

How God Uses Our weaknesses

Today we're going to look at "Using our weaknesses." We all have weaknesses. Some physical, some emotional; maybe there's relational weaknesses, financial weaknesses, and intellectual weaknesses. There are things your body can't do. Some of us (**like me**) have fashion weaknesses; we have all different kinds.

The question is, "What are you going to do with your weakness?"

Normally we try to deny them, make excuses for them, resent them and most of all - hide them. We don't want anyone to see our weaknesses.

Then God comes along and say's in the Bible, "You know what I want to do with your weaknesses? I want to use them."

But that doesn't make sense, shouldn't God use my strengths instead of my weaknesses? **The answer is, "Yes, God obviously uses our strengths."** But in Isaiah 55, God also says, "*My ways are not your ways. My thoughts are higher than your thoughts.*" What God is saying is, "I'm smarter than you and the way you think I should work is not usually the way I will work in your life!"

God wants to work through your weaknesses."

And that leads us to today's scripture. As we read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, listen to how God uses the unexpected to prove His wisdom, and also listen for the reason God gives us as to why it's done that way.

Now look back at verse 27, "*But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.*" In your sermon notes, circle "God chose" and "weak". This means that your weaknesses are not an accident. God purposely chose them and God works through weak people.

Why? It demonstrates His power.

When I was a kid, I used to think that Samson was this giant, muscle bound monster - kind of a Jewish Rambo with bulging biceps. But the truth is - Samson was a very ordinary looking guy. The Bible says that when the enemies looked at him, they couldn't figure out why he was so strong. The Bible tells us that his strength wasn't in his muscles - but in the Spirit of the Lord. He probably looked more like Steve Eurlke than he did Schwarzenegger.

My point God isn't impressed with power and might. God often chooses - and use weak, ordinary people. God says, "*I do that because that's when My glory, My grace, and My power shines through.*"

That's really good news, because most of us are not extraordinary people. We don't look like the supermodels or have an extraordinary intellect. We're just normal, ordinary people, and God says, "*That's ok, because I don't choose to work through natural strength. I work through natural weakness because that's when My power shines.*"

That's why we're going to look at how do you not avoid your weaknesses, but see how God wants to use them in your life.

What is a weakness? It's any limitation in my life that I inherited or I cannot change and we have limitations like that.

There are limitations that you were born with or have no control over.

- **There are financial limitations.** You know the unexpected expenses that weren't your fault?
- **There are relational limitations.** You really have a heart for God; but your spouse really doesn't care about the Lord. Maybe you have a rebellious child, a handicapped child or parent. Something in your life you can't control and it causes you pain.
- **There are emotional limitations.** Some people have a tendency to get depressed. Others have a tendency to lose their temper and get angry. Others are fearful. It is the natural inclination and when we make bad choices, we give in to them.
- **We have talent limitations.** Those things you just can't do.
- **And of course, we have physical limitations.** You only have a certain amount of energy. Maybe you deal with a handicap, a bad back, or some other kind of physical limitation in your life.

All of these things that God says, He purposely chose. Why?

2 Corinthian 4:7 "*We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all surpassing power is from Go and not from us.*" What God is saying is, "I put my treasure of wisdom and joy and salvation in you, in your body, but your body is just a clay pot," **and our bodies are just cracked pots.**

The thing about clay pots is they break easily. Every clay pot has natural faults and flaws in it which makes it weak and easily broken. Paul was saying, “Yes, I’m a Christian and God’s in my life, but I’m not indestructible - I’m human. **But God still chooses to use to prove that the great power in our lives - is from God and not from ourselves.**”

Still many people think, “God could never use me in a great way. I’m ordinary, I’ve made too many mistakes.” But that’s who God uses; weak ordinary people and uses them in extraordinary ways.

Let’s look at 2 steps the bible gives as to how to use our weaknesses.

1. I MUST - ADMIT MY WEAKNESSES

That’s the obvious starting point. That means I stop pretending I’ve got it all together. Because you know what - nobody else does either. It means that I stop hoping that my weaknesses will disappear if I ignore them - *because they won’t*. It means to stop making excuses and to stop blaming others for my weaknesses.

I just have to admit I have them.

A quick warning: God wants us to admit our weaknesses and we like to deny them, so occasionally God allows something into our lives to get us to admit them. That is called a crisis and a crisis is a weakness identifier. My advice: Don’t wait. *It’s less painful to identify your weaknesses and admit them up front, rather than go through a crisis that God allowed in order to get you to admit them.*

Once you have admitted your weakness you go to step two.

