

Little Strength Big God

Discover a God Greater
than Your Goliaths



Debbie W. Wilson

Praise for
Little Strength, Big God

“This book reminds us that the challenges we face are not unlike what people of character have faced for all of history. With thought-provoking examples, Debbie gently guides us in making decisions now regarding our integrity and faith for the situations we are likely to encounter along the way. No matter your circumstances or position today, you will create a shield of protection by reading this book.”

—**Dan Miller**, author of *48 Days to the Work You Love*

“In our world of ever-increasing antagonism, Debbie Wilson shows how those in the Bible faced similar challenges and found strength in the Lord. Like these heroes of the faith, we can triumph in crushing circumstances. *Little Strength, Big God* provides assurance, hope, and practical steps.”

—**PeggySue Wells**, best-selling author of 31 books, including *The Ten Best Decisions a Single Mom Can Make*, *Chasing Sunrise*, and *The Patent*

“I absolutely love Debbie Wilson’s latest book and see it as a great gift for our world at this moment in history when it is hard to stand strong for what is real, true, and good. Debbie’s personal anecdotes accompanying each topic are by far my favorite part of the book, bringing to life human stories of radical trust in God in a variety of situations and his ensuing fidelity to his children. I highly recommend *Little Strength, Big God* for anyone wanting to take their faith to the next level!”

—**Jeanne F. Mancini**, President, March for Life Action

“*Little Strength, Big God* is a powerful reminder of the mighty strength of our God. Just as he was bigger than all the problems faced by the people in Hebrews 11, he is bigger than all our trials, challenges, and mistakes. While current issues have different names, many of the problems remain the same. This book is a refreshing reminder to view our problems through a God lens and not vice versa. *Little Strength, Big God* will strengthen you and your faith.”

—**Lisa T. Grimes**, author and cofounder of Habergeon and Lead Wholly

“Debbie Wilson’s *Little Strength, Big God* does not disappoint. She’s created a compelling study of God’s faithfulness to his people through engaging (and sometimes little-known) Bible stories. The format provides a strong and comprehensive understanding of Scripture as Wilson blends ancient examples from the Bible with modern-day accounts. I recommend this book for serious students of God’s Word and for those who long to go deeper. This is a book I will return to time and again.”

—**Deb DeArmond**, award-winning author and writing coach

“Debbie Wilson has written an anointed book that overflows with the power of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. With her own stories and those of others, she shows us how we can stand in God’s strength for what is right. The most freeing statement came when Wilson wrote about David facing the Goliaths (giants) in his life in God’s strength, but *as David*. As a believer, I will face the giants in my life *as Yvonne*, ‘not as a soldier in someone else’s armor.’ Each of us has that privilege and blessing. I highly recommend this book for all who call themselves believers and for those who are searching for something worth believing.”

—**Yvonne Ortega**, international speaker, author of the *Moving from Broken to Beautiful* series, recently retired Licensed Professional Counselor, AWSA Coach

“The world tells us, ‘You can do it! Get brave and overcome.’ We do our best to fight the good fight of faith, but when we fall short in our strength, we feel like failures. In *Little Strength, Big God*, Debbie W. Wilson shows us how those we call heroes of faith found their strength when they didn’t think they had what it took to step into God’s calling. This book is an excellent reminder that we don’t have to have it all together. When our strength is little or we feel we don’t have any strength, our God is faithful to give us his strength in the battle and for daily living.”

—**Patty Mason**, best-selling author of *Getting to Know God’s Heart*

“Has God called you into the overwhelming? Are you intimidated as you face the seemingly impossible? In *Little Strength, Big God*, Debbie Wilson finds insightful and inspiring wisdom from Old Testament stories for facing our giants. Digging deep into the Word, she offers beautiful glimpses of the unfailing faithfulness of God. If you are seeking realistic

expectations of God in the twenty-first century and want to find your strength in his power and ability, this book was written for you. Refresh your faith in the God of the impossible and read it!”

