

# Songs of Victory And How to Sing Them

# Songs of Victory

# And How to Sing Them

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For our children

**We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:5**

## **Preface**

Once upon a time there lived a Good King who ruled over a beautiful kingdom. This kingdom was made up of people who had at one time been living under the oppression of a cruel and wicked lord until the Good King set them free. If you have not already heard the story of the Good King and His mighty rescue plan, you should put this story aside and go read about that one immediately. For the story of the Good King rescuing people from the land of darkness is the best story of all. Assuming you have heard *that* good news, *this* story will begin with a young fellow named Reagan who was recently rescued from the darklands and is getting settled into his new home in the Kingdom of light.

## Chapter 1

One morning, a little after 7am, Reagan woke from his sleep and immediately noticed the light pouring through his open window. A smile lit his face. After living his whole life in the darklands he was still surprised by the beauty and warmth of the sun. He hoped that as long as he lived he would never grow tired of seeing the sunrise. This particular morning, as was his custom, the good King was riding through the sunlit streets, and He made a special point of visiting Reagan's home.

The Good King slid easily from His large white horse and approached Reagan with a cheerful smile and outstretched hand. Reagan shook it readily, even though he felt that bowing would be a more appropriate greeting.

"I can't thank you enough for inviting me to live in Your Kingdom, Sir." Reagan managed to say. His nerves were a little on edge while in the presence of this powerful man.

"You have thanked me already, but I never grow tired of hearing it!" the King said with a chuckle as He patted Reagan's back. "Are you finding your accommodations to your liking?"

"Oh, Sir, this home is beautiful and you have filled it with everything I need. I am getting ready to plant my garden this afternoon with the tools you gave me, I've met several friendly neighbors and I was just now giving thanks for the sunrise when I saw you riding up the road. There's no comparison between where I am now and where I came from."

Just saying those words sent a chill down Reagan's back.

The King nodded and pulled a small book from His pocket that He handed to Reagan. "I promise you will never have to go back to darklands. I have paid for you and you are mine forever, but there are some things I need to warn you about."

A look of concern furrowed Reagan's brow.

"Not to worry, young man, this book is filled with information that will help you to live joyfully and prosperously in this Kingdom of light. There is a lot to read but you don't have to learn it all at once. I have marked a few passages for you to start with and I will come by tomorrow morning and we can discuss it."

"I'll start reading it right away, Sir. You've been so generous to let me live here; it's the least I can do to learn and follow your guidelines. Anything to please You, King." At this, Reagan did go down on one knee, lowering his eyes to the ground.

"I think you will find these rules will please you as well, son. Happy gardening!" And with that, He easily mounted the largest, whitest horse Reagan had ever seen and continued down the road to chat with his neighbor, Raleigh.

Reagan opened the small book and scanned some of the pages. This was going to be a big undertaking. There was a lot to learn, but the King had told him to start with the marked passages. So as Reagan ate his breakfast and enjoyed the sunlight pouring through the kitchen window, he began to read.

## **Discussion Guide:**

Here are some of the marked passages Reagan read:

- 2 Corinthians 10:5
- 1 John 4:18

What do you think it means to "take our thoughts captive"?

Who do you think the Good King represents?

Who is the "perfect love" that drives out fear?

Why do you think Reagan is so thankful to be living in the Kingdom of light?

## Chapter 2

The next morning Reagan was up, dressed and waiting by the road when the Good King approached. He had been up much of the night reading and mulling over the pages the King had pointed him to the day before. The passages had unsettled him, and he hadn't slept much.

"Good morning, son," the King called in greeting as He approached Reagan's home.

"Good morning, King. Thank you so much for letting me live in Your kingdom and for coming to talk with me today."

"It is my good pleasure to welcome you into my Kingdom, Reagan, and I have been looking forward to our morning chat." There was something sparkling in the King's eyes as He looked at Reagan, something that looked like a river in the sunlight, or laughter, or a river laughing... Reagan never could decide.

"I have some questions about the passages I read in Your book, Sir. Is it okay if we get right to it?"

"Speak your mind, son." The Good King took a seat on Reagan's front porch and sipped from the cup of hot cider Reagan had provided.

"Well, Sir," Reagan began, "It seems like all of these passages were talking about how all sorts of bad soldiers, from my old land, are going to try and get me. I thought I was safe here, and I didn't know they could come here, and if they do I'm not sure I would be able to fight them off." As Reagan talked he paced back and forth on the front porch. His speech was rushed and nervous.

The Good King smiled as if He'd had this conversation a thousand times and gestured for Reagan to take a seat.

"Son, the king of the darklands cannot take you from my Kingdom of light. This is your home forever, but as you can imagine he's not too pleased about me stealing you from him."

