

EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH, AND HOPE

Life With God In Recovery

Experience, Strength and Hope



Photo by Cathie Bolan 2015

[God] gives power to those who are tired and worn out; he offers strength to the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (Isaiah 40:29 NLT, 40:30-31NIV)

Our motivation for coming to support group meetings is to continue our journey with God in recovery and to share our experience with others. We share what is working for us. We hear and observe what is working for others. We want to learn from practices which helped old-timers get strong and stay strong, and which may also help us. What strength and hope have we gained that we can share with others?

Let your unfailing love surround us, Lord, for our hope is in you alone. (Psalm 33:22 NLT)

Many of us, when we come into recovery, are physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually weak. We're running on empty and are more likely picturing ourselves weary and limping along, rather than seeing ourselves running and not growing weary. We need to get strong. Some of us have diseases and wounds that need healing. Some are suffering from poor eating habits and need proper nutrition. Our minds are confused and worn out. Our emotions are ultra-sensitive. The task of detoxing in recovery is to help deal with enough of these conditions so we can hear and think clearly.

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matt. 11:28-29 NLT)

In the beginning we comply with the recovery program guidelines because we believe that there has to be a better life than the one we have been living. We are willing to learn from the experience of others who have walked the path before us. We sleep, we eat, and we talk. We read, we pray, and we write. We exercise, we go to meetings, and we serve. We start to look better and feel stronger. As our strength increases, we begin to have hope for a better life.

At this point, because we have energy to do whatever we want to do, thoughts of our old way of handling things start to surface and seem manageable. The

temptation to fix life as we've always fixed it will begin to call. The desire to run rather than face the troubling events of our past will grow. The voice in our head will assure us that we, by ourselves, know what to do in order to get well. As we entertain these thoughts, we drift towards relapse.

The word of God speaks truth at this time, if we will listen, So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! I know nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. (1 Corinthians 10:12, Romans 7:18 NIV)

As our physical energy is renewed we need to be very careful to correctly identify its source. The source is not ourselves. We are powerless on our own. We need a power greater than ourselves for the rebuilding journey ahead. We need to maintain the routine of turning our will and our life over to the care of God in each and every circumstance. Each day, throughout the day, for the rest of our lives, we will need to affirm our powerlessness and surrender to God who is the source of our strength. As we daily affirm this, we will be empowered by God to be the person He created us to be.

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 1:18-20 NIV)

No matter how strong we feel, it's not enough to bring us through to sustained recovery. We will tire out and give up the struggle if we think our own physical or mental strength is enough for the long haul. Strength is a gift. Strength is the product of an ongoing relationship with God. Strength is the result of trusting God, waiting for God to act, and following God's word and plan for fullness of life. That is what gives us joy, keeps us safe, and helps us understand and respond well to the events of each day.

The Lord is my strength and my song; he has given me victory. ... God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. ... Christ is the mighty power of God and the wisdom of God. This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength. (Exodus 15:2, Psalm 46:1, 1 Corinthians 1:24b-25 NLT)

Jesus taught that real strength comes to us when we remain in His care and grow in His grace. He used a gardening picture to help us understand. ***Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned.*** (John 15:5-6 NLT)

Outside of God, we can't maintain the desire to do what is right, let alone find the strength to do what we know we ought to do. ***For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him.*** (Philippians 2:13 NLT)

It is the experience of each person who walks with God that He gives power at the very time when they feel weak and this is what actually makes them strong. God says: ***"My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness."*** (2 Corinthians 12:9 NLT)

As we ask for, and receive God's grace and power, we can then say, ***"I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength."*** (Philippians 4:13 NLT)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. How have I sought and experienced God's strength in my recovery?
2. Where's the challenge for me in acknowledging that I'm powerless and need to daily rely on God's strength rather than my own?
3. What does the picture Jesus taught of the vine and the branches have to do with my recovery?
4. Through my own practice and experience, how am I encouraging others in their recovery with God?

PRAYER: Thank You God, for coming alongside us and giving us strength when we are weary and burdened. We need You today. We agree that we cannot do life without You. Jesus, we welcome You into our lives today as our Saviour and our Lord. We surrender to Your guidance. We trust in Your mighty power to be active in us so that we may daily live in Your care and grow in Your grace. We believe that Your mighty power is working in us to help us do everything we need to do. We are grateful that your power works best in our weakness. Anoint us afresh each day. Thank You for Your faithfulness and Your love, and for giving us strength each day to live according to Your word. Amen