

Trusting God in Our Weakness

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Do you feel overwhelmed by all that's in front of you, wondering how you can get it all done? Do you think that you can't serve anyone else because you're barely surviving yourself? Or that what you have to offer isn't enough for the job? If so, you're not alone.

I've felt that way before, and even feel that way today. I don't feel equipped to write the book I'm working on. Or to deliver the talks I'm slated for. Or even to help my friends who are struggling. Other people seem more gifted and more available, and I'm sure they'd do a better job than me. But I know that God equips those he calls, even when they have little to offer. It requires trusting God in our weakness.

Relying on God's Provision

I was pondering this truth when I considered the feeding of the five thousand recorded in John 6:1-14. The disciples had no food with them, yet Jesus asked them to feed a huge crowd that had gathered. As I reread this passage, I was surprised that Andrew even offered a boy's lunch of five loaves and two fish. While he gave a disclaimer that it was insignificant relative to the many who'd gathered, I personally would have been too embarrassed to even mention it. Why even bring up something so miniscule?

That embarrassment, that hesitation, is perhaps the root of my struggle. I look at my own resources and conclude they are inadequate for the task in front of me. So I panic and work feverishly, often beyond my capacity, or I feel overwhelmed and do nothing, hoping the situation will go away. In both instances, I forget that God is the one who meets people's needs – he just needs my willingness. What I'm giving may seem paltry to me and to others, but God can multiply my offering to feed 5000.

I know that when I minister in my own strength, I may see short-term results, but there is no lasting fruit. I have no power to effect real change. But when God is the source, miraculous things happen.

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I remember praying for a friend, wishing I could do more for her. Her family was in a crisis, and there was little I could do from a distance. Reading the Bible that morning, I was moved by a verse that seemed appropriate for them and I circled it. I prayed the verse, inserting their names into it and considered texting her the entire verse. But since I didn't have much time, I took a picture of the passage and texted it saying, "I just prayed these words over all of you." It took just a minute.

I got an immediate response. And later she said it was exactly what she needed - she held on to that Scripture throughout the day. Sitting in the hospital with her daughter, she desperately needed to hear from God. Those verses felt like the Lord was speaking directly to her. I was just the channel.

It was a simple thing to do — to share the food that God had given me for the day. But in God's hands, it was enough to feed others. I'd felt a bit bad about just taking a picture, but she said that seeing it in the Bible was like reading it herself. She didn't have the strength to read. Not that day. Not for many days. But God fed her through what he fed me. As I read her response, I realized that God's comfort is so much better than anything we can offer. When we think we have nothing to give, that's when we completely rely on God. God who owns the cattle on a thousand hills and knows everything a person needs.

There are other simple ways God can meet people's needs through us. Sometimes it's just picking up the phone and being willing to listen. Other times it's writing out a text detailing exactly what we are praying, rather than just saying "I'm praying for you." That way they know their specific needs are being directly carried to the Lord, and they can pray along with us as they read the text. Just pray and ask the Lord and he'll show you what to do. Then just do the next thing.

Sometimes we wonder if we can help anyone when we feel physically weak. A friend's mother who has cancer recently started going to local coffee shops and putting a sign on her table that says, "Can I pray for you?" Inevitably people stop and want to be prayed for, amazed that someone would offer to do that. I wonder many lives have been changed by her simple act of generosity, offering what she can and relying on God for the rest.

The Power of Small Acts

1 Peter 4:10-11 reminds us, "Just as each one has received a gift, use it to serve others, as good stewards of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, let it be as one who speaks God's words; if anyone serves, let it be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything." We don't need to serve in our own strength; God will give us the strength we need. Besides, God's power is most evident in our weakness. And when we rely on God, our trust grows, others get help and God gets the glory.

We don't need to do it perfectly, or to try to meet every need. Charles Spurgeon says in reference to 1 Peter 4, "the way to do a great deal is to keep doing a little. The way to do nothing is to continually resolve that we will do everything." Too often I want to do everything for people, but God is encouraging me to trust him as I start with a little. To do what I can, as soon I can, but not try to do it all.

As I write this, I feel more excited about the projects in front of me. I'm trusting God to supply everything when I feel weak, including what my friends need from me. Time. Wisdom. Words. With that confidence, I can move forward in faith, leaving the results to him, remembering that nothing is too hard for him.

What about you? What small act of kindness can you offer today, trusting God to magnify its impact?