

The background of the cover is a photograph of a stone archway. A set of stone steps leads from the bottom of the frame up through the archway into a lush, green forest. The forest is misty, and a bright, golden light emanates from the end of the path, creating a strong lens flare effect. The overall mood is ethereal and hopeful.

THE LAST STEP & THE LAST SWING

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Legacy of Champions

Written by
Elder Keith Joel Walker



Introduction

Life is a series of steps, each leading us closer to our purpose. Today, we reflect on the last steps taken by champions—both in the Bible and in our lives—who left a legacy of faith, resilience, and determination. Hebrews 12:1-2 (KJV) – “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...”



I. The Last Steps of Old Testament Champions

1. Moses: The Final Step to the Promised Land

- Context: Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt but was not allowed to enter the Promised Land.
- Last Step: Climbing Mount Nebo to view the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 34:1-4).
- Legacy: A life of obedience and leadership, reminding us that our journey may not always lead to the destination we envision, but faithfulness to God's calling is paramount.

2. Joshua: The Last Step into Battle

- Context: After Moses' death, Joshua led Israel into the Promised Land.
- Last Step: Stepping into the battle at Jericho (Joshua 6).
- Legacy: Courage and faith in God's promises, demonstrating that victory comes through obedience and trust in the Lord.

3. David: The Last Step to the Battlefield

- Context: David, the shepherd boy, became a king and faced Goliath.
- Last Step: Approaching Goliath with faith (1 Samuel 17:45-47).
- Legacy: A heart after God, showing that true strength comes from reliance on God, not physical prowess.

4. Gideon: The Last Step of Faith

- Context: Gideon was called to deliver Israel from Midianite oppression.
- Last Step: Leading his small army into battle with torches and trumpets (Judges 7).
- Legacy: Trusting God's unconventional methods, reminding us that God equips us for victory, even when the odds seem impossible.

5. Esther: The Last Step into the King's Presence

- Context: Esther risked her life to save her people.

of faith. It's a moment of vulnerability and courage, where one faces the challenges ahead.

- **Poetic Meaning:** Just as a batter stands in the box, ready to face the pitcher, we too must prepare ourselves to face life's challenges with faith. Each swing represents our attempts to hit the mark and fulfill our God-given purpose.
- **Legacy:** Overcoming adversity and racism, inspiring future generations to pursue their dreams.

2. Mariano Rivera: The Last Walk to the Mound

- **Context:** The all-time saves leader in Major League Baseball.
- **Last Step:** Walking to the mound for his final game, receiving an emotional farewell.
- **Legacy:** Excellence and humility, reminding us that our character is as important as our achievements.

3. Robert Norman: The Last Step to the Pulpit

- **Context:** A dedicated pastor who preached for over 60 years.
- **Last Step:** Walking to the pulpit at 90 years old for his final sermon.
- **Legacy:** Faithfulness in ministry, emphasizing the importance of lifelong dedication to God's calling.

4. Nona Freeman: The Last Messages from a Wheelchair

- **Context:** A missionary known for her unwavering

spirit.

- Last Step: Preaching from a wheelchair, inspiring others with her faith.
- Legacy: Demonstrating that our circumstances do not define our ability to serve God.

III.

Personal Anecdote: *A Legacy of Champions*



Kurt Walker: *A Champion's Journey*

My oldest brother, Kurt Walker, played professional baseball for the Angels, White Sox, and Twins. He was a champion in every sense. I remember a Thanksgiving day when he broke his elbow during a game of street football at my Great Italian grandmother's house. It looked like his baseball career was over. My great grandmother, Rose V. Mancini, prayed for seven hours straight that Jesus would heal his arm. After surgery, it seemed like he might never pitch again, but with the help of my Papa Mancini's invention and relentless determination, he returned to the mound, throwing harder than ever.

Kurt's journey was filled with dedication; he had

a pitching coach from age eight until he played at Fresno State University. His coach, Eddie Wilder, who played with Ty Cobb, honored him throughout his career. I watched my brother walk to the pulpit and give his testimony of repentance, baptism in Jesus' name, and being filled with the Holy Ghost. He gave Jesus all the glory for his achievements.

Kurt's Last Walk to the Mound

I wonder how he felt as he faced the plate and threw his last pitch at Major League Angels camp. When he walked off the mound that day and hung up his cleats, it must have been a mix of pride, nostalgia, and perhaps a touch of sadness. That moment marked the end of a chapter filled with dreams, hard work, and countless memories. It was a final step that encapsulated the journey of a champion.



Uncle Robbie Mancini: *A Martial Arts Legacy*

My Uncle Robbie Mancini has dedicated nearly 50 years to martial arts, earning several black belts across various styles. He trained under Mr. Natividad, whose lineage traces back to legends like Bruce Lee

and Chuck Norris. For 45 years, Uncle Robbie was mentored and disciplined under Mr. Natividad, and he now runs the studio in Las Vegas where he has taught martial arts for over 45 years, every single day without fail.

He has trained countless students, from children to adults, and has produced several higher-ranking black belts, including his own children, Franky, Sarah, and Giani Mancini, who are all 4th-degree black belts. Uncle Robbie is a humble and kind man, known for his discipline and dedication. At 65 years old, he still works out daily and teaches martial arts without fail.

The Coming Day

I wonder what it will be like when Uncle Robbie makes his last walk into the dojo. His last step to the mat, his last kick, his last punch, and his last lesson will mark the end of an era. However, the legacy of what he has taught will live on through the thousands of students he has trained. He has been a gentleman and a kind, giving man, embodying true self-control and discipline. I've had the privilege of watching him train firsthand, and I've seen him baptized in the Holy Ghost, speaking in tongues. His commitment to both martial arts and his faith makes him a true champion.

IV.

Reflection and Application

- **Connecting the Dots:** Just as the champions of the Old Testament took their last steps with courage and faith, so to do modern champions inspire us with their legacies.
- **Personal Application:** I encourage you to reflect on your own “last steps.” What legacy are you building? How can you step forward in faith in your own life?
- **Call to Action:** I challenge you to take your own steps of faith, whether in your personal life, career, or ministry. This is a reminder that every step counts in your journey of faith.



Conclusion

As we consider the last steps of these champions, let us remember that each step we take is significant in the eyes of God. We are part of a greater narrative—a legacy that transcends time. 2 Timothy 4:7-8 (KJV) – “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day...”

When that final moment arrives, may it echo with love, faith, and determination, inspiring future generations to continue the journey of resilience, greatness, and unwavering commitment to their calling. Each last step is a testament to a life well-lived, a legacy that transcends time, and a call to action for all who remain.

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Read and Obey Acts 2:38