—**Julie Zine Coleman**, author of *On Purpose*, and managing editor of the AriseDaily devotional website

“*Little Strength, Big God* is one of the best Bible studies I’ve ever done. It will help grow your trust in the immeasurable power of God, who is especially close to all who call on him—particularly the imperfect, those who feel weak or insecure, and those riddled with fear. This book will be at the top of my list of recommended studies!”

—**Tara Furman**, Founder and President of Knowing God Ministries

“Debbie W. Wilson’s vivid imagery seamlessly weaves biblical truth with the struggles of real people through the ages. *Little Strength, Big God* will take you by the hand and show you how your weakness is your greatest strength, placing your hand in God’s.”

—**Rhonda Robinson**, award-winning author of *FreeFall: Holding onto Faith When the Unthinkable Strikes*

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To Susie, I kept my promise.

To Lisa, a tower of strength and a steadfast friend.

To Diane, a living example of Philippians 4:13.

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Foreword

I WAS TIRED AND SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE VOICE OF DISCOURAGEMENT. Someone had hurt my feelings with wounding words and actions. So now, as I worked on my latest project, I could hear the whispers of the enemy, “Why are you wasting your life? Just quit.”

Quit? I love the Lord with all my heart, and I will follow him wherever he leads me, even when it means standing up to harsh words or working on thankless tasks.

When the enemy assaults me, I push forward, not in my strength but in God’s. I push past the voice of darkness as it whispers, “Give up already.”

We’ve all heard this whisper to surrender in our times of grief, pain, and difficulties—a whisper that comes with a choice. We can agree with the enemy’s lies, or we can call for God’s help so we can push toward a breakthrough.

The apostle Paul encouraged us in 1 Corinthians 15:58: “Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

Paul’s words remind us we need to call for the strength of the Lord to empower us. Our own frail strength is not enough.

Little Strength, BIG GOD

That's what I love about Debbie W. Wilson's latest book, *Little Strength, Big God*. It will help you find God's strength, empowering you to fulfill your purpose and face your battles with quiet confidence and courage.

Linda Evans Shepherd

Best-Selling Author and Founder of the Advanced Writers and Speakers Association

Introduction

How to Get the Most Out of this Book

“GINNY, THE COMPANY’S TARGETED YOU,” MY DAUGHTER’S supervisor said.

My daughter had excelled in her job with an international company for many years. Her performance repeatedly ranked in the top 5 percent worldwide. Suddenly, headquarters filed numerous complaints against this high performer.

No one could tell her what she needed to change because the complaints were not based on work performance. Despite successfully refuting these allegations, the false charges continued. Based on programs the company promotes, her conservative social media posts put her in their crosshairs.

How do we live and thrive in an antagonistic environment? For Christians, this has become an increasingly relevant concern. But the situation is not new to God’s people. The men and women featured in the last half of Hebrews 11 lived in extremely hostile times. Many lived and worked under oppressive rulers. Each demonstrated an aspect of finding strength in the Lord that allowed them to triumph in crushing circumstances.

A good English teacher shows her students how to use nouns and verbs to build sentences and paragraphs to convey thoughts. Practicing these skills makes a student a better communicator. Similarly, the Lord provides the tools we need to become strong in battle. And while he fights for us, most battles require our participation. As we follow his lead, like those in Hebrews 11, we become “powerful in battle.” Finding strength in the Lord removes the fear of people and circumstances and allows us to soar in situations that paralyze others.

The Layout

When I began writing *Little Faith, Big God*, I soon realized I needed two books to cover the men and women listed in Hebrews 11. In deciding how to divide them, the phrase “whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle” (v. 34) stood out to me. I felt it described the men and women in Hebrews 11:23–40 very well. This book explores those men and women and what we can learn from them.

The chapters in *Little Strength, Big God* are divided into five daily lessons to be studied at the speed that suits you or your group. Each chapter begins with a vignette of a biblical character’s life, as I imagine it. Each day includes an introduction, followed by a Study and Reflection section with questions to guide the personal application of Scripture. The day concludes with a Strength Builder and a place for you to record a closing prayer. Day Five ends with a place to record prayer requests for those meeting with a group.

