

VISION FORWARD



“GET UP!”

Back in May I preached a series called GRIT. We looked at the call of God on our lives, the life of victory He calls us to live, and the failures we inevitably suffer along the way. Some of the key thoughts from that series are:

- ***Being strong and courageous is first and foremost about your attitude, not your aptitude.***
- ***Grit is not about how strong you are, but about how long you can endure.***
- ***Grit is developed overtime, not acquired in an instant.***
- ***For a marathon, you train first to finish, not to finish first.***
- ***God has called you to victory. Not that you will not fail, but that no failure will be final.***
- ***God is after your heart, not your obedience.***
- ***God gives victory to people, not plans. The character of Christ in us matters most.***

- ***You want great faith? Practice small faith everyday.***
- ***God gives you breath and energy not just to stay alive, but to live for something.***
- ***You have to allow/accept difficult circumstances/people into your life, if you're going to grow and become more like Christ.***
- ***If you fear your failure more than you trust God's faithfulness, you will never do anything great for God.***
- ***Grit isn't being consistently great, but being great at being consistent.***



It was in the third part of that series on “failure” that I believe God spoke to me that Joshua 7:10 was to be our Vision Verse for 2019: “Get up!” I did not think then and I do not think now that this verse means God has called us to fail this year. Rather, God’s emphasis, encouragement, and challenge is this: if you want to stand before your enemies, then you need to stand before Me first; if you want to experience the life I’ve called you to and accomplish the works I’ve prepared for you, then you

need to allow Me to change you, to purify you, first.

The call to us, then, is to “get up!” Maybe failure has been your story in 2018. Maybe you failed or someone failed you. Maybe there’s a challenge you have yet to rise up to meet. Maybe there’s something God has called you to do and you’ve been running from it and from Him. Maybe you’ve sensed God is calling you to something new and you’re ready to surrender to whatever it might be. Maybe you know your relationship with Jesus has been withering and you’re ready to let Him cultivate, prune, and grow your relationship in new ways.

There’s a multitude of reasons God’s call to Joshua may echo in your heart. Joshua had suffered a major defeat of his own at the hands of his enemy. It was a guaranteed victory, but for the hidden sin in the camp. God allowed Joshua and Israel to fail, in order that they might truly come to succeed. Through the fire of their sin and repentance God purified their heart and set them up for victory. Remember: nothing succeeds in *Jesus’s* hand like our failure and nothing fails in *our* hands like our success.

Let us not credit any success we have to our own wisdom or strength. Let us always rejoice and boast in Jesus Christ alone! Let us grow neither weary in doing good nor desolate for having failed, knowing that in Christ Jesus God is always good, loving, merciful, and kind towards us.

This is a year for each of us and for all of us to “get up,” to stand up, to step up into what God has called us to do. But most importantly to step up into *who* He’s called us to become. “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9)

Our first step, then, to get up for this new year will not be to do something spectacular and exciting. It will be to do something seemingly unproductive and counter intuitive to our human understanding of seeking success and victory: we will spend our next 30 days giving ourselves to *prayer*. Starting today, I challenge all of us, young and old alike, to seek the face of God in prayer. Whether you take 5, 15, or 55 minutes each day, let us heed the call of God to “get up” and to come and stand before him in prayer. Let us ask him to change us, to purify us, to conform us; let us seek to gaze upon his beauty and to inquire of him; let us seek to be silent and in awe; let us seek to surrender and to be equipped. Let us seek *Him*.

We will conclude these 30 days of prayer on February 10 with a Touch Down service. Together on that night we will ask God to “show us his glory” and to pour out His Spirit, not for our sake, but for His name’s sake. For His is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.