2. I MUST BE GRATEFUL FOR MY WEAKNESSES

I’ve heard some say, “Pastor, you’ve got to be kidding! I come to church and be told how to get rid of my weaknesses. I don’t want you telling me to be grateful for them. I want to get rid of them.” But God says, “I want you to learn to be grateful for your weaknesses.”

In 2 Corinthians. 12:9 Paul said, *“I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”* What he was saying was, “Instead of wasting your time acting like you’ve got it all together and trying to get everybody to think you’re in control. Why not just stop, admit your weaknesses, and focus on God’s power and experience the deep freeing power of Christ.

Here’s 4 benefits to being grateful for your weaknesses:

- **It guarantees God's help.** When you face a big problem and try to solve it on your own, God says, "Be My guest. Go ahead and do it. If you think you can solve that problem at work, hold that marriage together, or turn that kid around on your own power, be My guest."

God will stand back and watch. But the moment you turn to God and say, "I can't do it on my own - I need You." God says, "*I knew that. I just wanted you to realize it.*" Then the Lord will plug you into the Holy Spirit's power and you'll experience a power you can't have on your own. **God says, "I want to teach you that I'm with you and that's all you need."** That's why Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:10, "*For when I am weak, then I am strong.*"

- **Another benefit of a weakness, "It prevents arrogance."**

It helps you know that it's not all about you. 2 Cor. 12 "*To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassing great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh.*"

What's a thorn? It's a weakness, a limitation that you can't change on your own, it causes pain & it limits your abilities. Paul said it was given to him to keep him from being prideful.

If Paul could have changed it, he would have. In fact, the Bible says he prayed three times for God to take it away. But God said, "I'm not going to, because My grace is sufficient for you."

That thing you've been praying for God to take away from your life and it's still there, it may be a thorn." Some thorns are gradually removed and others you have for life.

So what does a thorn do? It's that persistent problem that causes pain, that gets my attention, it keeps me dependent upon God and keeps me humble before God.

If God is going to use you in a great way, expect a thorn.

- **Weaknesses also cause me to value others.** One of the dangers of strength is - it breeds independence. If I don't have any weaknesses in my life, I tend to think, "I don't need anybody!" I've got it all together." But God made us to value each other. That's why nobody gets all the Spiritual gifts or has all the answers. We need each other.

The Bible says, *“Some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are really the most necessary.”* That’s true in the body of Christ. God allows each of us to have weaknesses, so we all recognize that we need each other. *“The hand can’t say to the foot, ‘I don’t need you.’ And the eye can’t say to the ear, ‘I don’t need you.’”*

God allows us to have weaknesses so we see the value of other people.

- **Another benefit of a weakness - It gives me a ministry.** God placed us on earth, not just to live for ourselves, but to help other people. And your greatest ministry will flow out of your weaknesses. The very thing that causes you the most grief and pain, God can use in the ministry and use to give other people encouragement.

That’s why God says in 2 Corinthians 1:3,4 *“...the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves received from God.”* If you’ve never struggled with a weakness, you probably don’t have much of a ministry. But most people have pain and God comforts us in our problems. Then we can turn around and comfort others with the same comfort we’ve been given.

God never wastes a hurt. God will use the thing in your life that you are most ashamed of, most embarrassed by, most heartbroken over to encourage other people if you’ll learn to admit it, see what God wants to do in it, be healed yourself through it and begin to share it with others.

Prayer:

What are you ashamed of? What causes pain in your life? I invite you to create an altar in your mind and on it place the weaknesses of your life that you cannot change and you didn’t ask for. Say “God, I give You these weaknesses. And I ask You to work, not around them, but would You use my weakness and show your power. You’ve said that Your power shows up best in weak people. So I’m asking You to help me.”

Lord, You do extraordinary things through ordinary people. Everything in our past has brought us to this point. And God says, “It wasn’t an accident that those things happened. Some were evil, some were bad. But Lord, I know that I can turn them around and use them for good, if I just admit them and be grateful

for them, to be willing to share them honestly with others and the mean while
You will heal me in the process.”

If you’ve never opened your life to Jesus Christ, say “Jesus Christ, come into my
life and heal my hurts and be my Lord and be my guide. I want to follow You.
In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”