

If You're Too Exhausted to Find God's Strength

Years ago I led a women's retreat called "How to Dress Like a Warrior."

Lately I have felt anything but warrior-like. If I am a warrior, I'm definitely a weary warrior.

Today I reread Ephesians 6:10-11 (NIV): "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."

I thought I'd look up the word *might* in my mighty big concordance. It pretty much means strength, might and power. So I decided to look up other verses about God's might ... I'm in awe.

"The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength" (Is. 40:28-29, ESV).

WOW!!!! Did I need to read those verses right this very minute! I can't even begin to tell you how weary and faint and NOT mighty I am right now.

There is just no way around the tired ... believe me, I've looked. I've tried to get rest ... get on top of things ... have less going on ... take charge ... let go ... hang on ... release ... you know, everything that is supposed to make life easier, but nothing really changes the crux of the matter.

I'm a single working mom with a bunch of sweeties ... throw in trying to sell a house, find a house, prepare lessons, grade papers, deal with family issues, financial issues and continuing ex-husband issues ... well, there is no way to avoid

the tired.

And sometimes when I consider the armor of God, I wonder if I'm even wearing it. Sometimes it feels like I'm in a battle wearing my pj's and my only weapon is a feather pillow.

I was thinking about that verse—"Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power." I'm thinking that means that before the armor goes on I need to have the Lord's strength working in my life. Otherwise I'm just putting on my own armor—my own righteousness, my own truth, my own salvation, my own everything.

And honestly, I've got cruddy armor.

My breastplate is dented. My shoes are Dollar Tree flip flops. My shield is made of cardboard. My helmet is an old baseball cap. My sword ... well, it's more like a toothpick. You get the idea.

If the armor must be God's, I'm thinking the strength must be His as well.

In the New Testament that strength is often equated with the resurrection of Jesus. Everything truly does go back to Jesus and the gospel. I can live a life of victory and strength because of Jesus' victory and strength on the cross.

There's a quote by Matthew Henry which basically says that no matter how good your armor is on the outside, if you don't have a good heart on the inside, it's useless.

"Let a soldier be ever so well armed without, if he have not within a good heart, his armour will stand him in little stead" (Matthew Henry).

I could have all that righteousness, faith, salvation, truth and even the gospel, but if it all hasn't reached my heart ... it's not of much use to me. And if the foundation of my faith

is not God's strength, but my own ... well, let's just say that's not much of a firm foundation.

Maybe things have been so difficult lately because I'm trying to do all this in my own might? Unfortunately I'm not sure how to do it any other way. How do I not do everything that needs to be done ... and what does it look like to do things in God's strength, not my own?

In each ridiculously busy day, what do I give to God? What do I let go of? I wish I knew right now ... I wish the next paragraph in this blog would hold the key to letting go and letting God.

But maybe it isn't so much about me doing anything more or less. Maybe it is more about me having a shift in my mindset. Maybe I need to re-evaluate what is causing me to feel so weary. Could it be my own expectations? My wish and hope to have a different life? Discontentment? Fear? Insecurities? Anxiety? Anger? Bitterness? Frustration? Probably some of those, maybe all ... depending on the day.

I keep trying to figure out how to make this life easier ... get off the battlefield. I don't think that is God's plan for me yet. I think the plan is to teach me to trust despite the battle ... to smile despite the frustrations ... to be thankful despite the weariness ... to praise despite the problems.

And as I'm listing some of what causes me angst, I'm thinking that part of the change in perspective might be stopping all the focusing on the battles, frustrations, weariness and problems.

Good gravy! There are good things in my life too! The blessing of children. The love of friends. The provision of a place to stay, a car, a job and food on the table. There are even things like beautiful clothes to wear, inspiring music to listen to and wonderful books to read (if I had time to read).

Most mornings on my way to work, I see gorgeous sunrises. I'm also blessed to drive through a park that is often filled with deer walking quietly through the morning mist. It is exquisite and peaceful, a truly wonderful way to start my day!

In the evening, I can step outside and look up at thousands of twinkling stars ... again exquisite and peaceful. God does offer me peace, rest and opportunities for thankfulness and praise. If I would but open my eyes and take a minute away from the stress of my circumstances, I think I'd see so many more things to inspire and bless!

There will always be things that distract us ... things that cause us to take our eyes off of Christ ... things that sap our strength ... BUT nothing can sap God's strength! And if God is the source of our strength, we do not need to fear the frustrations of life, we can rest assured He will provide all that we need ... even the armor to get us through the battle.

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen" (Eph. 3:20-21, NIV).

Sue Birdseye is an author and single mom of five kids who range from 4-years-old to 17-years-old. Her book, *When Happily Ever After Shatters* (Tyndale House) is in bookstores. This is adapted from her blog, .