

## Using Your Weaknesses

- **Luke 6:6-10 (KJV)** And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other.
- Every one of us has weaknesses. There are physical weaknesses, emotional weaknesses, relational weaknesses, financial weaknesses, intellectual weaknesses. There are things your body can't do. Some of us even have fashion weaknesses! We have all different kinds of weakness.
- The real issue is not, "Do I have weaknesses?" but "What am I going to do with my weaknesses?" What we normally do is deny them, defend them, excuse them, resent them and most of all hide them – we don't want anybody to see our weaknesses! Then God comes along and says, "You know what I want to do with your weaknesses? I want to USE them." That doesn't make sense to us; we think God only wants to use our strengths.
- **Isaiah 55:8-9 (LB)** This plan of mine is not what you would work out, neither are my thoughts the same as yours! For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than yours, and my thoughts than yours.
- God is smarter than you. The way you think He should work is often the exact opposite of the way He really works in life. He says, "I don't want to work around your weaknesses. I don't want to work in spite of your weaknesses. I want to work through your weaknesses!"
- **1 Corinthians 1:27 (TEV)** God purposely chose what the world considers nonsense in order to shame the wise, and he chose what the world considers weak in order to shame the powerful.
- God purposely works through weak people. Why? Because it shows His power! God is not impressed with strength, we are!

- **Zechariah 4:6b (KJV)** Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.
- That's good news, because most of us are not extraordinary people. We don't have bodies like the models. We don't have extraordinary intellect. We're just normal, ordinary, average people. God says "That's okay, because I don't choose to work through natural strength. I choose to work through natural weakness so that My power can shine through."
- When we talk about weakness we're not talking about sins or character flaws that you can change (like overeating, impatience, greed, laziness).
- Weakness is any limitation in my life that I inherited or cannot change. There are all kinds of limitations like that.
  - Physical defects you were born with
  - External circumstances you cannot control
  - Unexpected financial setbacks
  - Relationship pressures within your family
  - Emotional tendencies you are predisposed toward
  - Some talents are completely beyond your ability
- **2 Corinthians 4:7 (NCV)** We have this treasure from God, but we are like clay jars that hold the treasure. This shows that the great power is from God, not from us.
- The thing about clay pots is that they break easily, they are not indestructible. But more than that, every clay pot has inherited design flaws, it is imperfect. We are just ordinary containers, but we have a great God! Someone wrote a book entitled, "God Uses Cracked Pots." You're the kind of person God wants to use!

## HOW CAN I USE MY WEAKNESSES?

### 1. ADMIT MY WEAKNESSES

- The starting point is to stop pretending you've got it all together. Because you don't – nobody does! Stop hoping that your weaknesses will go away if you just ignore them. Stop making excuses or blaming others for your weaknesses. You've tried all that, and it hasn't worked. Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result! Just admit that you have weaknesses!

- Sometimes God has to bring something into our lives to get us to admit our weaknesses. That is called a crisis. A crisis is a weakness identifier. When you go through a crisis it says, "Here's the fault in my life, the failure, the lack, the weak spot." Don't wait for a crisis! It's far less painful to identify your weaknesses and admit them up front than having to go through crisis after crisis for God to get you to admit, "I'm not God. I don't have it all together."

## 2. BE GRATEFUL FOR MY WEAKNESSES

- "You've got to be kidding! I want to come to church and take a magic pill to get rid of all my weaknesses. I don't want you to tell me to be grateful for them – I want to be free from all of them."
- **2 Corinthians 12:8-9 (PHI)** Three times I begged the Lord for it to leave me, but his reply has been, "My grace is enough for you: for where there is weakness, my power is shown the more completely." Therefore, I have cheerfully made up my mind to be proud of my weaknesses, because they mean a deeper experience of the power of Christ.
- **2 Corinthians 12:8-9 (LB)** Three different times I begged God to make me well again. Each time he said, "No. But I am with you; that is all you need. My power shows up best in weak people." Now I am glad to boast about how weak I am; I am glad to be a living demonstration of Christ's power, instead of showing off my own power and abilities.
- Why in the world would anybody do that? Because there are many benefits; weaknesses are actually blessings in disguise!

### a) It guarantees God's help.

**GOD: 2 Corinthians 12:9a (LB)** But I am with you; that is all you need. My power shows up best in weak people.

**PAUL: 2 Corinthians 12:10b (LB)** For when I am weak, then I am strong – the less I have, the more I depend on him.

If you've prayed repeatedly for God to take something away and He hasn't, it's probably a weakness. He might be saying, "Why in the world would I take it away? If you could solve all your problems and meet all your needs, how much would you depend on Me?"

