

OUTNUMBERED

On Friday morning my daughter's high school basketball team was in Hamilton to play the opening game of the St. Thomas More Hoops Invitational. We had to play the host team in the opening game of the tournament. Little did we know before we arrived what we were in for. St. Thomas More's student council turned it into a spirit day event where students could pay \$2.00 to come to the game and miss their first period class. That is a pretty good deal for teenagers to be able to miss class and hang out in the gym with their friends to watch basketball.

I am guessing over 500 students were sitting in the stands for this opening game. We know which team they were rooting for. The only fans at the game from BCI were yours truly, another dad and one other parent. The dads decided to sit together to form a cheering squad for BCI. We were not only outnumbered by all of the students there, but also by their cheerleading squad. I am guessing 20 cheerleaders were positioned at the end of the court cheering loudly for the home team. We were also outnumbered by the school band. As loud as we dads tried to yell and scream the band proved to be much louder. We were also outnumbered by their team mascot. Their team mascot was on hand, but I do not think I qualify as the team mascot even though I am at almost every game.

The BCI basketball team was certainly outnumbered and at a disadvantage going into this game. It reminded us of the atmosphere we see on television when watching a football or basketball game at one of the USA colleges. The BCI players had never experienced this before, and I could see how nervous they were at the start of the game. It showed in their play as BCI went down by 6 points very early. Whenever our players went to the free throw line to shoot, the fans from St. Thomas More would try and distract them by making lots of noise. If our player missed the shot, their fans would cheer. When BCI made a basket only the two dads could be heard cheering. After the game the players acknowledged how intimidating it was to be so outnumbered but admitted it will be one of those experiences playing basketball they will never forget.

This story is a reminder of how we can find ourselves in situations where we feel outnumbered based on the challenges we are facing. These situations make us feel like the odds are stacked against us resulting in feelings of fear and apprehension about our ability to compete or cope. The situations I am referring to are not on a basketball court like on Friday. These situations might be:

- a doctor telling us the odds are not in our favour of recovering or healing,
- bills piling up at an amount that outnumbers the level of our income,
- feeling outnumbered at work or among a group of people who do not value our input or contribution, or make us feel excluded,
- feeling the number of bad days we are experiencing are outnumbering the good days.

It is never a comfortable experience when we feel outnumbered, and the odds are not in our favour. If we are in this kind of situation now, or at some point in our lives, I hope we can find inspiration from a story in the Bible when Elisha was outnumbered.

The story begins with the king of Aram frustrated because the prophet Elisha always seemed to know when they would mobilize their army and try to attack Israel. Elisha would send word to the king of Israel forewarning him of the pending attack. The king of Aram realized the only way to have success would be for them to send a sizeable force and seize the prophet. When the king of Aram learned of Elisha's whereabouts, he sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the town where the prophet was living. The next morning Elisha's servant went outside and when he saw all the troops, chariots, and horses he began to panic realizing they were outnumbered. When the servant cried to Elisha in fear the prophet reassured him by saying:

**"Don't be afraid! For there are more on our side than on theirs!"
(2 Kings 6:16)**

Elisha then prayed asking God to open the servant's eyes and see with faith how God had provided them with more on their side. When the servant opened his eyes, he saw the hillside around them filled with horses and chariots of fire from God's heavenly army. Elisha's servant at first thought they were outnumbered, but soon realized what the prophet saw all along: how one is never outnumbered with God on one's side.

Life has its share of experiences when we can feel outnumbered. If this situation should ever arise, may we take a lesson from Elisha by realizing we are never outnumbered and without hope when we have God on our side. **Elisha's servant failed to pray** at first and that is why he felt so afraid in this situation. Elisha was a praying man and could see through the "eyes of faith" that God had

the situation under control. It was only after Elisha prayed that his servant began to see the same thing. **Like Elisha, may we be a person of prayer** so that we can see through the "**eyes of faith**" each day **how God is at work** stacking the odds in our favour even in situations where we appear to be outnumbered. Prayer is the difference maker from feeling overwhelmed and outnumbered to being at complete peace.

What the BCI players did not know is I always say a prayer for them in the stands before each game. Even though they were outnumbered, God brought about a win for them. They did not win the game, but they won by Him giving them a special memory they will never forget playing basketball. God gave two of BCI's players a special win as well. Coral and the daughter of the other dad who was there were laughing at us from the bench seeing us trying to cheer louder than 500 students, 20 cheerleaders, a school band, and a mascot. These two girls were provided a winning memory of how proud their dads are of them. In a situation of being outnumbered, when we pray through it, God always brings about a way of winning.

Keep Safe and God Bless

Pastor Dean