This study is written to help you become a biblical thinker and an able listener of God. Use a Bible in a translation you enjoy. Below are a few suggestions to help optimize your experience:

- Bring a pen.
- Feel free to add your own questions.

- Listening to passages read aloud helps me hear things I miss when silently reading the same passage. Consider listening to the biblical stories in a familiar version or a modern idiomatic translation like *The Message*. There are several free audio Bible apps available.
- Since the Bible is spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:9–16), begin each lesson by opening your heart and asking the Lord to speak to you through the Holy Spirit.
- Be open with the Lord and yourself when answering the questions. If you discuss this study with a group or another person, share only what you are comfortable sharing.
- When possible, do this study with a grace-filled group that enjoys discussion. We can learn much from other people's questions and observations.

May this study inspire and equip you to live strong and finish well.

Lord Jesus, thank you for inviting us to live every day with you. Grant us ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to receive all you have for us. In Jesus's name. Amen.

*Note for those planning group studies, you can find a leader's guide at debbiewilson.com/book. Allow eight weeks for discussion if you plan to cover one chapter per week. However, some weeks can be divided into smaller chunks for deeper discussion. For example, because there's more biblical reading on Moses in Week Two, you could divide that discussion into two weeks. In Week Seven, you could discuss Days 1–3 one week and Days 4 and 5 the following. In Week Eight, you could discuss David in one session and spiritual armor in another the following week. Depending on how you split these weeks, your study could run from eight to eleven weeks.

If your group has only a brief time to cover the lesson, ask the group to come prepared to share one or two takeaways from each day. When the group meets, the facilitator can summarize the main point for each day and ask the group members to share their takeaways from that day's lesson.

Strength to Resist Intimidation

Fear of man paralyzes; fear of God mobilizes.

“OH, AMRAM, HE’S BEAUTIFUL.” JOCHEBED STROKED THEIR newborn’s soft cheek.

Her husband nodded and squeezed her arm.

She met his eyes. “We must protect him.”

“Yes, but how?” Amram threw up his hands. “What can two slaves do against Pharaoh and all of Egypt?”

Jochebed brushed away a tear. “We’ll ask Yahweh to make a way.”

“Eventually, a new king came to power in Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph or what he had done.”

—Exodus 1:8 (NLT)

Exodus begins like a thriller. To forget Joseph meant to forget the debt Egypt owed his people. Joseph’s wise leadership and God-given ability to interpret dreams had saved Egypt from total devastation hundreds of years earlier during a great famine. The grateful pharaoh of that time gave the land of Goshen to Joseph’s family of shepherds. This new ruler disregarded Egypt’s history and debt to Joseph and Joseph’s God.

Like Hitler, Saddam Hussein, and the Taliban, this pharaoh ruled with an iron fist. Approximately 1500 years before Christ, Amram and Jochebed started their family under his oppressive reign. When harsh treatment failed to slow the growth of the Hebrew population, he commanded the Hebrew midwives to kill the baby boys as they were born. When that didn't work, he ordered all of Egypt to throw the male Hebrew babies into the Nile.

With no sonograms to predict the gender of a child and allow the family to brace themselves for what might follow, can you imagine the emotions that accompanied every Hebrew birth?

“It's a girl!” Exhales. Smiles. Embraces.

“It's a boy.” Hands cover faces. Sobs.

These mothers loved their babies. These fathers needed to protect their families. But how could a slave resist the power of Egypt?

In this dark setting, five brave women dared to defy a cruel dictator and his people.

Day One

Fear the Lord—or Fear the Worst

*“Fearing people is a dangerous trap,
but trusting the LORD means safety.”*

—Proverbs 29:25 (NLT)

Are you or someone you love embroiled in a massive struggle? Are you battling to save your health, marriage, child, or culture? The enemy is fearsome. Why did God choose you for this battle?

