

The Power of One

Jim Jonas

08/02/26

Do you ever feel small? Insignificant? Powerless? A victim of forces out of your control? Are you frustrated by things that need correcting that no one else seems to see? Do you get tired of the “status quo” excuses everyone offers about the way things are? Are you disheartened when people seem to shrug their shoulders and lament, “There’s nothing anyone can do about it?”

Consider the following names: Noah, Joseph, Jonathan, David, Elijah, Nehemiah, Esther, Paul – and a dozen others we could add. What do they have in common? Among other things, they demonstrate the great difference one person can make.



Noah dedicated himself to a 120-year project to build a vessel large and sturdy enough to withstand a global inundation, saving both his family and enough “seed animals” to repopulate the earth.

Joseph was the victim of unspeakable treachery by his own brothers but continued to act with integrity and good judgment. In the process he used his position to give safe haven to his extended family and create optimal conditions for them to multiply “as the stars in the heavens.” Joseph’s perspective: “God sent me before you to give safe haven to his extended family and create optimal conditions for them to multiply “as the stars in the heavens.” Joseph’s perspective: “God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God ...” (Genesis 45:7-8).



Jonathan finally had enough foreign oppression and, with his armor-bearer, attacked a Philistine garrison. This act resulted in an Israelite rally which drove the Philistines back to their coastal lands. Jonathan’s view: “It may be that the Lord will work for us. For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few” (1 Sam 14:6).



David took one look at the Philistine giant who had stymied the Israelite army by his blasphemous taunting and immediately answered the challenge no one else would dare touch. David took the fight to Goliath and slew him, sparking another rally of the cowardly Israelite army. David's bold assertion: "Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine The Lord ... will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (1 Sam 17:32, 37).

Elijah famously stood alone against nearly 1,000 prophets of Baal and Asherah backed by the wicked Jezebel and called upon God to show His power by burning up the sacrifice with fire from heaven.

Nehemiah heard that the walls of Jerusalem were still in ruins some 90 years after the return from exile. He provided leadership, inspiration and resources for the walls to be rebuilt when everyone else had been demoralized and abandoned the project. Nehemiah's confidence: "I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words ...' So, they said, 'Let us rise up and build'" (Neh 2:18).



Esther became Queen of Persia and through her influence and shrewdness saved Israel at the risk of her own life. Her resolve: "And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!" (Esth 4:16).

Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles and as such spearheaded the spread of the gospel in major metropolitan cities across the Roman Empire. As Paul testified before King Agrippa: "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God ...'" (Ac 26:19-20).

All of these examples – and many more could be cited from both the Bible and secular history – witness to what one person can do when motivated by courage and conviction. We are not

discounting the power of God, but the point is that there must be a person of faith to take the initiative and stand up for God's causes so that He can work through them.

Why do the few often stay silent or hide in the shadows when bold action is needed? First, they are intimidated by the immense size of the task. But Noah didn't build the ark in a day. Under Nehemiah's leadership the people cleaned up the rubble left by the Babylonians and rebuilt the walls in 52 days. Amazing! What seemed like an impossible task only took two months to complete. In both cases the work was done the only way it can be – one day at a time.

Those who lack courage also exaggerate the strengths of the opposition instead of looking for weaknesses that can be exploited. All the Israelite army saw in Goliath was size, power, armor and grizzled war experience. But David saw a small, unprotected part of Goliath's forehead. David also had God on his side; Goliath had nothing but carvings of wood and stone. David's sling found its mark, and the retreat was on.

The unwilling are also paralyzed by the inaction of others. Cowardice and slothfulness are contagious; they drain energy and enthusiasm from those around them. This is true in all human endeavors – sports, warfare, business, religion. The lack of zeal in some justifies the lack of involvement in others. Deep down inside we realize that we are free moral agents and responsible to God for our own actions – or lack thereof – but the indifference of others is like an anchor around the neck.

So what do the courageous exhibit in the above citations? First, a proactive mindset. They do not wait for others to motivate them; rather, they understand their duty to carry out God's will regardless of the risk or participation of others. But it is a painful thing to admit that the Lord's sacrifice sometimes does not move us as it should. It is respect and gratitude for what He has done for us that spurs us to give back to Him. We must exercise this part of our mind by doing the inconvenient, the uncomfortable, the scary. In so doing we solidify the integrity of our faith in Christ.

Also, it is crucial to focus on those who set a positive example, rather than being dragged down by the idlers and naysayers. Brother Sewell Hall, who passed away last Sunday at the age of 96, was just such an example for me personally. Sewell was a long-time gospel preacher; co-editor of *Christianity* magazine; traveled and preached extensively overseas; moved to NYC in his 70s; etc. Sewell always carried himself with a quiet but powerful gravitas that inspired others. Such people should be our role models, not those who complain and excuse their do-nothing-ness.