

EXCERPT



Persevering Power
Encouragement for When You're Oppressed by Life

November 28, 2023 | \$18, 192 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0847-8

Bruce Strom (JD, University of Illinois) is the founder and CEO of Administer Justice, a national legal aid ministry, where he invites attorneys, pastors, and God's people to do practical justice in their community through church-based gospel justice centers. He is a pastor, a speaker, and the author of *Gospel Justice*. Prior to Administer Justice, he was the senior partner of a successful multi-office law practice in the Chicago suburbs.

Get Perspective

Sometimes God allows a storm of circumstances to correct us. He did that a lot with the people of Israel. Sometimes God allows a storm of circumstances to teach us to rely on him more fully. And sometimes the storm of circumstances happens for reasons known only to God. For me, they were a lesson in humility. I liked relying on a bank account. I liked telling people I was the senior partner of a successful law practice. My identity was rooted more in my career than in Christ. And I believed my work was mine and separate from my wife. I forgot that all I had was a gift from God, especially my wife.

I thought I could negotiate with God. I had a nice ministry called Administer Justice, which I started on the side. I gave more than a tenth of my money to important Christian causes. I led a small group and taught the Bible. And even though I'd written good stewardship resources for the church, I was not practicing good stewardship in my own life—I had not fully surrendered myself to God. I wanted control of my life and to share only parts of it with God. But God wanted all of me.

Maybe that is your circumstance. Maybe the challenges you are facing are God's way of saying, *Stop trusting in yourself. Trust me.* Maybe he wants you to close that business or end that relationship. Maybe he wants you to involve your spouse or significant other in your life more. Perhaps he wants to move you out of your comfort zone so you trust him more. He often asks us to do hard things if we are to listen and not lean on our own understanding.

God asked me to close the law practice. He didn't want part of me. He wanted all of me. My storm of circumstances was sent so I would look up. I was trusting in my job, money, and abilities, but God wanted me to trust him. I shut down my law practice, sold everything, and went to Administer Justice full-time.

And that is how I found myself all alone in a little office shaking my fist at God. I spent two years looking down. All I could see was the unfair circumstances at work. I'd done nothing to deserve the chaos and confusion. Like Job, I felt righteous in my response. But also like Job, I could not see the bigger picture. I lacked faith. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1 ESV).

My friend Dr. Tony Evans says, "If all you see is what you see, then you do not see all there is to be seen." Think about that. Your perspective is limited. You do not see all there is to be seen, but God does. All I could see was that Administer Justice only had two thousand dollars in the bank account and my wife was not working as she stayed home to raise our sons. I was looking down at my circumstances. When I finally looked up it was to shake my fist at God. But when I looked up, he answered. And that wrecked me. Looking up usually does.

I left my law practice in grudging obedience to God's call. I had no joy. I was angry. Everyone thought I was crazy, and so did I. All alone in a little eight-by-ten-foot office, I looked up and shook my fist at God. "What am I doing here?"

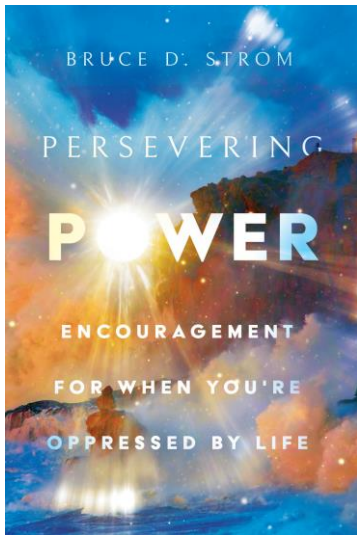


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God responded: "My will. For whatever you do for one of the least of these, you do unto me."

That was the true breaking point of my life. I had to stop seeking the approval of people. I needed to stop chasing the things of this world. I needed perspective. I was bigger in my own eyes than God wanted. I had to become less so he could become more. I had to recognize my life was not my own, and I needed to focus less on me and more on God and others.

How about you? Is your identity tied to what you do or who you are with? Do you describe yourself by a role or do you describe yourself as a child of God? Perspective matters.

-Taken from chapter 1, "Get Perspective"

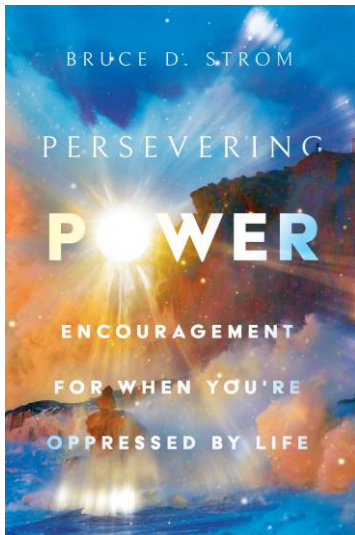


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ENDORSEMENTS



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How can we carry on when we are weary and overwhelmed by the unjust world around us? God is a God of justice who cares for people in distress. By looking to God's perspective, Bruce Strom shows how we can find direction for what God has in store for us. If you're running on empty, discover how God's persevering power can renew your soul.