I've learned God chooses the weak. Weakness may be your greatest qualification. God's glory shines through the cracks we call limitations (2 Cor. 4:7). But he doesn't leave us in a fragile state. Describing some of God's heroes, Hebrews 11:34 says, “[Their] weakness was turned to strength.” As Moses's parents and the two

Hebrew midwives illustrate, our limitations become windows through which God's glory shines.

Shiphrah and Puah cherished their jobs as midwives. While other Hebrew slaves labored under ruthless taskmasters, they welcomed new babies into the world. Amid the desperate suffering of their people, Shiphrah and Puah thanked God for this joy and the promise held within each new life.

One day, Pharaoh summoned the midwives. He ordered them to kill the baby boys as they were being born. Shiphrah and Puah never imagined anyone—even one as cold as Pharaoh—would demand something so heinous.

His orders soured their stomachs. They couldn't do it—wouldn't do it. But did they have a choice? Shiphrah and Puah shuddered to imagine what would happen if they disobeyed. If Pharaoh killed infants without a qualm, what would he do to two disobedient slaves?

On the other hand, though compelled by their ruler, what would happen to their souls if they complied? Yahweh's presence swathed every birth. How could they offend him? Hadn't he said, "Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind" (Gen. 9:6)? His sweet favor meant more than life.

Pharaoh wielded power, but, despite the Egyptians' beliefs, he was no god.

Recalling the Lord's character reminded them of their calling to protect life. Knowing what they couldn't do clarified what they must do. They would serve Yahweh whether he saved them or not. They would disobey Pharaoh and rescue as many infant boys as possible. And when—not if—Pharaoh called them to give an account of their actions, may Yahweh have mercy on them.

The dreaded day arrived. Shiphrah and Puah prayed to the one they served for strength as they answered Pharaoh's summons.

Scripture Reading.....

EXODUS 1:8–21

ACTS 5:29

Study and Reflection

1. “Eventually, a new king came to power in Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph or what he had done” (Exod. 1:8 NLT). Egypt owed Joseph, Abraham’s great-grandson, a great debt. Joseph’s wisdom and leadership kept Egypt from utter desolation during a seven-year famine. Pharaoh’s ignorance of history brought Egypt and the Hebrews great pain. From Exodus 1:11–14, list the words that describe how the Egyptians treated the Hebrews.
2. Consider what it must have been like for the Hebrews to live and labor under Pharaoh. From where did the midwives find the strength to resist Pharaoh (Exod. 1:17)?
3. How did God show his approval of Shiphrah and Puah (Exod. 1:20–21)?
4. Imagine a situation where your boss’s command violates your conscience or God’s principles. How can you apply the midwives’ story to such a challenge?

5. How do you know when to resist authority (Acts 5:29)?

6. Record any final thoughts or takeaways from today's lesson.

Destructive Fear versus Saving Reverence

Getting Republicans and Democrats to agree on something is about as easy as going off sugar during Christmas. Yet, according to Dan Heath, in his book *Upstream*, the two groups are more alike than you might think.

In a speech, Heath explained the results of a poll conducted in Charlotte, North Carolina, with Black women who identified themselves as Democrats and White women who identified as Republicans. While the political pundits want us to believe we are worlds apart in our healthcare needs and desires, the poll results from these two groups showed otherwise. Their answers showed a 1 percent difference in priorities. The pie charts were virtually identical. Healthcare is not a Democrat, Republican, or race issue. It's a human concern.

Satan wields fear to divide and manipulate people. To secure power, leaders like Pharaoh use race, religion, ideologies, and even masks and vaccines to pit groups against each other. Worst-case scenarios spun through Pharaoh's mind. "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country" (Exod. 1:9–10). Ironically, the more Pharaoh oppressed the Hebrews, "the more they multiplied" (Exod. 1:12).

