

"In the beginning
was the Word,
and the Word was
with God, and the
Word was God."
—John 1:1

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“GOD’S POWER IN OUR WEAKNESS”

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Introduction:

God loves to use weak people. “I am with you; that is all you need. My power shows up best in the weak people.” (2 Corinthians 12:9a).

Everyone has weaknesses. We have flaws and imperfections: physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. We have also uncontrollable circumstances that weaken us. It is important how we react to these imperfections and circumstances. Usually, we deny our weaknesses. We excuse them, defend them, hide them, and resent them. Our actions prevent God from using them the way He desires. Let us realize that God has different perspective on our weakness. “My thoughts are not your thoughts and my ways are not your ways.” (Isaiah 55:9).

God often acts in ways that are the exact opposite of what we expect. We think that God only wants to use our strength, but He also wants to use our weakness for His glory. “God purposely chose... what the world considers weak in order to shame the powerful.” (1 Corinthians 1:27).

Our weaknesses are not accidents. God deliberately allows them in our life for the purpose of demonstrating His power

through us. God has never been impressed with strength and self-sufficiency. He is drawn to people who are weak and admit they are weak. Jesus regarded this recognition of our need as being “poor in spirit”.

The Bible is filled with examples of how God loves to use imperfect, ordinary people to do extraordinary things in spite of their weakness. That God uses imperfect people is encouraging news for us.

A weakness or “thorn” as St. Paul called it (2 Corinthians 12:7) is not a sin or a vice or a character defect that we can change like over-eating and impatience. A weakness is any limitation that we inherited and that we have no power to change. It may be physical limitation like chronic illness, emotional limitation like trauma and hurt memory, and intellectual limitation.

When we think of limitations in our life we may be tempted to conclude, “God could never use me.” Let us remember that God is never limited by our limitations. In fact, He enjoys putting His great power into ordinary “containers”. “We are like clay jars in which this treasure is stored. The real power comes from God and not from us.” (2 Corinthians 4:7). Like common pottery, we are fragile and flawed. We break easily. God will use us if we allow

Him to work through our weaknesses.
Let us imitate St. Paul.

How To Be Blessed With God's Power In Our Weakness

Admit Your Weaknesses

Admit and own up to your imperfections. Stop pretending and be honest about yourself. Instead of denying and making excuses, take the time to identify your personal weaknesses.

Two great confessions in the New Testament illustrate what we need for healthy living. The first is that of Peter who said to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16). The second confession is from Paul, who said to an idolizing crowd, "We are only human beings like you." (Acts 14:15). If you want God to use you, you must know who God is and know who you are. Many Christians, especially the leaders, forget the second truth: we are only human! If it takes a crisis to get you to admit your weaknesses, God would not hesitate to allow it because He loves you.

Be Content With Your Weaknesses

Paul wrote, "I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may work through me. Since I know it is all for Christ's good, I am quite content with my weaknesses." (2 Corinthians 12:9-10a).

These verses seem not to make sense. We want to be freed from our weaknesses - not be content with them! But contentment is an expression of faith in the goodness of God. "God, I believe you love me and know what's best for me."

Paul gives us many reasons to be content with our inborn weaknesses.

First they cause us to depend on God. Referring to his own weakness, which God refused to take away, Paul wrote, "I am quite happy about 'the thorn,'... for when I am weak, then I am strong - the less I have, the more I depend on him." (2 Corinthians 12:10). Whenever we feel weak, God is reminding us to depend on Him.

Second, our weaknesses also prevent arrogance. They keep us humble. "So I wouldn't get a big head, I was given the gift of a handicap to keep me in constant touch with my limitations." (2 Corinthians 12:7). God often attaches a major weakness to a major strength to keep in check our egos.

Third, our limitation can act as a governor to keep us from going too fast and running ahead of God. When Gideon recruited an army of 32,000 to fight the Midianites, God whittled it down to just 300, making the odds 450 to 1 as they went out to fight 135,000 enemy troops. God's instructions appeared to be a recipe for disaster, but He did it so Israel would know it was God's power, not their own strength, that saved them.

Fourth, our weaknesses also encourage fellowship among us, believers. While strength breeds an independent spirit ("I don't need anyone else"), our limitations confirm how much we need each other. When we weave the weak strands of our lives together, a rope of great strength is created.

Fifth and most of all, our weaknesses increase our capacity for sympathy and ministry. We are more likely to be compassionate and considerate of the weaknesses of others. God wants us to have a Christ-like ministry on earth.