Look Up. Look Back. Look In. Look Around.

"If you're feeling down and out, I want you to look up and remember that there is always hope. And if you need some guidance on how to persevere through life's challenges, I recommend my friend Bruce Strom's *Persevering Power*. Let this book be your guide to a life that is less of you, more of Jesus, and abundantly better than what you had planned."

Tony Evans, president of The Urban Alternative and senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship

"I learned the hard lessons of poverty and brokenness from an early age, growing up in Mississippi. I knew that I had dignity, but I also learned that there were systems in place that denied my dignity. I was invisible . . . voiceless . . . without resources. These are the people that my friend Bruce Strom and Administer Justice serve. *Persevering Power* shares Bruce's journey of self-sacrifice and service to the least of these. His call to look up, look back, look in, and look around is an invitation to everyone to join in this battle for justice. It's a fight worth living and dying for."

John M. Perkins, founder and president emeritus of the John and Vera Mae Perkins Foundation and cofounder of the Christian Community Development Association

"A career of thirty or forty years is a very long time. And every career has its ups and downs, setbacks and dry spells, challenges and crises. Yet God wants leaders who will persevere in their service to him over the long haul. Bruce Strom's new book, *Persevering Power*, offers us a kind of leadership life jacket—with the spiritual principles that will keep us afloat during life's inevitable storms and make us more productive for God even when the going gets tough."

Richard Stearns, president emeritus of World Vision US and author of *Lead Like It Matters to God*

"As Bruce Strom shares in the book, justice reflects the character of God. In other words, justice is essential to our discipleship and worship. But if we're not wise, our focus can become misaligned. We lose our sense of purpose and joy, and we may end up worshiping justice, rather than a just God. This is why this book spoke so vulnerably and intimately to me—and I believe it will speak to you."

Eugene Cho, president of Bread for the World and author of *Thou Shalt Not Be a Jerk*, from the foreword

"*Persevering Power* is a practical, faith-filled guide to trusting, submitting, and following Christ where he is leading you. Bruce Strom's stories throughout the book are relevant and inspiring. His theological insights on the kingdom of God, the justice of God, and the persevering power of prayer are a rich resource for anyone wanting to pursue a life of peacemaking."

Michelle Ferrigno Warren, author of *Join the Resistance* and *The Power of Proximity*

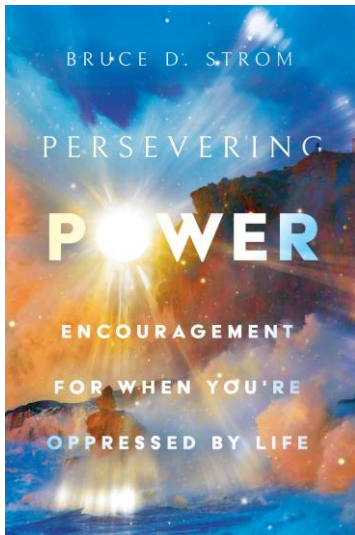


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Q & A



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An Interview with Bruce Strom

Why did you write *Persevering Power*?

Bruce Strom: Life is hard. As I watched people struggle against injustice and grow weary, I wanted to share lessons the Lord has taught me over several decades of justice work that allow us to run and not grow weary if we are rooted in God's persevering power. I also wanted to help those trapped in unjust circumstances understand they can find joy apart from their circumstances.

What is distinctive about this book?

Bruce: *Persevering Power* recognizes the challenges that come from a noisy world full of injustice. Sometimes the brokenness of our world can feel overwhelming. In response, we can explode in doing good work that only leads to exhaustion or we can implode by withdrawing from the world and wanting nothing to do with it. There is a better way. This book demonstrates this better way by examining the importance of a balanced life in pursuing the good work of the Kingdom and in navigating challenging circumstances. *Persevering Power* provides a unique four-key grid, along with eight principles, that is easy to remember and apply. The grid is helpful in demonstrating balance and also in highlighting what happens when we lean out of balance. *Persevering Power* is designed for small group study with questions and applications at the end of each chapter. No one should face injustice alone and no one does justice alone. Discover persevering power in a community.

What do you want readers to take away from *Persevering Power*?

Bruce:

- Look up: Life is about perspective and understanding your purpose.
- Look back: Allow the past to be your teacher, not your master, and learn the importance of remembrance and praise.
- Look in: Pride destroys persevering power while inner peace makes persevering possible.
- Look around: Trust God for provision and people for help. Life is not about you; it is about how God can use you in the loving service of others.
- Live balanced. The heart of justice is the cross of Jesus. Pick up that cross daily, die to yourself, and live for others in the joy that comes from Persevering Power.



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