Reagan shifted uncomfortably.

"He can't take you from this Kingdom, but he is going to do everything he can to make sure that you are miserable here. He has a few favorite strategies, and one is to send loyal soldiers from his army to come and attack you."

"He...he can do that?" Reagan stammered.

"That's not even the worst of it," the King continued. "The worst is when he sends soldiers to befriend you and try to live with you. Those are the attacks you don't see coming."

"Why would I let an enemy live with me?" Reagan questioned nervously.

"It happens a lot," the King replied, sadly rubbing his chin. "You'd be surprised."

"So what do I do if someone from the darklands comes to my house?"

"You bring them to me, son, immediately. You grab them by the ear and your drag them up the hill to my castle." The King rose and moved close to Reagan's face. "Immediately." He said slowly and earnestly.

"Wh...what if they won't come?" Reagan replied, unable to calm his nerves.

"If they won't come, then you run them through with this."

Reaching around to His side, the Good King drew His sword and handed it to the wide-eyed recipient. "And if this doesn't kill them, it will at least take the fight out of them so you can haul them up the hill to my castle."

Reagan felt the weight of the shiny sword in his hands and tried to give it back. "I couldn't possibly take Your sword, King. I have one of my own I could use instead."

"It wouldn't work, son." As the King mounted His white steed, He explained, "The soldiers from the darklands are too strong for you, but my sword has my strength in it and it will protect you. Keep it with you at all times and be on the lookout for anyone that looks shadowy."

"Shadowy?" Reagan called, but the King was already heading down the road.

"You'll know it when you see it, son, if you've got your eyes open."

## **Discussion Guide:**

1 Peter 5:8 tells us to be alert and sober minded because our enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour!

Did you know that we have an enemy?

What did the Good King tell Reagan to do if He catches an enemy soldier?

According to Ephesians 6:17 you and I have a weapon too. What is it?

## Chapter 3

Later that afternoon while Reagan was working in his vegetable garden, he caught a glimpse of something bright out of the corner of his eye. He stood up straight and looked around trying to pinpoint what it could be. Just then, another blaze of light came whirring by his head, and this time Reagan saw that it was an arrow that someone had lit on fire and shot into his garden.

"Who goes there?" Reagan demanded in a voice more courageous than he felt.

Instead of a reply he received another blazing arrow. This time it struck the side of his home.

"Hey!" Reagan yelled as he rushed for his hose to put out the flame. The initial shock he felt at this attack was quickly turning to fear and after putting out the fire he reached for the King's sword while simultaneously looking for a place to hide.

What was it that he was supposed to do? Reagan panted as he thought back through the conversation this morning. Oh yeah, take them to the King. But how was he going to do that? With his heart beating wildly, Reagan held out the sword and peeked around the barrel he was crouching behind.

"In the name of the good King I command you to stop shooting and come with me immediately or face the wrath of the King's strong and swift sword!"

Again, his words sounded more sure and steady than he felt, but to Reagan's surprise the arrows stopped flying and a few moments later a small soldier appeared with his hands lifted in surrender.

"Please, please don't kill me," the soldier sputtered. "I'll come with you to your King."

The soldier, who was quite small, came forward slowly and with trembling hands laid his bow at Reagan's feet. Reagan, who was trying to pretend he did things like this all the time, stood with his shoulders back, and with all the authority he could muster he pointed the sword at the enemy soldier and commanded him to march.

When they got to the top of the hill, Reagan was again surprised to find that the good King was standing out front watching the procession and was ready and waiting to deal with this prisoner of war.

"Good evening, King."

"Good evening, son. What do we have here?"

"I caught this soldier shooting blazing arrows onto my property, and so I did as You commanded and brought him to You."

"You have done well, Reagan. I will take it from here and you are free to go."

"But what will You do with him?" Reagan inquired.

The Good King looked strong and stern as He led the enemy up the path and away from Reagan.

"That is not your concern, son. You have done your part and now I will do mine."

The castle gates closed and Reagan headed back down the hill to his home. As he walked he hummed a little melody that came to his mind. The tune seemed to settle his nerves and steady his feet. This had been quite a day, and despite the fear that had visited earlier, he was filled with a deep peace, for he lived under the protection of a good, strong King. And so, with the King's sword beside his bed, he fell fast asleep.

## **Discussion Guide:**

What was the enemy soldier doing when Reagan first saw him?

Does our enemy shoot arrows at us? (See Ephesians 6:16)

What do these flaming arrows look like? (examples: doubt, fear...)

Was Reagan obedient to the Good King's commands when he noticed the enemy and the arrows? What did Reagan do?

