

# Special Messages of 2019

## Strengths and Struggles

Edited Transcript

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Good morning. I appreciate you Brett, thank you so much. Now, you said not too many came back, so I guess the second time I may try to clear you guys out for next week. Thank you again for having me on this morning. We'll get right into it. I'm talking about strengths and struggles on this morning, and when we look at that topic, it's pretty self-explanatory. We understand when you hear strengths, you hear struggles, but before we start and talk this morning, I just want to talk to get an introduction and to open up and to let you guys know something.

So around eight years old, I can honestly say that I felt my first taste or introduction to love, eight years old. And some of you guys may be looking at me, and I kid you not, you may think that she probably had pigtails and a nice denim dress on, but it was something different. It was a square box, a ring with red and blue ropes, and in the center of that ring it had WWF, the World Wrestling Federation. When I tell you I fell in love, I fell in love. Not to mention just the introductions and the cool names. The Animal, Jake the Snake, Junkyard Dog, people like that. Sound like some of you guys were watching that with me on Saturdays. We talk about wrestling, and it was just something about it that I was just so fascinated about everything that happened, I just didn't know, I just couldn't wait, I was locked in. Not to mention as well that I had to get talked down from my mother telling me, "Hey listen, that's not what you do. You're not a wrestler." I had younger siblings and, of course, we would go try some of those. Thank God that everything was okay. But as we begin to talk about that wrestling, there was something about it. Key things about wrestling that [inaudible] or makes it a great thing, people have certain moves that label who they are, and those moves are signature moves that will quickly allow them to say, "You know what? You'll be able to get out of this situation." Eyebrows start to raise, voices start to get a little bit louder when people hear that this move or this position is about to happen from the current wrestler that's speaking, or that's up before them.

Now I have a quick story about wrestling on this morning. Genesis 32:24 says this, "So Jacob was left alone and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched, and he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, 'Let me go before it's daybreak,' but Jacob replied, 'I will not let you go until you bless me.' The man asked him, 'What is your name?' 'Jacob,' he answered. Then the man said, 'Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel.'" I'm trying to figure out, do I have to wrestle with somebody to get me a cool name? Because I know that the wrestlers have a cool name. Their real name isn't their name, but they have a cool wrestling name.

So it tells us here in this story that Jacob began to wrestle with the man all night long. And we understand about certain struggles that we may have that will pull different types of strengths that we have to rely on. He wrestled with him, but one thing that I loved about what he did in that story was he said this to his struggle, "I won't let you go until you bless me." A lot of times we begin to bow down to our struggles, but I say that, here in this situation, or things that I may struggle with, "You know what? I won't let you go until you bless him. I won't be down to it." I was laughing with my table on this

morning. I was sitting in the parking lot a little bit earlier, and I know that the staff was looking for me. I was here, came enough time to get suited up, and I was telling the table when they were looking for me, one of the guys, I don't know, Lawrence, was saying, "Hey, they were looking for you."

I said, "I was here," but I said, "I had to understand my strengths and struggles." I said, "I couldn't give myself enough time to sit in here with all those boxes of donuts because I know I'll be tempted." A lot of us have to understand and identify our struggles, and know what it is that needs to happen. I said, "You know what? I'll give myself enough time to get suited up and get myself together, and won't have that much time to be able to debate back and forth, am I going to get a jelly, or am I going to get glazed, or am I going to get powdered donuts on this morning?" So, we have Jacob here and he wrestled with some things. When we talk about struggles, we talk about strengths, but we have to look at ourselves and understand that there's a big idea that we have. Let me make sure we're good. Okay, here we go.

### **WHEN DO YOU RELY ON YOUR STRENGTHS AND WHEN DO YOU RECOGNIZE YOUR STRUGGLES?**

Strengths and struggles. When we look at strengths and struggles, this is a question, when do you rely on your strength and when do you recognize your struggle? When do you rely on your strength and when do you recognize your struggle? Well, we have certain struggles that we all may deal with. Some may be huge, some may be small to our mindset of what we may look at it as to be, but they're just struggles across the board. When we began to look at those things, we have to begin to reflect back on ourselves, what do we have to do? So sometimes, I found out during the course of things that I may be dealing with, I never gave my strengths enough time to carry out its full potential. In the midst of it, of a struggle, I may give frustrated. I may give it up, I'll make wash my hands from it and say, "You know what, I'll step away," never really giving myself or my strengths time to be able to fully develop myself through the course of this struggle that I may be dealing with.

