

4 Session Four: Strength

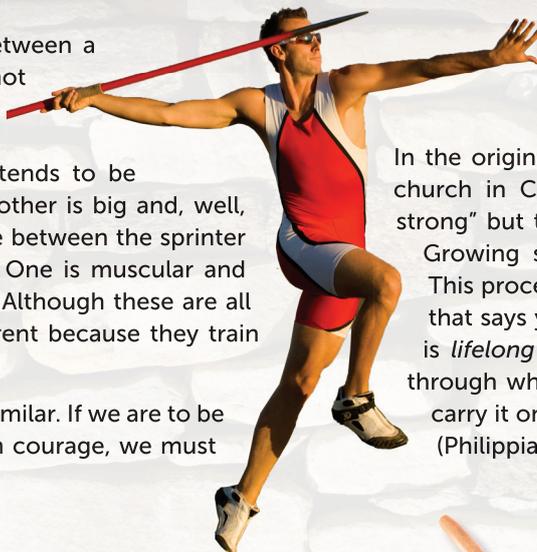
Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; **be strong**. Do everything in love.

1 Corinthians 16:13-14, NIV

Consider This...

What's the difference between a javelin thrower and a shot putter? They are both hurling objects as far as they can; yet, one tends to be long and lanky and the other is big and, well, just big! Or the difference between the sprinter and the distance runner? One is muscular and tense and the other is thin and relaxed. Although these are all track and field athletes, they look different because they train differently, according to their goals.

As a Christian, building your strength is similar. If we are to be on guard, standing firm in our faith with courage, we must



build up our strength in the proper areas. For the Christian man, this means mentally, spiritually, and even physically.

In the original Greek, the phrase that Paul writes to the church in Corinth is "krataioó." It isn't actually to "be strong" but to "become strong." What does that tell us? Growing strong is not instantaneous; it's a process. This process is called discipleship, and there's no mark that says you've suddenly arrived. Instead, discipleship is *lifelong* strength training, aided by the Holy Spirit, through which "he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6).

MEMORIZE THIS



KEY PASSAGE

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

– 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, NIV

Rock Solid Tool: FELLOWSHIP

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up... Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

– Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, 12, NIV

As we are becoming strong and maturing in discipleship, we will always stand stronger together. In authentic relationship, we are "not quickly broken." **Being intentional about participating in fellowship with other brothers is a vital part of our spiritual training.**

Talk About It

1. How did you do on last session's Rock Solid Challenge?
2. Think about a skill or activity you've improved at through training. What did you do to build up your ability?
3. Do you agree that the Christian man is called to develop strength mentally, spiritually, and physically? What is the importance of training in each of these three areas?
4. What does "running aimlessly"—as Paul puts it—look like in your own life? Is there an area where you need focused training?
5. Do you feel like you are continually becoming strong? Why or why not?
6. Have you ever had to train with a team (band, football, Basic Training, etc.)? What were the benefits of training as a group?

Activity Idea

Look for an upcoming 5K event in your community to do together as a group. You can find many free training programs online by searching for the phrase "couch to 5K." Consider getting together regularly to train—make it fun!

ROCK

SOLID CHALLENGE:

Real Relationships.

Who are the guys you could really count on in a crisis? Are there men who know you well enough to call you out on your "stuff" when needed? If you have a hard time coming up with names, you aren't in the minority. Many of us try to go-it-alone. Although the reasons might be varied, the end result is the same: we end up isolated, unprotected, and weak.

Instead, how should we function as brothers in Christ? Patrick Morley describes it like this: "In some ways, men are like redwood trees. [...] They reach as high as 350 feet. Yet their roots generally run only six to ten feet below the surface. How do these top-heavy monsters stand the tests of storms and high winds? They grow close together, and they intermingle their

roots" (*A Man's Guide to the Spiritual Disciplines*, 93). Christian fellowship works this way, steadying and strengthening us over time.

This week, as you interact with other Christian men—both inside and outside of this group—look for opportunities to go beneath surface conversation and "intermingle roots." Is there something you're excited about? Share it. Is there a struggle you need prayer for? Find a guy you trust and ask. "None of us is complete," writes Morley, "but together, we are whole. In His wisdom, God has not given any of us everything we need. Instead, He chose to give us one another" (99).

As a group, discuss what comes next after this study. Will you continue meeting together? If so, what will the purpose of meeting be? How often will you get together? Will you go through a formal study? If you need ideas, ask a leader at your church for direction.

Prayers for my brothers...

OUR NEXT STEP...