## Chapter 4

Several weeks went by, and Reagan settled into his new life in his new home. He enjoyed his work and could often be found humming and singing as he went about his tasks. He continued his daily talks with the King and began to build some good friendships with other folks in his part of the kingdom. One friend, Charlie, had invited Reagan over for lunch, and since Reagan had never yet been to Charlie's home he was excited to accept the invitation. Even when Reagan was still a good distance away, however, he noticed something strange about Charlie's fence. He couldn't quite put his finger on what it was, but there was something odd about it - something shadowy.

The closer he got to Charlie's home, the more nervous he felt in his stomach. Something was not right, but he wasn't the type of man to not follow through with a commitment, so with the salad he had gathered from his garden in hand, he knocked on the front door. Charlie was happy to see him and quickly welcomed him inside. Upon entering, Reagan immediately noticed how dim the lighting was, even though it was the middle of the day.

"What a nice home you have," Reagan said, because that's what you say. Then he added, "Do you have your curtains closed? It seems a bit dark in here."

"Oh, that's because of my fabulous new fence I'm having installed," Charlie chimed, putting his arm around Reagan and guiding him out the back door to admire the construction. "See?" Charlie gestured to the large barbed wire fence that was so tall it was starting to form a dome over his home.

"Isn't it modern?" Charlie asked happily.

Reagan mumbled something that Charlie accepted as an assent.

"This is Bill. He lives in another part of the Kingdom and has offered to build this state-of-the-art fence for me, free of charge! Can you believe it? All I have to do is give him room and board and he is doing all of *this!*"

Charlie called for Bill and quickly made introductions. Reagan shook Bill's hand and looked him in the eyes, and though it was a warm, sunny day, he felt cold all over. If there ever was an individual who could be described as shadowy, Bill was it.

"Bill, would you be willing to build a fence for my friend, Reagan, when you're done over here?"

"Nothing would please me more," replied Bill in a voice that made Reagan's skin crawl.

"I'll, uh, have to think about it," said Reagan. "Would you mind if we eat, Charlie? I'm starving."

Hunger was the last thing on Reagan's mind at the moment, but he figured the sooner lunch was over the sooner he could go home. Several minutes into their meal, Reagan felt considerably more calm and decided to speak with his friend rationally about the situation.

"Um, Charlie, why do you need such a big, tall fence?"

"To keep out the enemy soldiers, of course! Didn't the King speak with you when you arrived about how the lord of the darklands sends soldiers to try and harm us?"

"Yes, He did. I was just, um, wondering if maybe Bill might actually be one of those enemy soldiers."

"Bill? No way!" Charlie laughed. "Bill is *helping* me!" Charlie leaned back in his chair and continued. "You see, Bill knows a lot about the lord of the darklands and his various strategies, and he is helping me to be prepared for any and all of them. In fact, he is so wise that I don't even leave my house anymore without asking him if he thinks it's a good idea. He's been working on this fence so long he's become one of my most trusted friends and advisers. I consult him about almost all of the decisions I make. You should really give him a chance. He could really help you too!"

Reagan nodded and chewed his food quickly. He smiled politely and made conversation for the next hour, but the entire time he was in Charley's house, all he could think about was how that fence was slowly blocking all of the sun from shining in. He hadn't been anywhere this dark since leaving the darklands.

## **Discussion Guide:**

What do you think of Charlie's new fence? Does it seem good or bad?

I wonder if Bill is good or bad? What do you think and why?

There are a lot of references about shadow and light in this book. What do you think they might represent?

Why did Charlie decide to have this fence built? Do we build similar fences?

Did the Good King tell Reagan to build a fence?

What *did* the Good King tell Reagan to do for protection against enemy soldiers?

## Chapter 5

That evening, Reagan couldn't stop thinking about Charlie, and worrying about how he may have an enemy soldier living with him who was slowly caging him in with a state-of-the-art fence! In fact, he had gotten himself so worked up about it that he decided to ride his bike over to Sam's house to talk it over. Sam had lived in the Kingdom of light a lot longer than Reagan, and he would surely know what to do.

Reagan had never visited Sam's house in the evening, and Sam seemed surprised to find Reagan standing at his front door.

"Hi Sam, do you mind if I come in? I've got something I'm really worried about that I need to discuss with you."

"Um, sure, you can come in but just so you know my house mate is here too. Is that okay?"

"You have a house mate?" How had Reagan never known that? He and Sam had been friends for a few months and it had never come up. "That's fine with me. Any friend of yours is a friend of mine," said Reagan confidently as he stepped into Sam's living room.

Those words had just left Reagan's mouth when he came face to face with an enemy soldier. Shocked and confused, Reagan went to reach for his sword, but quickly realized in horror that he had left it at home. Both Sam and the soldier saw Reagan looking for his weapon and awkwardly tried to diffuse the situation.