### b) It prevents arrogance.

**2 Corinthians 12:7 (NIV)** To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

What is a thorn? It is a weakness or a limitation I cannot change that causes me pain and apparently limits my ministry. Thorns are given by God so they're not sins. Some thorns are temporary, some are removed gradually, and some you have for a lifetime like Paul.

What does a thorn do? It causes me enough pain that I remain humble and dependent on God. If God is ever going to use you in a great way, expect a thorn!

### c) It causes me to value others.

One of the dangers of strength is that it breeds an independent spirit. If I don't have any weaknesses in my life, I tend to think, "I don't need anybody!" But God made us to value each other.

One of the biggest lies in our society is that significance is the same thing as prominence. We tend to think if you're well known then what you have to say is very important. But you can be a celebrity and be living a totally trivial life.

Your nose may be a very prominent feature of your body. But it's not very significant. You could lose your nose and live the rest of your life. It's prominent; it's not significant. On the other hand, there are some organs that are not seen at all, but you can't live without them.

**1 Corinthians 12:22 (LB)** And some of the parts that seem weakest and least important are really the most necessary.

You make a strong rope, not by making one solid cord, but by putting a lot of strands together. That's the value of unity, and the value of a church family.

**Ecclesiastes 4:12 (NLT)** A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.

#### d) It gives me a ministry.

God puts you on earth not just to live for yourself, but to help other people. Your greatest ministry will flow out of your weaknesses. Your greatest life message is going to come out of your deepest hurt. The very thing that caused you the most grief and pain, God can use as a message to other people to encourage them. The thing you're most embarrassed about, the thing you're most ashamed of, the thing you don't want anybody else to know about – God wants to use that to encourage other people.

Pain sensitizes us to the hurts of others. If you want to have a Christ-like ministry, that means sometimes other people are going to be helped, encouraged and even healed by the wounds in your life. Jesus Christ received wounds in His body and we all benefited from it!

**2 Corinthians 1:4 (NLT)** He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When others are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us.

When you have walked a mile in someone else's shoes, you are uniquely equipped to help them through their problems!  
GOD NEVER WASTES A HURT!

- Whenever you go out and share your strength, that always creates competition. But whenever you share your weakness, that creates community. Vulnerability is the key to intimacy and fellowship.
- God always uses weak people. He turns weakness into strength.

#### **MOSES**

Anger was Moses' greatest weakness; he killed an Egyptian, broke the tables of stone, and smote the rock twice. Yet only he and Jesus were called "meek" in the Bible, which means "anger under control."

#### **DAVID**

David lusted after another man's wife, committed adultery with her, and then had the man killed. But later he was called "a man after God's own heart" when God turned that weakness into strength.

#### **ABRAHAM**

Abraham is called the father of faith, but his greatest weakness was his lack of faith. One time, he had his wife pretend to be his sister because he doubted that God could protect him from the enemy who wanted her.

#### **GIDEON**

When God wanted Gideon to become Israel's deliverer from the Midianites, He called him a "mighty man of valour." Gideon was hiding from the enemy at the time, but God still used him!

#### **PETER**

Jesus called Peter a "rock" but he was anything but stable! He was impulsive and violent, and he even denied the Lord. But look at him on the Day of Pentecost after God used his weakness to become strength!

#### **JACOB**

Jacob was a deceiver, a manipulator and a schemer. He made one mess after another and then ran from it. He ran his entire life, until the night that he wrestled with God. He said, "I'm not letting you go until you bless me!" And God said, "Okay, I'll bless you!" He touched Jacob at his greatest point of strength – the thigh that helped him run! Forever after, he would walk with a limp. Why? So he couldn't run from his weaknesses any more, and so he would have a constant reminder to depend on God!

- God wants to take the greatest weakness in your life and turn it into a strength! (**so stretch out your WITHERED hand!**)
- **Hebrews 11:32-34 (NIV)** And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets ... whose weakness was turned to strength.

#### **HIS STRENGTH IS PERFECT**

I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength  
But sometimes I wonder what He can do through me  
No great success to show, no glory on my own  
Yet in my weakness He is there to let me know

His strength is perfect when our strength is gone  
He'll carry us when we can't carry on  
Raised in his power the weak become strong  
His strength is perfect, His strength is perfect

We can only know the power that He holds  
When we truly see how deep our weakness goes  
His strength in us begins when ours comes to an end  
He hears our humble cry and proves again

His strength is perfect when our strength is gone  
He'll carry us when we can't carry on  
Raised in his power the weak become strong  
His strength is perfect, His strength is perfect