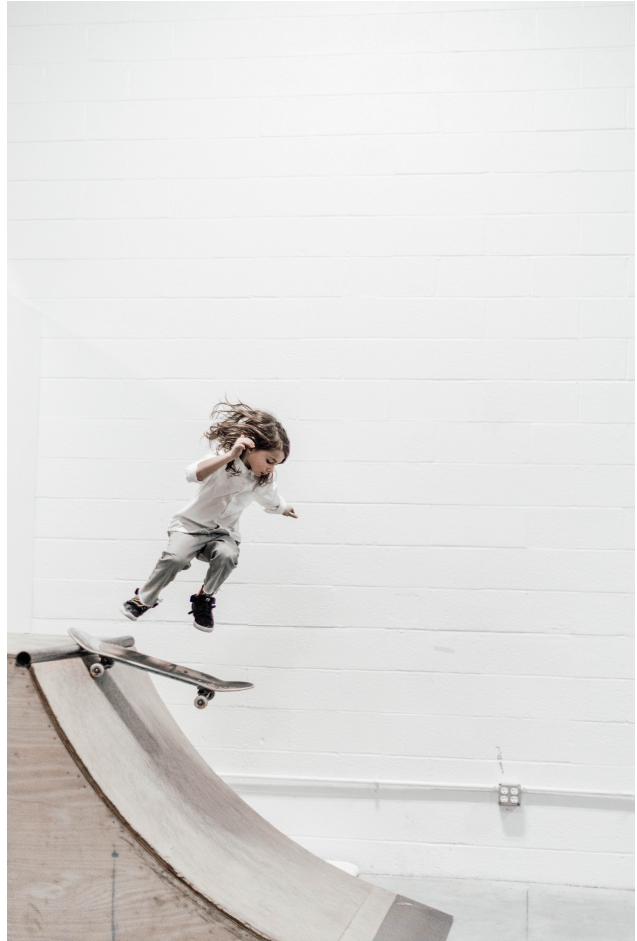
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Let us demonstrate grit in 2019: grit in prayer, grit in doing good, grit in serving, grit in obedience, grit in love. “Get up!”

2019 GOALS

FIRST GOALS (Essential—if we do nothing else, we will do these)

- 1) Work towards opening The Desens House
- 2) Expand our “Serve Oswego” project with 100+ volunteers
- 3) Experiment with a third service for reaching and serving more people in our city



SECOND GOALS (Anticipated—We believe we should be able to do these things)

- 1) Pursue a greater freedom in our praise and worship
- 2) Grow our small group participation
- 3) Build up new leaders and volunteers

THIRD GOALS (Possible—We hope that we might be able to do these things)

- 1) Launch a Celebrate Recovery Group (or an equivalent)
- 2) Equip adults and teens financially
- 3) Pray for 12 or more new Christians and new baptisms

LOOKING FORWARD TO...

SERVE OSWEGO: In May of 2018 we launched our “Serve Oswego” project. With a team of 100 volunteers of all ages we spread out over four locations on the West side of the city and partnered with our DPW department to clean up for the Spring. The DPW was very thankful and surprised at the amount of work we were able to accomplish. After our work was finished, many of us went to The Connection Point for a breakfast together. Our hope is to be able to serve Oswego again and expand the number of volunteers.



SATURDAY NIGHT SERVICE: As we look at ways to cultivate growth as a church and at ways to reach more in our community, we are in the very early stages of considering adding a third service. This service would be a Saturday night service (roughly 60-70min) and would not offer Elim Kids. We would try this as a 3 month experiment sometime in 2019 and see where it goes or doesn't go.

Why Saturday night? (1) As the Catholic churches in our city consolidate next year, there may be few or many Catholics who begin to look for something new or another option to Saturday night mass. This may be a portion of our demographic that we can serve. (2) There are some in our congregation who work weekends. Sunday mornings in particular. This would provide them with an option to stay connected to Elim Grace. (3) Attending a Saturday night service would provide many of our people the opportunity to volunteer during our Sunday services. (4) During the school year, there may be college students that

would be interested in coming to church Saturday night but not Sunday morning. (5) We are slowly but steadily growing in attendance.

KEY 2018 METRICS

- **TOTAL GIVING:** \$493,000 (TOTAL TITHES and OFFERINGS: \$437, 400)
- **TOTAL PEOPLE SERVED:** 12,000 (up from 8,000 in 2017. This also doesn't include mid-week or monthly events such as Bible studies, men's and women's events, the YMCA kids program, Alive at 25 driving course, voting, young mother's cafe, and more)
- **TOTAL ELIM KIDS ATTENDANCE:** 2,200
- **TOTAL BENEVOLENCE GIVEN OUT:** \$8,646
- **TOTAL LOCAL MISSIONS:** \$22,042
- **TOTAL FOREIGN MISSIONS:** \$21,634
- **TOTAL BUILDING FUND DONATIONS:** \$19,280