"Whoa, Reagan, it's okay bud. This is Glen. He's my house mate." Sam was pointing to the enemy on his couch and calling him a friend, and now Reagan was not sure how to respond. He froze and looked to Sam for further explanation. Sam had shadows under his eyes.

"Glen is from the darklands, yes, but he's not dangerous. He doesn't have any weapons."

As if to prove the point, Glen lifted his empty hands and shrugged, an innocent look on his face.

Sam continued, "Glen and his brothers have lived with folks in the Kingdom of light for years. You'll see why once you get to know him. He is so fun to hang out with and he tells the best jokes. Man, I'm telling you, if Glen is your friend you don't need anyone else. But I'm glad you came by, Reagan. We can hang out with Glen together."

"Um, I don't know," said Reagan stumbling backwards toward the door.

"What was it you wanted to talk about?" asked Sam.

"Oh, it can wait until tomorrow" stammered Reagan, reaching for the doorknob.

"That's cool" Sam replied. Glen and I mostly hang out at night, so I'll look for you sometime around noon."

"You do that!" called Reagan, who was on his bike and pedaling away from Sam's house as fast as he could.

### **Discussion Guide:**

I wonder if Glen is a friend or foe? What do you think and why?

Reagan noted that "Sam had shadows under his eyes." Based on our previous discussions about shadow and light, what do you think this might represent?

Read Matthew 7:15-20

According to this passage, how can we tell if the people/voices in our lives are friends or foes?

Why do you think Sam views Glen as his friend?

## Chapter 6

Reagan pedaled hard as tears streaked down his face and dried cool on his cheeks. He was so upset and confused that he rode right past his home and kept going all the way up the hill to the King's castle where he banged his fists against the gate. He was weeping now and knocking so loudly that he felt a little embarrassed when the Good King opened the door and embraced him.

"I'm s-s-sorry" Reagan sobbed into the King's shoulder. "I know we meet in the mornings, but I just had to speak with you tonight."

"You can always come to me anytime day or night, son" the King replied, stroking the boy's head and humming something soft and familiar. "Now take a deep breath and tell me what is on your mind."

A few minutes later they sat leaning against the trunk of a large, steady tree a few feet from the castle. After rehashing the events of the day, Reagan sighed and asked, "So what do I do? There is one, most likely two enemy soldiers in my neighborhood, and I don't know how to bring them to you."

The King was silent for a moment, and then said, "I am glad you brought this to me this evening. I am aware of all of the enemy soldiers that live in my kingdom, and I am sorry to say there are many more than two."

"Well let's go get them, Sir!" said Reagan, who realized at that moment that he still didn't have his sword.

"Well," replied the King thoughtfully, "there have been times when I have done some house cleaning, but that is not how I usually handle things. Do you remember what I told you to do whenever you see an enemy soldier on your property?"

"Yes, Sir. Bring him to You immediately."

"That is correct, son. You are to bring to me the enemies that come to your house, but you cannot bring me the enemies that come to someone else's house. They have to bring their own enemies to me. Do you understand?"

"So Charlie and Sam have to bring Bill and Glen to You, and I can't help?"

"Oh, you are helping already. You are talking with me about the problem, and I can help *you* help your friends."

"Just tell me what to do, Sir." The look of sincerity and determination in Reagan's eyes warmed the King's heart as he reached over and rustled the boy's hair.

"This is what you do, son. Take the book I gave you, and read the marked passages to your friends. Remind them what is true and what they are to do with enemy soldiers."

"What if they still won't bring their enemies to You, King?"

"Then you see if you can get Charley and Sam to come have a talk with me. They haven't been available to talk the last few weeks when I've come by for a visit. That's the thing about the soldiers from the darklands... they are always trying to move people away from light."

Reagan thought about the dim kitchen in Charlie's home and the shadows under Sam's eyes, and he hoped with all of his heart that he would be able to talk some sense into his friends.

### **Discussion Guide:**

What does the Good King tell Reagan he can do to help his friends?

Have you ever known someone who was choosing sin over God and therefore moving toward the darkness and away from the light?

How can we be helpful in those situations?

Read and discuss the following verses:

Galatians 6:1

Romans 10:13-15

James 5:16

## Chapter 7

Several days later, Reagan forced his feet to take the path toward Charlie's house. He had busied himself as long as he could in his garden and with odd jobs around his home, but knew that he could no longer justify a delay. With the King's book in one hand and his sword in the other, he headed out. As he walked he whistled a little tune, not because he felt like whistling, but more because he thought he might trick himself into feeling lighthearted. In truth, Reagan was a wreck. What would he say when he arrived? What if Bill answered the door? What if Charlie wouldn't listen?