When we look at a struggle, it's defined as this, a forceful or violent effort to get free from resistance or constriction. So the struggle may not be bad. It's showing us that we're giving a fight or tug from it because it's this, it's a forceful or violent effort to get free from something. Meaning that I have to strength inside of me, which they played together on each other, to say this. "You know what? It's something inside of me that's saying I'm going to forcefully get myself away. If I get into a bind or something that I may be dealing with, what can I do to make sure that I a great escape from it?" I think I talked about this before. There's certain TV shows that I grew up on that I really love, and it was one guy who always would get into types of trouble and he may get tied up, feet may be locked up, upside down, inside a building underwater, and he may have a piece of gum wrapper and get himself away.

Everybody know I'm talking about MacGyver. I mean, I don't know how he did it, but he always did it. Whatever the situation may be, he pulled on whatever was close and resources, and being that this Bible study is available, I can imagine all the resources that may be here when the struggle may begin to arise. Now when we look at the definition of a strength, we look at strength, strength is this, it's the quality or the state of being physically strong, the capacity of an object or substance to withstand great force or oppression. Be it that we all have types of strengths and some of us won't begin to look at it. And it's not like that we just have one. I began to look at certain superheroes. They all don't just have one thing. Some may run fast, night vision, flying. We are capable and understand and say, "Do you know what? I have more than one strength inside of me that I can lean and depend on when I'm dealing with a certain situation."

Ephesians 6:12 says this, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and it gets spiritual wickedness in high places." So does this mean I don't get my cool wrestling name being that these things are spiritual, being that, you know what, I'm not physically able to put my hands on a situation, I'm not physically able to put myself in that situation, I'm not physically able to say, you know what, I can tie this thing up and put it away? No, it's telling us right now, for we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but it's against the principalities. And it tells us this, being that we may not get our name called to come down that hallway for that cool intro, our strengths are constantly fighting for us, it's wrestling for us right now in the spiritual world. It's wrestling against our struggles. There's certain things that we may not even get time to approach, because our strengths has already stepped up to the plate and make sure that we started to fight that battle for us.

And it tells us, against flesh, and blood against the principalities, against the powers, and against the rulers. So what are some of our strengths? One thing, one strength that I know that I had to really rely on for myself, because I couldn't physically touch it, I couldn't physically do it, it was prayer. I know I had to rely on one of my strengths and you know what? The one thing I love about prayer, sometimes I didn't even open up my mouth, it was just in my mindset that I just started to run those things, so it can run its course during the course of my struggle. Because one thing I didn't want to do, I didn't want to make my self vulnerable, to say it out loud. "Oh my goodness, I can't deal with these things. You know what? I'm saying it in my mind to make sure that spiritually things begin to line up for myself while I'm about to face a struggle." Let's just be honest.

If we all have paper and pencil to be able to draw out what we thought our struggle look like, I can imagine some of the monsters that would be on that paper that we would sit in front of the things that we face. Some of us may not even like to approach or even think about those things, but these are things that we have to recognize. We have to recognize our struggles because then we'll be in a place of denial if we never do that, and then we'll always be in a place of defeat as well because we've never been able to recognize it, we've never been able to face it, or call it out for what it is. So when you see certain things, it's like, "Oh, I know what that is. Now you won't get me. I understand, I see what you're trying to do," so I can make sure that I'm winning into this next level.

So when we look at it, it's something physical that the orb of a man won't be able to come out, I won't be macho, I won't be able to hit myself on the chest and get myself together. It's a spiritual thing. It tells us here, that's not what we wrestle against. We're not wrestling against these things, but the principalities. When I begin to look at and correlate the scripture with it, Habakkuk 3:19 says this in the new international version, it says this, "The Sovereign Lord is my strength. He makes my feet like the feet of deer and enables me to tread on the heights." And it tells us this, the sovereign Lord is my strength. So you mean to tell me when I step up to a situation that I may be dealing with, my strength is not enough? Oh, you can't tell me that. I'm looking at all these guys are here. I see top notch fella in here right now, and it looked like a lot of strength in here.

But you mean to tell me, when I face a situation, that my strength is enough? It's telling us this right here, that the sovereign Lord is my strength and he makes my feet like deer feet. Now, one thing I have begun to look at it, it pulled out to me talking about deer's feet, that there they are shaped and in such a way that they're able to run across rocks and mountains and things like that. I'm telling you right now, if I tried to run across a few rocks and things like that, I guarantee you that I will fall. But they're able to get through those things. So when we think about rough situations, our strength, ourselves, the way

that we present ourselves, are like deer's feet, are like hinds feet, that were able to get over these rough situations without fail, without falling.

