



Pause With Purpose

...to refresh

...to grow

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Living in Strength

We hear it referred to often, from advertisements for paper towels ("... as strong as cloth...") to promotions for military service ("You made him strong. We make him Army strong."). Competitions are held to determine "the world's strongest man." Even Scripture encourages us to "be strong and take heart" (Ps.31:24). But what is this thing we call *strength*?

Dictionaries overflow with definitions of strength, perhaps because it applies to so many different aspects of life. Yet, all the definitions seem to describe strength as flowing from the inner core of something, rather than as something that is "put on." For us humans, once we get past muscle cells and blood flow, strength reveals itself as a matter of heart and soul. It is a quality of character that is grounded in our deepest beliefs and energized by what we hold dear. It exists across the full spectrum of humanity, living within the aged as well as the adolescent, within the physically impaired as well as the physically elite.

While several words are used to describe strength, a few stand out.

1) *Durability* - the ability to resist stress and strain; the ability to resist force or attack; the capacity to endure.

2) *Vigor / robustness / potency* - the capacity for effective action; a physical,

legal, logical, or moral force.

3) *Courage / resolve / stamina* - the ability to maintain an intellectual or moral position firmly, and to act on it.

Overall, such strength is seen as positive and desirable. Many of us, however, being very aware of our limitations and failures, question our capacity for strength. We settle for a life of damage control, vigilantly focused on limiting the impact of our weakness and vulnerability. Yet, when we listen to our heart, we likely can hear a voice ask, "How can *I* grow to live in strength?"

To answer this question, we must again look inward to the spiritual core of our beliefs and being. Believing in and claiming a personal relationship with a loving Creator God lays the foundation for a life lived in strength, since through this relationship we have access to the strength of His Spirit. This Spirit delights in demonstrating His strength both through us and, at times, in spite of us. The conviction that we need not rely solely on our own limited strength (that we're not "in this on our own") builds a confidence that we will be "okay" today, and a hope for great things in the future. The strength of this confident hope enables us to approach life events, relationships, opportunities and challenges with

reassurance and peace. It frees us from our anxious focus on self service and self preservation, and clears the way for a life of fulfillment through the service of others.

Not surprisingly, strength of spirit and character brings with it a variety of attributes beyond those mentioned earlier. Among them are some not typically connected with strength, such as ... wisdom, patience, gentleness, humility, kindness, and the ability to forgive. Mohandas Gandhi recognized this when he said, "If your heart acquires strength, you will be able to remove blemishes from others without thinking evil of them." Within the Christian faith, these attributes mirror what are called the "fruits of the Spirit." How interesting! Fruits of the Spirit grow from the strength of the Spirit!

Just imagine how living in real strength might impact our lives and the lives of those around us! Then ask:
- What do I believe - about my God and about my self?

- Do my beliefs strengthen me or leave me weak?

- How, today, will I best use what I believe?

There's no day like today to begin living in strength!



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CONTACT INFORMATION

Your thoughts and comments are warmly welcomed. I would also be happy to share with you more about life coaching and how it can assist you to be your best, personally and relationally, at home and at work..

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Strength and Power

Living in strength means *using* the strength we have. Strength that is hidden away or kept in a box ceases to be strength. It is at best just a dream. For strength to exist, it must be used.

How we use our strength will vary from situation to situation. In one instance, we may use our strength to hold our tongue in silence. At another time, we may use it to speak up with courage. Our wisdom, good judgment, and strong values must guide the use of our strength.

On occasion, our strength may flow over into *power*. Power is the ability to influence or control situations or people. Healthy leaders (and we all lead someone at times) exert healthy power which flows from (and reflects the values of) real strength. When power is used as a *substitute* for real strength, turmoil and struggle almost certainly result, since such power grows from selfishness and lacks the love and moral grounding of real strength. Such power is used to fill the needs of the one exerting it, rather than being used to serve others.

Let's stay healthy, live in strength, lead from strength, and make a positive difference in our world today!



"O, it is excellent to have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant."

-William Shakespeare