There were many what-ifs plaguing Reagan's mind, but they vanished immediately when rounding the corner he came face to face with Charlie's home... if you could call it that. The truth was, Reagan could hardly see Charlie's place through his state-of-the-art fence! The barbed-wire structure now completely surrounded the small house and was so tall that it leaned in at the top, completely enclosing the entire property. The severity of the situation emboldened Reagan, who was beginning to be concerned about Charlie's welfare.

Climbing carefully through a small opening in the barbed-wire, Reagan knocked steadily on the door. There was no answer at first, but he had resolved in that moment that he would not stop knocking until it opened.

"Go away!" shouted a gravelly voice that Reagan recognized as Bill's. "Charlie isn't feeling well, and he doesn't want visitors."

"Open this door, Bill. I'm not leaving until I speak with Charlie directly!"

"Reagan?" came a small, weak voice. "Is that you? Please... please help me." A small, white hand - Charlie's hand - pressed against the living room window. Feeling the urgency of the situation, Reagan swiftly kicked in the door and drew his sword before Bill could interfere. The light reflected off his ready sword forcing Bill to quickly back out of the room.

"I'll deal with you later!" Reagan yelled as he rushed into the dark living room and found Charlie in a heap on the floor. He was shackled, malnourished and whimpering.

"Charlie!" Reagan gasped. "I'm so sorry. I should have come sooner." Determined to make up for lost time, Reagan used his sword to cut the shackles, threw his weakened friend over his shoulder and walked as fast as he could up the hill to the King. It had been his intent to read passages from the book, but there would be other times for that. In this moment Reagan knew that what Charlie needed most was the Good King. And if Charlie was too weak to get there himself, then Reagan would carry him.

Sweating and trembling from exhaustion, Reagan reached the castle gates, and before he ever knocked the Good King came out to meet him.

“It’s Charlie,” Reagan choked. “He needs you. I don’t know if he *knows* he needs You or not, but here he is. Please do something.” With that, Reagan laid the boy at the King’s feet and shuffled back down the hill to his home. Spent and broken, he crawled into bed. The open window welcomed a warm breeze that slowly calmed his nerves and steadied his breathing. Just before he drifted off to sleep, he was almost sure he heard the faint, never-too-far-off voice of the King. He was singing.

### **Discussion Guide:**

Why was Reagan surprised when he saw Charlie’s house?

What did Reagan use to get rid of Bill and free Charlie from his shackles?

Read Mark 2:1-5

Does Mark’s gospel account remind you of anything from Chapter 7? Discuss any similarities.

I wonder what the Good King was singing? What do you think?

## Chapter 8

"...and he just limped off. If I had known it would be that easy to get rid of him I would have sent him packing a long time ago." Reagan pulled another piece of Charlie's barbed-wire fence down and threw it into the dumpster. After spending a few weeks at the castle with the Good King, Charlie was much stronger and able to return home to drive out Bill with his newly sharpened sword. Reagan had been coming over on the weekends and helping Charlie tear down the dark fortress surrounding his property. It was slow going, but they were seeing the fruits of their labor.

"The problem is," Charlie continued, "Bill keeps trying to come back. I've caught him out here a few nights trying to patch up the places we've torn down."

"What did you do?" Reagan asked.

"You mean after I hid under my bed?" Charlie laughed. "My first instinct was to hide, but the thought of being a prisoner in my own home again finally drove me to run out back in my pajamas waving my sword and shouting loud enough to wake the neighbors!"

Reagan chuckled. "Did Bill take off?"

"After I stuck him pretty good in his leg. He looked really surprised. Said he didn't think I had it in me, and then hobbled off."

Reagan raised his eyebrows and whistled. "Whoa. That's pretty intense."

"Yep." Charlie pried another piece loose and tossed it in the pile. "He hasn't come around as much since that incident. And when he does, he scares off easier."

The two friends put in a full day of work, and then, feeling ready for a hot meal and a long bath, Reagan headed home. He'd had a melody stuck in his head all day, and while he strolled along the path he tried fitting a few words to the tune. It was a song that felt good to sing, and he felt renewed strength coming to his limbs as he marched along. He wasn't too far from his block when he saw dark smoke rising from a home nearby. Reagan ran toward the smoke hoping he could be of assistance. As he approached, the smoke cleared for a moment and Reagan stopped dead in his tracks.

