

This Fragile Source of Strength Will Only Stunt Your Spiritual Growth

My best and brightest moments have been laced with weakness.

We met our first two children in Ethiopia and spent our first days of parenting in a tempered state of shock over the rolling meltdowns. While adopting our second two children from Uganda, I saw miracle-level movements of God I'd never before or since seen. Even in the times when we've repeated the stories, I feel that lump-in-my-throat awe over just how rare they were and how near He felt. And yet in between those miracle days were tearful nights under mosquito nets and terse words spoken to the man I love, the one who brought us there, and more of my own meltdowns than I'd like to admit over power outages and the broken shower in the guest home and the smoggy air.

Nate tells the stories from Uganda—these glorious moments that only God could have orchestrated—to new friends and others who hadn't heard what we saw, and I can't help but flash back to the argument we had outside of the van scheduled to take us to our court appointment, and in front of the unsuspecting driver who quickly got schooled in American conflict.

I birthed my first biological baby after 12 years of marriage. Twelve years of waiting and *more than* long hours of labor.

Yet somehow I still imagine the most glorious moments I have ahead of me in God to be seamless. I look at others who've accomplished what I consider to be great feats of faith and ignorantly assume they came with ease.

Recently, a friend who has been a missionary to a remote village in Africa for years witnessed those she loved getting

their hands on the very first translated New Testaments in their language. Translators had been working for 20-plus years on these pages and the ones in her community now held their own Bible, in their native tongue. My friend sent me pictures and I cried—I couldn't get it out of my mind for days, this momentous event of hungry people getting the food of the Word. But when we finally connected so that I could hear her voice telling me more of the story, she cautioned me. *This is complicated, Sara*, she said. Bibles that could be read fell in the hands of many who have never read *anything* in their own language. This pinnacle moment was, in fact, another beginning toward a different ascent. These Bibles would be sweated over before they were read.

Our greatest moments in God are laced with weakness and we humans don't like it.

Though I quote Paul's letters to my children and to my fickle heart, I often forget what he walked through in order to be able to say "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:13). I love that David was a man with a pulse melded toward God and one about whom God looked through his boyishly-rouged cheeks to see a heart that could hunger, but I'd like to ignore the tryst that leveled his life and made him weak and needy for God and the son who stealthily betrayed him.

I want His best moments to also include me, at my best. I give accolades to friends who "pulled it off" and slap an "I'm doing well" on the times when I feel best about my motherhood and my home and my marriage and my writing and my friendships. I still want the great strength of God and my own great strength too.

But it never happens that way. No, *never*.

When my human strength attempts to compete with His glory (let's be honest: near *daily*), I am subtly despising

the unique way (read: unfamiliar, unconventional, not-of-this-place-where-we-live) that He moves in power.

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, the excellency of the power being from God and not from ourselves” (2 Cor. 4:7).

It’s a rare thing that I call my weakness a treasure. But to skip to that step and merely use the verbiage—while still secretly wanting the glory of God to seamlessly manifest within my tightened life—I miss what David had, what Paul had. (And, ahem, I then lead people to me.)

They knew His eyes on them when all hell broke loose in their life. They knew destitution of the heart and body and yet also how one received a look from God that made that single moment their richest. They knew what it was like to have their heart race, in love, from love, all because of a surprising brush with the near gaze of God in their most unsuspecting hour.

When I’m admittedly weak (because, as my husband sometimes tells me, my stated “weak moments” are truly just the ones where I’m acknowledging a weakness that was already there before I noticed it), I’m supple, receptive. His glory streams brighter through all the holes in my countenance.

So people, let’s stop dreaming about the day when it’s all slick and we’re strong and then God is glorified. It’s a myth.

In your sweatpants and a top knot and un-showered, He has power and He sees you. At the height of some sort of messy unfolding of a new thing He’s led you to do, He has power and He sees you. With your arms around a child who would rather be anywhere else than with you, He has power and He sees you. By the bedside of a friend, He has power and He sees you. In your own hospital bed or nursing a tireless infant at 3 a.m., He has power and He sees you.

In the kingdom of God, all those places about which we’ve been

complaining, where we feel so weak, are in fact the places for our greatest access to the truest glory.

“But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will boast in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. 12:9).

Sara is a wife to Nate and a mother of five whose arms stretched wide across the expanse between the United States and Africa. After almost a decade of Christian life she was introduced to pain and perplexity and, ultimately, intimacy with Jesus. God met her and moved her when life stopped working for her. And out of the overflow of this perplexity, came her writing, both on her blog and in her book: Every Bitter Thing Is Sweet.

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