But it tells us this here, it says the Lord is my strength, it's not about me. The things that I think I have, the strength I have, it's not my physical strength, it's not the accolades that I have. It's not the things that are around, but the Lord is my strength, the sovereign Lord is my strength. So whenever I'm approaching something I'm making sure that I'm bringing him in. So one thing about that wrestling that I love now, not only did I love the wrestlers that came down and they began wrestling, but then one Saturday, they through a whole loop in there. I saw four people come out and there was one guy in the ring. As he was beginning to wrestle, the other opponent was getting the best of him, and he tried his best. But then I saw him on the ground and he was able to get his self from the position from the guy who was getting the best of them, and he began to roll over to the end of the ring to a guy who had his hand reaching outside the ring to tag him in.

That's just like God when dealing with a situation that we feel as though that we want to take control of and is getting the best of us, he's standing outside with his hand. And it's like this, listen, tag me in. How many situations are getting the best of us that he's just stretching because he can't come in unless invited? But I need you to tag me in. He's standing outside the ring waiting while we're still going through back and forth, back and forth, until that man began to manage to roll his self over. And it doesn't matter how you get over there, thrown over, crawled over, run over, pushed over, the hand is waiting for you to tag him in. And when I tell you that blew my mind, a whole level of energy came in, because they said, "You know what? From them on the outside looking in, I see what's going on. I see the moves that he's doing, I see the weakness. You know what, I need to tag. I need you to be tagged in, to take over the rest of his struggle that I may be dealing with."

So, it's not a single fight, but it's a tag team match that we may be dealing with. We may have certain situations that we may say, "You know what? I can't." And he's waiting there on the outside stretching himself as much as he can, and all we have to do is get over there and make sure that we tag him in. So, the sovereign Lord is our strength. He makes our feet like deer feet. They're going to be some things that come up. They're going to be some situations that we deal with that, you know what, a regular person can't deal with. Your attributes won't be able to pull you out. Those things won't work. It tells us this, first Corinthians 10:13, it says, "**God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation, he will also provide a way of escape that you may be able to endure it.**" We're dealing with certain situations, but there's a way of escape and it tells us this.

You won't be tempted beyond your ability. Everybody has a certain amount of ability inside of them and it tells us in first Corinthians 10:13, "but with the temptation he will provide a way of escape." Now I'm not by trade an architect or anything like that, but talking to a few friends who have contracts and deal with builders, there are certain things that they can't do and move on until certain people come in and check certain things within the building. And one thing that's really important that a person has to come through is check and make sure that all the available exits for that building are there. A building cannot go up without it being the certain amount of however the exits that need to be a part for that building. So you knowing that the struggle or situation you may be dealing with, whatever you may face with, there's always an exit all ways around. It tells us here in the scripture that there is a way of escape.

We have to make sure that we find out, and one thing I love about buildings, even when we sit in this room, there's a bright red exit sign on the top that says, "You know what? Even if I didn't know how to get out, if I came to this building, any place that you go in the world, you'll be able to get out of that

building because there's an exit somewhere around that building all around, and not just one, but there's several exits. So when we begin to think about it, we have to be able to rely on our resources, what's our strength, which is the Lord, to understand that, no, do you know what? There is an exit that is close by. And the last scripture for today says this, 2 Timothy 1:7 says this, "For God have not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

Sometimes we go through certain situations and it gets, honestly, let's just talk about it. When it feels like that I'm trapped in, I'm locked in, there's no resources around, I'm not sure if I'm able to get out of it, it feels like, you know what? I don't even know if my mind is able to contain this, that a feeling like that, I may lose my mind in this situation. But it tells us this, that the spirit of the Lord that God gives us, has not given us the spirit of fear, but the power of love and a sound mind. Going through these struggles, going through these situations and things that you may be able to deal with, one thing that you have to have is a sound mind. You have to make sure you keep your cool. We understand how quick it is for us to lose it. We understand. I know for myself, at a younger age, was a hothead quick and ready to go.

But you know what? I found out that, that didn't give me exactly what I really needed, but it made things worse. I had to make sure that I was cool, had to make sure that I was calm, and be able to collect everything that I needed before I made the decision. Sometimes we move into certain situations and make decisions too quick before we can find out what really happen, or what needs to be done.