"What on earth?" he mumbled. The scene that played out before him was so confusing that he honestly stood frozen in place trying to make sense of the situation and how he should respond. This is what he saw: Sam was sitting in the shade of his front porch with ropes tied around his body. It looked like someone had bound him in order to restrain him, but, to Reagan's confusion, Sam was laughing. Well, his mouth was laughing, but his eyes weren't. All around his house there were enemy soldiers sitting around camp fires. There must have been at least twenty. Glen, his house mate, seemed to be in charge. Maybe these were his friends. All Reagan knew is that the multiple fires were filling the air with thick, choking smoke. Reagan

took in the scene, checked to be sure he had his sword, and slowly walked through the haze to approach Sam.

Glen was the first to notice his arrival. "Hey Reagan, did you come to join the party?" Glen swung his arm around Reagan's shoulder as if they were old friends and offered him something dark to drink.

"Um, no" said Reagan, removing Glen's arm. "I'm just here to talk with Sam."

At the mention of his name, Sam stood up and turned angry eyes toward Reagan. "What are you doing here, jerk?" Sam spat.

Confused, Reagan continued forward. "I saw the smoke, and I came to make sure you were alright." Reagan's mind flashed back to Charlie's white hand pressed against the window, begging for help, and he instantly felt that Sam's situation was equally as dire.

Well I'm fine, so get out of here!" Sam shouted.

The hostile tone in Sam's voice brought a halt to the festivities, and suddenly Reagan noticed that all of Glen's friends were slowly moving toward him - surrounding him. Glen's eyes looked very dark, and he wore a little smirk on his face. "Looks like Sam doesn't need any more friends," he snarled. "He's got plenty right here."

"Sam?" Reagan asked questioningly. He was reaching to untie Sam's ropes when - splat! Sam spat in his face! Reagan's surprise was so great that he didn't even feel angry at first. The next thing he knew, the entire group was spitting on him and throwing small rocks and sticks and kicking up dirt.

Reagan covered his face and stumbled away as fast as he could. What had just happened? He didn't get too far before he collapsed - overcome by the smoke inhalation, the surprise, and the anger that was quickly rising up in him.

"That was not cool what they did to you back there." Reagan heard the voice but his eyes were still blurry from the smoke.

"Who said that?" he gasped.

"Over here. Easy now. I come in peace." Now Reagan could see that the figure slowly coming toward him, hands lifted in surrender, was that of an enemy soldier. Not only that, it was one of the soldiers from Sam's house.

Reagan drew his sword, adrenaline pumping through his every vein. "I don't think you want to mess with me right now." Reagan fumed. "I'm in the mood to cut someone's head off."

"Hey, I'm on your side" the enemy pleaded. "I saw what they did to you back there, how your friend turned on you when you were just trying to help and I said to myself, 'Damien, any group

of folks as fickle as that is no group for you.' Plus, you've got a nasty cut on your shoulder and I thought you might need some help."

Reagan glanced down at his left shoulder, and to his surprise found that his shirt was torn, and there was a small red stain leaking through the fabric. It must have been from one of those sticks, Reagan guessed. The cut didn't look too deep, but Damien was right – what kind of friend would attack you for no reason? He felt his righteous anger bubbling to the surface again.

"Let me take a look at that," said Damien, stepping closer.

Sighing deeply, Reagan sat down on a large rock and surrendered his arm to the stranger.

"I'll just put a special ointment on this, and it should be good as new in the morning."

Ten minutes later, wound bandaged, Reagan extended his right hand to the soldier.

"I'm most obliged, Damien. It's been a strange night - a friend became an enemy and an enemy became a...well, sort of a friend." Reagan shook his head in disbelief and started to walk away.

"Speaking of us becoming friends," Damien added hastily, "Do you think I could stay at your place tonight? I don't want to go back to that crazy bunch, and it's getting too late to travel home. Just for tonight, I promise."

Reagan felt conflicted. The Good King had been clear about not letting any enemy soldiers onto his property, but this felt different. Damien was defending him, helping him. This enemy was on his side, and right now he felt like he could use an ally.

"All right," said Reagan finally. "But you can't come in my house. You'll have to sleep on the porch."

"Sounds fair enough," said Damien amicably as he grabbed his knapsack and followed Reagan down the short path to his home.

### **Discussion Guide:**

What is Reagan helping Charlie with on the weekends?

Based on Charlie's remarks, do you think Bill is gone for good?

What was causing all the smoke around Sam's house?

Was Sam happy to see Reagan? I wonder why not?

What do you think about Reagan letting Damien sleep on his porch? Do you think this will please the Good King?

Read Matthew 7:15 and discuss.

## Chapter 9

The next morning Reagan woke with a start. Checking his clock, he saw that he had overslept and missed his daily meeting with the King. It still seemed so dark inside his room. Maybe the clock was wrong. Reagan sat up quickly and felt a sharp pain in his shoulder. "Oww!" he cried. All at once the events of the previous night came back to him. Peeling back the bandage, he was surprised to find the wound had grown. It was red and itchy and Reagan felt certain it was infected. "What did Damien do to this last night?" he wondered. Speaking of Damien, where was that guy?