Someone described FEAR as False Evidence Appearing Real. Have you ever been manipulated by disturbing what-ifs? What if I

can't pay my bills? What if my child gets involved in an unhealthy relationship? What if cancer returns? Our spiritual enemy plants dark scenarios in our minds hoping to control us with fear.

The late R. C. Sproul said you can't have courage without fear. You don't need courage if you aren't afraid. It's natural to *feel* fearful. But the faithful obey God anyway. In Revelation 21:8, God shuts the cowardly out of heaven, not the fearful.

Need Courage? Look Up

Where did Shiphrah and Puah, two female slaves, find the strength to defy a dictator the Egyptians called a god? They "feared God."

Perhaps standing in Pharaoh's throne room reminded them of another throne. Yahweh, not Pharaoh, determined their destinies.

God provides grace for real trials, not for imagined what-ifs. Rather than focus on what Pharaoh might do to them, the two women conquered the dread of their enemy through reverence for God.

The Bible says, "Fear of the LORD is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment" (Prov. 9:10 NLT). The midwives' fear of God provided the wisdom and courage they needed to act in this tough spot. When Pharaoh summoned them, perhaps God reminded them of one of the Hebrew women who had given birth before they had arrived to attend the birth, and they relayed that story. Miraculously, Pharaoh sent them home unharmed. God rewarded Shiphrah and Puah with families of their own.

The Protection of Holy Awe

Have you ever been jarred awake from a dream where it feels like you're falling? When I visited Yosemite, I learned that for some who ignore a healthy fear of heights, that nightmare becomes a

sickening reality. The fear of plummeting over the side warned me to stand away from the edge.

Similarly, I grew up near the coast. I learned the patterns and characteristics of the sea and avoided strong undercurrents and being afloat during storms. The more familiar I became with the ocean, the more I respected its power.

We might compare fear of God with a respect of the ocean. The better we know God, the greater our awe. A healthy fear of God saves us from the destructive fear of people, no matter how high their position.

A friend I'll call Zeke experienced that protection when his boss told him to manipulate the numbers on two sales representatives so the company wouldn't have to pay the bonuses they had earned. Zeke refused, and his boss fired him on the spot.

Ironically, or should we say providentially, a recruiter telephoned that night to ask if he would interview for a new job.

"How did you know I was available?"

"I didn't," the recruiter said. "I just know your qualifications."

Jesus told his disciples not to worry about how to defend themselves when they were arrested (Matt. 10:19). The Holy Spirit would give them what to say. Jesus hasn't changed. There is no need to live in dread. Those who fear the Lord have a counselor and comforter to guide them on earth and eternal glory awaiting them in heaven (2 Cor. 4:17; 2 Tim. 2:12).

Today's Strength Builder

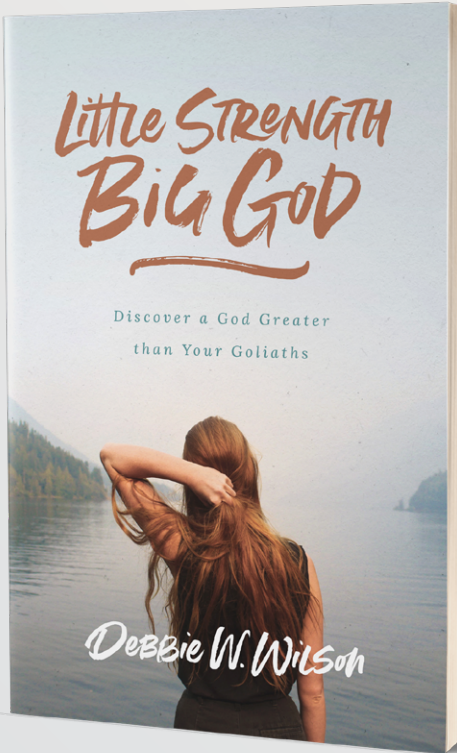
What persistent fear do you face? What truth about God could help you counter this fear?

Little Strength. BIG GOD

CLOSING PRAYER

Use this space to turn your insights and responses into prayers.

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