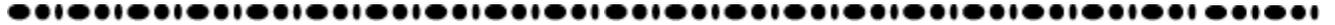


MY WEAKNESS



INTRODUCTION

The most important aspect of *My Portfolio* may be found in the unlikeliest of places. Yes, expect God to use your strengths, or spiritual gifts, which will be addressed next week, but your most powerful influence and impact may flow from your weaknesses or even your failures. This can, of course, be misapplied or misunderstood. Just because God makes a habit of working through our weaknesses does not mean we are to presumptuously jump into situations that exasperate those weaknesses. It does mean, though, that we should be cautious of dismissing what may initially seem unlikely. Some of the most powerful service comes from those whose clumsiness in an area underscores the genuineness of the service, and the power of God working in and through that person. Even more, the failure of the alcoholic may do more to serve those struggling with addiction than the lifelong sobriety of a well-meaning but misguided friend. Or the person who has walked through the pain of multiple broken marriages may do more for the struggling couple than the person with decades of marital bliss. When we hit the depths of despair, we want to walk with people who have been there and come out of it. Your ability to offer your weaknesses and failures in and through the body of Christ may be where you find the most profound possibilities for genuine service.

The exercise that follows may be the most vulnerable of assessments. Approach it with tender honesty while enjoying the freedom that is consistently present with humility.

FIRST STAGE MY WEAKNESS

Before beginning, take a minute to remind yourself of *My Opportunities* that you identified in Week Two (pages 52, 54, 56, 58). Then in this First Stage, consider areas of weakness in your own life that keep you from fully engaging these Opportunities. This week's reading discussed the weaknesses felt by several key biblical figures. Use their stories to help you brainstorm. You might identify with all of those listed below, or perhaps just one or two. Use the list to guide, rather than restrict, your thinking.

Where do you feel **FOOLISH** like Abraham?

Where do you feel **INADEQUATE** like Moses?

Where do you feel **VULNERABLE** like Gideon?

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Where do you feel **WEAK** like David?

Where do you feel **UNQUALIFIED** like the apostles?

What **OTHER AREAS** of weakness keep you from engaging *My Opportunities*?

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SECOND STAGE MY DISTRUST

Consider again the following passage from this week's reading:

Confessed sin, sin that has been brought into the open and dealt with before God and others, is never, not once, held against a person in Scripture. But high-handed disobedience, sin that is buried in one's tent, is a breach of the very trust that unleashes God's power. Through the march of Scripture, we do not see God pointing to his people's inabilities, shortcomings, or failures. We do, though, see an uncompromised expectation of trust. If like Achan, a person's present actions display lack of trust through buried rebellion, that person should have very low expectations of God's presence in his actions.

We must learn to distinguish things in our life that are no obstacle for God (i.e., weakness, vulnerability, lack of training, etc.) from that which truly disqualifies us from experiencing God's power (i.e., active disobedience). In the First Stage, you considered areas of perceived weakness that are actually no obstacle for God. Now in this Second Stage, you are asked to consider areas of active disobedience that do, in fact, thwart God's purposes in your life.

If need be, remind yourself of the story of Achan from this week's reading (in the section entitled *Troubling* on pages 96-97) and then answer the following questions:

What is currently buried in your tent that might be blocking the work of God in your life?

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Spend some time talking to God about what you have buried. What do you hear him saying?

How will you respond to what you heard from God?

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THIRD STAGE GOD'S STRENGTH

In this Third Stage, you are asked to prayerfully reflect on how it is that God may want to show himself strong through your weakness. As echoed in this week's reading, God's strength is made perfect in weakness. Once you have genuinely addressed areas of buried rebellion in the Second Stage, look back at your identified areas of weakness from the First Stage and consider if any of these may be areas through which God wants to display his strength.

STEP 1: For each weakness that you listed in the First Stage, ask God how he wants to display his strength in these circumstances. On the following page, you will find a list of Scriptures taken from the Psalms that attest to God's strength in action. Use this list to inspire your thinking around what God may want to accomplish through you in the Opportunities (Week Two) that he has given you. Note anything he shows you in the space provided:

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STEP 2: Finally, wait on the Spirit for empowerment, just as the apostles did on the day of Pentecost. Waiting in this sense is not a passive experience. Rather, we wait actively by looking for God's hand in the Opportunities around us. Tear this page out and carry it with you as a constant reminder of areas where you're waiting on God's strength. Then, as you are empowered, act boldly and courageously.

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TESTAMENTS OF GOD'S STRENGTH IN THE PSALMS

God's strength SAVES...

Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand. Psalm 20:6, NASB

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Psalm 46:1, NASB

For You have been a refuge for me, a tower of strength against the enemy. Psalm 61:3, NASB

God's strength EMBOLDENS...

For You have girded me with strength for battle; You have subdued under me those who rose up against me. Psalm 18:39, NASB

My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Psalm 73:26, NASB

God's strength DEFENDS...

The LORD is their strength, and He is a saving defense to His anointed. Psalm 28:8, NASB

You will pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me, for You are my strength. Psalm 31:4, NASB

God's strength WORKS WONDERS...

You are the God who works wonders; You have made known Your strength among the peoples. Psalm 77:14, NASB

God's strength BRINGS PEACE and STABILITY...

The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty; The LORD has clothed and girded Himself with strength; indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved. Psalm 93:1, NASB

The LORD will give strength to His people; the LORD will bless His people with peace. Psalm 29:11, NASB

God's strength ESTABLISHES JUSTICE...

The strength of the King loves justice; You have established equity; You have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. Psalm 99:4, NASB

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