### **CAN YOU THINK OF A TIME WHEN YOUR STRUGGLES/STRENGTHS CHANGED YOUR BEHAVIOR?**

Next one. Can you think of a time when your struggles and your strengths have changed your behavior? Correlates with 2 Timothy 1:7. Can you think of a time? I can think of several times that certain struggles may have moved in and change my behavior, change my position, changed my posture, and how I was. But I had to understand and know that the strength was there. The struggle presented itself, but I had to make sure that I relied on what was there.

The dear God there again, God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. So that's time for us to reflect and think, what is my ability? I know what I can do. I know what I can do. If you lined up three chairs and told me to jump over them, I will move two of them, and jump over one. Why? Because I know my ability. Sometimes we feel as though that we're faced with certain things that are before us that we have to perform. Some things are, I just don't have to do it, that's not my ability, that's not my placement, and I will not do it. When will we stand in understanding, pull inside of ourselves to understand and know that this is what needs to be done? If you knew you would end up with your desired outcome, would you still allow your struggle to get the best of you? Yeah, that's a good one.

### **IF YOU KNEW YOU WOULD END UP WITH YOUR DESIRED OUTCOME, WOULD YOU STILL ALLOW YOUR STRUGGLE TO GET THE BEST OF YOU?**

If you knew you would end up with your desired outcome, would you still allow your struggles to get the best of me? If you knew going into this situation, even though the way that it was presented, even though you know it'd look like I couldn't handle it, if you knew that you were going to get your desired outcome, would you still let your struggle frustrate you? Be it that we have these scriptures that tells us right here, we should be able to go into it and know, you know what? I know I'm going to get my desired outcome and I'm not going to let it get the best of me. How can we look at our struggles different? How

can we look at them different? Because we know when it comes to do, we know where it puts us, and we know how we feel afterwards if we fall into it. We all have struggles. We understand and we know, but if you knew you had your desired outcome, how would you present yourself?

I found out to myself then I said, you know what? I'm going to have to present myself the way that I would as a champion before, as if it was their victory at the end. I'm going in with the victory of saying, "You know what? It's already defeated before I already approach it and before I get to the end, I have to understand and know." I have to make sure that I'm doing these things because, after all, like we said in Ephesians, it's not against flesh and blood. This is not a physical one. These are spiritual things that we need to rely on, spiritual things that we know that we need to deal with. So as he's reaching into the ring, that it may be getting the best of us, that this is a tag team match, you know what? I've tried all that I could. Father, I need you to take care of this. This is what I need you to do for me.

I'm going to drive it again, the same Big Idea. God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. We've all dealt with people. We've dealt with situations that's been inconsistent. We can even mark it ourselves. I haven't been consistent even with things that I said I wanted to do. I said, "You know what? Every Saturday, I want to make sure I clean the car out." Spent a couple of Saturdays and I haven't been able to clean the car out, and I can see the results of it because I haven't been consistent with it. But it tells us here, God is faithful and God will not let us be tempted beyond your ability. We know what our abilities are, we know what we're faced with and we know what we deal with, our strengths and our struggles. Our struggles are always going to present themselves, but we have to understand that we have more than one strength and what are the steps that we are going to rely on?

It tells us, God makes a way of escape. He'll make us like deer feet. We're not wrestling with physical things. It's all spiritual that we're dealing with, and you know what? At the end of it, I'm not going to be upset, I'm not going to be flustered, but I'm going to walk out with a sound mind. It's not going to beat on me as I'm sitting down, as I'm recapping about what happened or what I could have done better, but I'm going to have a sound mind in the situation.

If you will, Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for blessing each and every one of us to here on this morning. God, as we sit in here right now, Father, with the men that you've called, the ones that you've blessed, we ask right now that you begin to touch us. Father, we all know that we deal with struggles in life right now, God, but we know that you've applied us and we know that you have strengths as well. Lord, we believe in and trust in you and thank you for everything that you've done in our lives. We know that you can do it. So we ask right now that we began to reignite the strength that we have inside of us. Father, we ask that you help us along with our struggles. And after all, we know that this is not a battle that we're dealing with on our own, but we believe in and trust in you, and we know that you can do it for this guy. So, Father, whereby I may be weak, I'm tagging you in right now to help me during the course of this. We thank you, Father, for everything that you've done and everything that you're going to do in our lives. We appreciate you. In your name we pray, Jesus. Amen.