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## “COUNT ON ME”

*by Daniel A. Brown, PhD*

From our earliest years on the planet, we learned how to size things up—comparing the length of our *4-year-old* stretch, to the distance between us and the cookie on the counter; counting leftover allowance coins to see if they could get us a candy bar *and* a soda; and, stacking up our soccer team against *theirs* during warm-up drills. It’s a slogan of our culture, a bedrock equation of recent military strategy (overwhelming force), and an instinctual component of self-preservation: “*If you’ve got enough, you can make it.*”

The problem is...we usually don’t have enough.

Not all “*doctrines of demons*” sound ghastly or cultic. Most of them show up as hardly noticed thoughts that flit across our mind as *just-the-way-things-are* preconceptions. In His kind mercy, Jesus has been helping me reconsider the equation of sufficiency that influences our thinking as believers, more than we (I) like to admit.

“*Do you have what it takes?*” One of the most intimidating questions, rolling around in our minds, sounds innocent enough (even practical). But it can keep us from spiritual victories. Even though I’m a bit slow catching on, I love it when He is in the process of teaching me more of how His kingdom works.

## OUTNUMBERED

As with most lessons from the Lord, this one began with a simple Bible text that caught my attention; I found myself meditating on (i.e., thinking often about) one of dozens of incidents when God tells His kids not to be intimidated by the enemy’s superior size or numbers. He says, “Do not be shocked, nor fear them” (Deuteronomy 1:29), and though they are more numerous, just keep remembering who is on your side (Deuteronomy 20:1-4).

That sounds like the pep talk I used to give the U-10 soccer team I coached the season we had two incredible, *no-one-is-better* players (no, I didn’t recruit them). As a coach, I knew my players would do better if they worried less about how impressive the other teams appeared. I wanted to spare my kids anxiety and fear; besides, having coached a long time, I knew we really would win every game that season.

It’s easy to read such words from the Lord in a legalistic, *prove-you’re-really-a-good-Christian* manner, imagining His voice tinged with disgust at the pathetic team He has to work with. God isn’t angry when He tells us not to be unnerved by the odds. He’s simply reminding us that He has what it takes—even (especially) when we don’t.

*Do I have what it takes?* I almost always need more resources than I have in hand. As a pastor I feel constantly undersupplied (time, money, volunteers), and in want of more...everything! As an individual believer I worry about not having enough (right) words to share my faith, not having enough money to cover college tuition for my kids, not enough people in my Bible study, etc.

Unknowingly, the pursuit of “excellence” in my church and in my life can end up being little more than a desire to have *good enough* goods, *numerous enough* resources to even the odds. I want to be able to count what I have—and conclude that my chances for winning are good. Actually, I want enough of whatever to assure victory...on my own.

## UNNUMBERED

When Jesus encouraged us to count the cost, He did so partly by telling a story of a king whose army was outnumbered. The point of the story is not for us to be sure we have enough soldiers to match the enemy’s numbers. Rather, unless we realize

that the numbers will almost *always* be against us, we’ll be tempted to size up the size of our army, and surrender before the *Unnumbered One* can fight for us.

I’d be content if God would at least show up on the troop roster—even in disguise and under an alias—and assemble, unnoticed to all, where I could see Him wink at me periodically. But He’s never there! He’s invisible.

That’s one of the great things about an invisible God. Granted, we cannot see Him or count Him among the ranks/resources supporting us; but neither can Goliath or Pharaoh see Him, until it’s too late. That realization is helping me become eager for battle when the obvious odds are against me.

God can’t be counted—but He can always be counted on.