



Daily Devotionals: Strength | October 31, 2021

Welcome to the final week of our All series! Over the past few weeks, we've examined God's great commandment that we love him with all our heart, mind, and soul. This week we will unpack what it looks like in our own lives to love him with all our *strength*.

When you think of strength, what comes to mind? Most people likely think of physical strength first. But strength can have a much broader context than physical exertion. Strength can describe power, influence, intensity, potency, weight, and number. There are so many ways we can apply the word *strength*.

Like with many physical ailments and disease (which are brought on because of underlying health conditions), many times we can have underlying conditions that make us vulnerable to spiritual struggles. These make it difficult for us to pursue a relationship with God that makes us grow to be more like his Son.

In his book, *Renovation of the Heart*, Dallas Willard explains the spiritual transformation of the body.

“Spiritual transformation into Christlikeness, I have said, is the process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it takes on the character of the inner being of Jesus himself. The result is that the “outer” life of the individual increasingly becomes a natural expression of the inner reality of Jesus and his teachings. Doing what he said and did increasingly becomes a part of who we are”.

Consider these questions: What underlying conditions in your life currently serve as obstacles to becoming more like Jesus? What do your habits, practices, and outer life say about your inner being?

When in the examination room, your doctor can assess your condition by looking at, feeling, and listening to your body. She knows what kinds of foods you're eating, whether you exercise regularly, if you get enough rest, or smoke cigarettes. She can see in your posture if you're carrying stress and she can smell your breath to know if you're well hydrated. Your eyes tell her if you're lacking vital dietary nutrients. She sees all this and more before she even asks, “What brings you here today?”



What’s going on inside of us inevitably shows up externally. What internal disruption in your life is showing up in your physical body – in your actions, facial expressions, countenance?

As a church, we want to love God with our bodies. We want to pursue obedience to God with everything we are, and we want to rid ourselves of any disobedience. This desire isn’t because we want to be strait-laced for the sake of being strait-laced, but because we desire, above all else, to love our Lord with heart, soul, mind, AND body.

The role of the body in spiritual formation is often misunderstood. This week’s practice invites you to take an inventory of the practices, habits, and actions in your life that are fueling or hindering your adoption of the character of Jesus. After taking stock of your situation, you’ll identify practices, habits, and actions to embrace to replace habits that hinder your spiritual growth.

A Practice to Examine My Habits

Start by reading **Matthew 7:24-29**, the closing of Jesus’s sermon on the mount.

Looking at your schedule reveals the architecture of your life. Are you using builders grade materials? Is your foundation sound? As you examine your schedule, think of how your habits and practices contribute to your outer life. What areas require renovation?

Reviewing my schedule:

- Spend some time reviewing your schedule (both things that were “planned” and where and what you spent your “unplanned” time doing) from the last week. If you were on vacation or sick last week, choose the most recent “typical” week you’ve experienced.
- If you don’t have a physical copy of your schedule, create one.
- Include everything you did in that week and make a note of any regular habits you have each day – like a morning cup of coffee, a trip to the gym, stopping in a co-worker’s office to debrief the weekend... etc. And don’t forget to include aspects of your schedule that are unplanned but happen frequently (such as reading to the kids before bed, prayer before dinner, etc.)
- After you’ve listed out your weekly schedule, highlight everything in your schedule that shapes you to be more like Christ.
- In another color, highlight everything that is an obstacle to becoming more like Christ.



- List the habits that reflect obedience and list the habits that reflect disobedience. If you're not sure if a habit reflects obedience or disobedience, ask yourself what your appetite or desire is behind that habit. For example, does your current workout routine serve a kingdom outcome (stewardship of your body) or worldly outcome (vanity, pride)?

Questions to help you uncover habits:

- What kind of habits do you have with food, alcohol, spending, sex, and media? Are you loving God in these areas?
- What are your idols? Where do you spend your money?
- Do you care more about what others think of you than what God thinks of you?
- Where do you feel discontentment?
- Do you have relationships with toxic people who infect their surroundings?
- Could YOU be a toxic person infecting your surroundings?

Replacing Unhealthy Habits

Identifying your habits can be eye-opening. Have you identified at least one habit that you would like to transform? One of the best ways to undo unhealthy habits is to replace them with healthy ones. If a habit you're regularly engaging in is blocking your ability to grow in Christlikeness, replace it with a practice that will help you grow.

If one of your habits is to relax on a Saturday night by watching Netflix, what would it look like for you to set aside that time to sit in silence and pray? If you drink coffee every day, what would it look like for you to replace your coffee one morning with a time of worship?

Which of these practices can you "try on" for the next week in place of one of your habits?

- Silence
- Solitude
- Confession
- Sabbath
- Service
- Study
- Blessing a neighbor
- Prayer
- Worship



- Practicing the presence
- Communion
- Memorizing scripture

Do these habit swaps seem extreme? Maybe. **Read Matthew 24:36-46.**

How might the lives of Peter, James, and John have changed if they had stayed awake and prayed for Jesus as he was in the garden?

Finally, read these Scriptures about loving God with all our strength. Pick one or two to memorize!

1. “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.” - **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**
2. “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.” - **Romans 12:1-2**
3. “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.” - **Galatians 5:17**
1. “But each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” - **James 1:14-15**