A quick search found the soldier asleep on the front porch. Damien had assembled a makeshift tent, which was blocking the light from coming in the window. Hmm... that must be why he had overslept. Oh well, the thought of trying to explain Damien's presence to the Good King didn't really appeal to him anyway. Maybe it was best that he had missed their meeting this morning.

A few minutes later Damien knocked on the front door. "Breakfast ready?" he asked with a sheepish grin. "And hey, let me take a look at that wound. Did it heal up any overnight?"

Distracted by the wound on his shoulder, Reagan moved aside and let Damien walk into his home.

"It actually seems like it got worse. What type of ointment did you use?"

"Oh, don't you worry about that," said Damien, opening his knapsack. "I'll have you right as rain in no time."

Reagan sat on the kitchen chair and opened the King's book. While Damien inspected his arm, he tried to review a few passages, but with the tent blocking his window, there was hardly enough light to read.

"After breakfast I think you should be on your way," Reagan said with as much authority as he could muster.

"I still can't believe how rude Sam was to you last night," Damien reminisced. "And spitting in your face is even worse than throwing sticks if you ask me, although those sticks sure left a mark, didn't they?"

Damien was right. He had a score to settle with Sam. He didn't have time to read; he should be thinking about a way to get revenge. The more he thought about it, the angrier he became. He was just about ready to burst when his thoughts were interrupted by a knock on the door.

"Who is it?" Reagan growled, his irritation spilling out on whoever had the misfortune of coming to his door this morning.

"It's Charlie," came the nervous reply.

"Oh," Reagan sighed. "Come in, I guess."

Charlie opened the door a crack and hesitantly peered inside. "I don't mean to intrude, but when I spoke with the Good King this morning he suggested that I might want to come by and meet your visitor. Who is your new friend, Reagan?"

"He's not my friend," Reagan huffed. "It's no big deal. Damien just stayed with me last night after I got into some trouble with Sam. I got a little beat up, and Damien is helping me out. It's a long story."

"I see," said Charlie, eyeing the imposter in the dark clothing. "Well, Damien, thanks for helping out my friend, but you can be on your way now. I'll take care of things from here."

"Isn't that rich?" replied Damien in a mocking tone. "Your friend, who was so sick and weak that you had to carry him from his own home, is playing the hero."

Reagan shifted uncomfortably.

"How did you know about that?" said Charlie, who had turned a bright crimson.

"Everybody knows." And with that, Damien shut the door in Charlie's humiliated face.

"You didn't have to be so hard on him, said Reagan, rising from the table. He's my friend, and..."

"And we know how well your friends treat you, don't we?" snarled Damien. "We saw a nice display of that last night."

Reagan sighed. Maybe Damien was right. Maybe Damien was the best friend he had right now. He was just about to say so, when he heard Charlie singing something light and familiar. What was that song?

Damien stood, "I'll tell him to shut up."

"No, wait! I know that song, I think." Reagan listened and slowly the melody came back to him. It was the same tune they had whistled while tearing down Charlie's fence.

What happened next, Reagan never could explain. All at once he remembered how free and strong and joyful he had felt that day, and suddenly he wanted *that* more than he wanted to be right - more than he wanted vindication. The memory of that day lifted the fog he was in just long enough for him to draw his sword. And just as quickly as Damien came into his life, Damien was gone.

Charlie knew Reagan would want some time to himself, so after making sure Damien left the premises, he turned toward home.

"Thank you." It wasn't more than a whisper.

Charley turned and saw Reagan. His body looked dejected - humbled. His eyes held an apology, and Charlie's eyes held forgiveness and the deep understanding that comes from having been on the other end of the exchange.

There would be time for words later, but for now, 'thank you' was enough.

### **Discussion Guide:**

Why did Reagan miss his meeting with the Good King?

How did Damien gain entry into Reagan's home?

Why do you think Reagan's wound became infected?

What "lifted the fog" and helped Reagan to draw his sword?

Have you noticed that a melody or song is weaving through this story? I wonder what it is or what it means? What do you think?

## Chapter 10

The next morning, Reagan sat shivering on his front porch, much like a child sitting outside the principal's office. He knew he had messed up, and he was ready to face the consequences, but he was nervous all the same. He had no defense. He had gone over the scenario again and again, and no matter how he tried to spin it, the simple truth was that Reagan had disobeyed the King's command.

When the good King arrived, he surprised Reagan by sweeping him up into a huge bear hug.

"Oww!" Reagan blurted, unable to stifle the amount of pain his now feverish arm was causing him.

"Hmm, I see Damien has been at work here. Let me take a look."

The Good King carefully unwrapped Reagan's bandages, revealing his now raw hurt. Seeing the severity of the wound, the King paused and looked into Reagan's eyes.

"I'm so sorry you were wounded, son. And I am sorry you tried to treat your wound with bad medicine."

There was not condemnation in his eyes, only sadness.

Reagan lowered his own eyes, ashamed. "I'm sorry too," he managed to whisper. "I know I messed up. Can you find it in your heart to forgive me?"

The Good King touched Reagan's chin, and tipped his face up.

"Always."

With that, the King ripped off a piece of his white robe and wrapped it around Reagan's bleeding arm.

"I am the good medicine, son. Next time, come to me first."

"I will," Reagan replied. And he meant it.

### Discussion Guide:

Why was Reagan nervous to see the Good King?

How does the Good King bandage Reagan's wound?

Where can Reagan (and you and I) find good medicine?

According to Isaiah 53:5 how are we healed?

## Chapter 11

"A parade?" Reagan smiled as he looked at the strange invitation he had just received in the mail. The festive post card was from the Good King inviting Reagan and many of his friends to participate in a parade later that afternoon. They were to report to the castle for further instructions, and there was a feeling of anticipation and excitement in the air.

When the hour finally arrived Reagan climbed the hill, dressed in his best clothes and ready to participate in this joyous occasion. The castle grounds were abuzz with excitement. What a gathering! Charlie was there, of course, but also other friends and neighbors that Reagan hadn't spoken with in a while. The sun shone brightly, and the breeze was cool, and it was a wonderful time of laughing and catching up.

A roar of applause erupted from the crowd when the Good King emerged from the castle. He welcomed them with open arms and addressed the multitude with gladness.

"Children, I'm so glad you could join me today for this joyous celebration! I am so pleased with the way you are obeying my commands and flourishing in my Kingdom of light, and today we will march through the town and invite others to join us in our joy!"

At this, there were many shouts of "Hurrah!" and "Long live the King!" Someone even released brightly colored balloons into the sky.

"While we march through the streets, we will sing the song of victory that you have been working on these last few months."

What? What song? All of a sudden Reagan felt faint. The King had been counting on him to participate in this event, and Reagan was unprepared. Oh no! His palms began to sweat, and he looked around to see if anyone else was nervous.

"This is a song of victory," the King continued, "so sing with strength and joy and thanksgiving!" The Good King signaled to the band, and all at once the air was filled with the sweetest sounds Reagan had ever heard! The melody burned in his heart and made him want to march and smile and sing! And then, somehow, he *was* singing! He *did* know this song! For this was the very same song he had been humming and whistling and singing since moving to this Kingdom. He had not known it all at once; it had grown in him, or rather, grown with him. And now, he sang it out with all of his might, surrounded by brothers and sisters who had also grown into this song, and the sound was glorious!

Reagan smiled at Charlie as they sang and marched through the streets of their town. There was so much joy in the singing that people couldn't help but lean out their windows or stand in their doorways and listen! Reagan noted that even Sam looked longingly toward the procession as it passed his front porch.

While marching through a heavily shaded street, a little girl, who was not much higher than Reagan's knee, tugged on his pant leg.

"Hey, Mister, what's that song you're singing? It makes me want to dance!" As if to prove her point, the little girl did a pirouette and several small leaps in the air.

"It's something I just learned," Reagan replied. "Why don't you come walk with us for a while and I'll teach you how to sing it?"

The little girl hopped up and down with glee. "I'll bring my mommy too! Wait right here!" And with a bright smile, she disappeared into her house.

Reagan continued to sing the new tune, and soon his feet started shuffling in time with the beat. The child was right, he thought. This song was just right for dancing!

When the girl and her mother came out, they all joined the procession of joy. Reagan knew that not all days would be this beautiful. There would be battles and hard-fought obedience to come. But as long as he lived, he would carry this song in his soul... this song that told the story of his victories... this song that told the greatness of His King. Just before turning the corner, Reagan cast a quick glance over his shoulder and found the Good King watching him. Reagan waved.

The King smiled, and the radiant sun lit up the sky.

### **Discussion Guide:**

What type of invitation did Reagan receive in the mail? Who else was invited?

What caused Reagan to panic?

Do you think this "Song of Victory" is the same song/melody that has been mentioned throughout the book? Why do you think it is called a "Song of Victory"? (see Romans 8:37)

Reagan says this song had "grown in him, or rather, grown with him." What do you think that means?

Do you know this song? Could you teach someone else how to sing it too?