right now cry out in their isolation for someone just like you. Not a condemning Pharisee of self-righteousness, but a wounded warrior brought to wholeness with a desire to lead others there also. What a privilege lies before you!

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

What are some of the preventative measures we can take to prevent the enemy of condemnation taking root in our own lives?

When you read of coming to “His throne of grace”, what attributes of God’s character do you think He will communicate to you at that time? What attitudes do you believe would be totally inconsistent with God functioning in that particular capacity?

To what degree do you think your ability to identify with the pain of a particular person, empowers you to help them better? Why do you believe that?

For you to minister life, identification must be accompanied by hope. You give hope by having come through the pain into victory.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE DIVINE POTENTIAL

THERE IS HOPE IN YOUR FUTURE,
SAYS THE LORD!

JEREMIAH 31:17

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE DIVINE POTENTIAL

As both God and man, the Lord not only is the all conquering one but also the all understanding one. He sees our human frailty and reaches out in His compassion, yet is able to see through the eyes of the one that has gone before and declare to us that we too can triumph.

This is no vain imagination.

This is the master potter taking marred pieces of failure-ridden clay and remaking them into vessels of dignity and honour. He is the creator and He can re-create us, as our lives are placed unconditionally into the palms of His strong but tender hands.

No matter how bleak and grey your past attempts at spirituality have been, let me assure you. You are dealing with one that chose a three-time loser of a fisherman called Peter who fell asleep in the prayer meeting, sliced a guy's ear off in the garden, and denied the Lord three times whilst swearing his head off! And what did He do with him? He made him the great apostle of faith that ushered in the church of the New Testament!

You are dealing with one that took a cowering worm of a man called Gideon who questioned even the very existence of the miraculous, and made him into the warrior-leader of God's people! How awesome is that!

He took a wilful, morally weak loser, like myself, and has given him a wonderfully God-blessed and rewarding life!

When He looks at you, He doesn't see the past of disappointing failure, He sees the future of overcoming fulfilment that He can give you.

Because He knows the power of the blood of Christ to forgive and cleanse you, and the power of the Holy Spirit to transform you, His thoughts towards you are those of great anticipation. He looks at you through the eyes of divine potential! He knows what He can make you to be.

Come! Join me in this exciting voyage of discovery together.

CHAPTER SEVEN: **THE DIVINE POTENTIAL**

In future volumes we will discover the life-transforming keys that can take us from the present reality to the future promise.

We will see that walking through this sin-ridden world in a God-honouring way is not a tantalising carrot on the end of a very long pole, but a reality awaiting us.

Just imagine awaking to every new dawn with a sense of destiny and divine appointment in your heart. Imagine praying with an authority that creates an open heaven and draws God's favour to bear upon us. Imagine a victory of heart so powerful that all those that know you can be touched by it.

But, dear reader, do not just imagine it; reach out and possess it!

THOUGHTS TO PONDER:

There are no limitations upon God's ability to forgive, restore, and freshly commission a person's life. Think of scriptures that will support this statement.

For God to take the "Gideon" in us and transform weakness into strength, what does He require of us?

How can we determine to be more available to God's call and intention in future days?

If you were to look at yourself through the "eyes of divine intention", what are some of the things you might see?

IN CLOSING: THE BATTLE IS HIS

It is fought with His grace, His protection,
His power, His enabling.
Your part is to be willing.
You must volunteer to have the
privilege of being one of His restored warriors of faith.
As such, you will become His instrument to
bring about His triumph in the lives of others.

Till then,
Love and God bless,
David.

DAVID McCRACKEN MINISTRIES

For more details on training or resources, please visit our website:

www.davidmccracken.org