Other people are going to find healing in our wounds. Our greatest life messages and our most effective ministry will come out of our deepest hurts. The things we are most embarrassed about, most ashamed of, and most reluctant to share are the very tools God can use most powerfully to heal others.

The great missionary Hudson Taylor said, "All of God's giants were weak people." Moses' weakness was his temper. It caused him to murder an Egyptian, strike the rock he was supposed to speak to, and break the tablets of the Ten Commandments. Yet God transformed Moses into "the humblest man on earth." (Numbers 12:3). Gideon's weakness was low self-esteem and deep insecurities, but God transformed him into a "mighty man of valor". (Judges 6:12). Abraham's weakness was fear. Not once, but twice, he claimed his wife was his sister in order to protect himself. God transformed Abraham into "the father of those who have faith." (Romans 4:11). Impulsive, weak-willed Peter became "a rock", (Matthew 16:18). The adulterer David became "a man after my own heart," (Acts 13:22) and John, one of the arrogant "Sons of Thunder," became the "Apostle of Love." Barak, Samson, Jephthah, Samuel, and all the prophets... their weaknesses were turned to strength." (Hebrews 11:32-34).

God specializes in turning weaknesses into strength. He wants to take our greatest weakness and to transform it.

Honestly Share Your Weaknesses

Ministry begins with vulnerability. The more you let down your guard, take off your mask, and share your struggles, the more God will be able to use you in serving others.

Paul modeled vulnerability in all his letters. He openly shared his failures,

feelings, frustrations, and fears: "When I want to do good, I don't, and when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway." (Romans 7:19). "I have told you all my feelings." (2 Corinthians 6:11). "We were crushed and completely overwhelmed, and we thought we would never live through it." (2 Corinthians 1:8). "When I came to you, I was weak and fearful and trembling." (1 Corinthians 2:3).

Vulnerability is risky. It can be scary to lower your defenses and open up your life to others. When you reveal your failures, feelings, frustrations, and fears, you risk rejection especially in the world we live in where the strong are admired. But the benefits are worth the risk.

Vulnerability is emotionally liberating. Opening up relieves stress, defuses fears, and is the first step to freedom. God "gives grace to the humble," but many misunderstand humility. Humility is not putting yourself down or denying your strengths; rather, it is being honest about your weaknesses. The more honest you are, the more of God's grace you get. You will also receive grace from others.

Vulnerability is an endearing quality; we are naturally drawn to humble people. Pretentiousness repels but authenticity attracts. Vulnerability is the pathway to intimacy. This is why God wants to use your weaknesses, not just your strengths. If all that people see are your strengths, they get discouraged and think, "Well, good for him, but I'll never be able to do that." But when they see God using you in spite of your weaknesses, they are encouraged to think, "Maybe God can use me!" Our strengths create competition, but our weaknesses create community.

At some point in your life you must decide whether you want to impress people or to influence people. You can

impress people from a distance, but you must get close to influence them, and when you do that, they will be able to see your flaws. That is okay.

The most essential quality for leadership is not perfection, but credibility. People must be able to trust you, or they would not follow you. How do you build credibility? Not by pretending to be perfect, but by being honest.

Glory in Your Weaknesses

Paul wrote, "I am going to boast only about how weak I am and how great God is to use weaknesses for his glory." (2 Corinthians 12:5b). Instead of posing as self-confident and invincible, see yourself as a trophy of grace. If Satan points out your weaknesses, agree with him and fill your heart with praise for Jesus who "understands every weakness of ours," (Hebrews 4:15) and for the Holy Spirit who "helps us in our weaknesses." (Romans 8:26a).

Sometimes, God turns strength into weakness in order to use you even more. Jacob was a manipulator who spent his life scheming and then running from the consequences. One night he wrestled with God and said, "I'm not letting you go until you bless me." God said, "All right," but then he grabbed Jacob's thigh and dislocated his hip.

What is the significance of this story? God touched Jacob's strength (the thigh muscle is the strongest in the body) and turned it into weakness. From that day forward, Jacob walked with a limp so he could never run away again. The limp forced him to lean on God whether he liked it or not. If you want God to bless you and use you greatly, you must be willing to walk with a limp the rest of your life. God uses weak people.

Conclusion:

Let us not limit God's power in our life by trying to hide our weaknesses.

Let us be blessed with God's power in our weaknesses by:

Admitting our weaknesses;

Being content with our weaknesses;

Honestly sharing our weaknesses; and

Humbly experiencing glory in our weaknesses.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness."
(2 Corinthians 12:9a)

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