

Stronger Empowering your future – part 5

Introduction: In all my years of serving God as a pastor, I have observed people who are strong, who do well, flourish spiritually and advance well in their walk with God. I have seen people with a vibrant faith, passionate about God and who, in spite of what comes against them, seem to always bounce back and carry on, with enough encouragement to spare. However, I have also seen many who don't do well and who never seem to grow in God and become strong.

Here's an area that I believe a lot of people struggle with and that can account for where they're at: lack of consistency.

Consistency is a deliberate effort to stay the course, to be steady, unchangeable, immovable, constant, firmly fixed in a position.

Opening Text: Genesis 49:22-25

1. Consistent Joseph

A bit of context: in this passage, Jacob the great patriarch of the 12 tribes, knows that the time to be with his Maker is at hand and call his sons to prophesy over each one of them. Here, he speaks over his son Joseph.

Joseph is described as someone flourishing in life:

V.22 *“Joseph is a fruitful bough by a well, his branches run over the wall”.*

He went through a lot since he received his dream from God:

V.23 *“The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him”.*

However, in spite of the attack, ...

V.24 *“his bow remained in **strength**, and **the arms of his hands were made strong** by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob”.*

What a picture of strength – but the key word here is ‘*remained*’. Joseph didn't quit, Joseph remained. He remained the same, he remained strong, he remained faithful to the assignment, he remained pursuing the dream, and was never moved from the source of his strength: The Mighty God of Jacob.

He didn't lack ‘staying power’, he didn't change course, he was constant and unwavering. He knew his identity, he embraced his assignment and never moved from where God was. Joseph's life is such an example of stability and consistency and of the blessings that followed as a result.

2. Unstable Reuben

What a contrast we find in his brother Reuben:

Genesis 49:4 “*unstable as water, you shall not excel*”.

Because of his sin, Reuben lost his birthright and because his instability, he was not going to excel. He was described as someone ‘*unstable as water*’.

- a) **Unstable**: uncertain, unreliable, always changing, unpredictable, fluid, wobbly, lacking substance. Someone unstable can't be trusted with an assignment.

(**Proverbs 24:21b** – “*do not associate with those given to change*”)

Joseph had some real stick-ability and was blessed, but Reuben was unstable and could not excel. What a contrast! You cannot be inconsistent and expect to be strong and succeed.

If you want to excel and be strong then you have to embrace consistency, you have to stick to “the plan”, whether you feel like it or not.

Someone said, “*success is the sum of small efforts repeated day in and day out*”. What you do every day, matters more than what you do once in a while.

- b) Being ‘unstable’ has all sorts of ramifications, one of them being unanswered prayer:

James 1:6-8 ⁶ *But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.* ⁷ *For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;* ⁸ *he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

We need to be single-minded:

1 Kings 18:21 NIV - ²¹ *Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”*

3. A consistent God

James 1:17 - *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*

Malachi 3:6 – “*For I am the Lord, I do not change*”

Psalms 102:27 - *But You are the same, and Your years will have no end.*

Hebrews 13:8 - *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

4. The call to consistency

God calls us to be a branch *planted* by the well, a people *planted* in the house of God who will flourish in the courts of our God (Psalms 92:13).

There are so many scriptures in the Bible that use synonymous words to emphasize consistency like: *steadfastness*, being *immovable*, *constant*, having *patience*, *persevere*, “*stand and having done all to stand, stand therefore*”.

Consistency will always lead to blessing and cause you to be strong. Being *unstable like water* is the opposite picture of someone strong.

Another word that describes consistency in the Scriptures is the word ‘*continue*’:

- **Romans 11:22** says to *continue in God’s goodness*,
- **Colossians 1:23** says to *continue in the faith and not be moved away from the hope we have received*,
- **Colossians 4:2** says, ‘*continue earnestly in prayer*’,
- **1 Timothy 4:16** says to *continue in the good doctrine we have received*,
- **Hebrews 13:1** says to *continue in brotherly love*

God wants continuity in your relationship with Him and in how you give yourself to spiritual things. The early church did that:

Acts 2:42: *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

Conclusion:

Here’s some areas to be consistent:

a) Your prayer life:

Luke 18:1-3 The Message: *Jesus told them a story showing that it was necessary for them to pray consistently and never quit.*

Ephesians 6:18a “*praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,*”

1 Thessalonians 5:17 - *pray without ceasing,*

Daniel prayed 3 times a day (Daniel 6:10)

b) Service

1 Corinthians 15:58 - *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, - always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

c) Fellowship

As we saw in Acts 2:42, the early church did not forsake their assembling together but *continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

If we get the basics right and we stick to them on a consistent basis, we will grow in strength, we will not be weak and vulnerable. There will be blessing and growth!

Let us not be like “*unstable Reuben*” but more like “*consistent Joseph*”.

Genesis 49:23 - *The archers have bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him.*
*²⁴ But his bow remained in **strength**, and **the arms of his hands were made strong** by the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob*