

Strength in Change

-There is an old saying that says “We all can’t wade in the same river twice.” Does anyone know what that may mean? (When you walk into the waters of a running river, it immediately moves on and new water continually passes by you. When another person walks in, the water is brand new and different than it was for you because it is new water going by them.)

-That is how the river of life is. Life is never the same for any two people. What we may cross through will change for someone else when it is their turn to cross through it.

-Times change, families change, cultures change and people change! Even our own needs change!

-How many of you have gone through change recently or know of someone who is going through one right now? (...)

-Can it be difficult? (...)

-What emotions could you or they be facing? (Fear, loneliness, anxiety, hopelessness, etc.)

-Do you ever ask, “Why can’t things be the same as they were?”

-Have you ever thought the words “If only...?” (...)

-There is one promise in life that everyone faces and it is life changes, sometimes weekly, sometimes daily and many times in a single moment!

-To help us as we walk through these changes, the best place to find strength and encouragement is in God’s Word.

-To do that, we are going to look at several encouraging verses that share with us Who God is in the midst of it all.

-First off, I want to ask does anyone remember who Rebekah was from the Old Testament? Hint, she was related to Abraham. (She was Abraham’s great niece and became Abraham’s son’s [Isaac’s] wife.)

-Does anyone remember how she was picked to be Isaac’s wife? (Abraham sent his servant back to his home country to find a wife for his son Isaac. When his servant reached a well, he asked the Lord that the first woman who gave him water to drink at the well and then offered to water all his camels would be the sign from Him that this was the wife for Isaac. It was Rebekah. [Gen. 24])

-Now, after Abraham’s servant met Rebekah’s family and told them all that the Lord had done for Abraham and for showing him that Rebekah was the wife for Isaac, he wanted to leave the very next morning to take Rebekah back to Abraham and Isaac. The family wanted her to stay for 10 more days. So they brought her before them to see what she would say.

-Let's stop here for a moment and consider what Rebekah may have felt. First off, what were some things that she was going to give up for an unknown man in an unknown country? (Family, friends, home, familiar surroundings, security, etc.)

-Second, how do you think she may have felt about this? (Maybe scared, unsure, etc.)

-Let's make this personal, have you ever had to give any of these things up in your own life? (...)

-Was it scary? (...)

-Was it hard to deal with? (...)

-If you have, you can understand how difficult this may have been for this young woman to make her decision. Back then, once they left home, many times they would never see their family members again because of travel was so difficult during that era in history.

-But, let's read Rebekah's response that could only come from the peace of knowing that her Father in Heaven was watching over her. Let's read together verse #1 on our Verse Sheet: (Gen. 24:55-58 "Her brother and her mother said, 'Let the young woman remain with us a while, at least ten days; after that she may go.' But he said to them, 'Do not delay me, since the Lord has prospered my way. Send me away that I may go to my master.' They said, 'Let us call the young woman and ask her.' And they called Rebekah and said to her, 'Will you go with this man?' She said, 'I will go.'")

-What do you think it took for her to say "I will go."? (Courage and faith.)

-Do you think she knew that her Father in Heaven understood her feelings and struggles about all that she was going to leave behind? (...)

-Do you think God understands your feelings and struggles when things change drastically in your own life? (...)

-To help us understand Who He really is in these situations, let's read Verse #2 on our Verse Sheet together: (Isaiah 40:28-29 "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary and *His understanding* no one can fathom.")

-Let's stop here for a moment and concentrate on the words "His understanding no one can fathom." What do you think this means? (...)

-Do you think God understands when you are struggling and need His strength? (...)

-Do you think He also understands that the outcome of your situation is eternally better for you than the struggle you may be facing in the middle of it? (...)

-Are you willing to trust Him in this as Rebekah did? (...)

-Looking back at Rebekah, she trusted that God was going to handle the outcome of the situation she was about to embark on. She acted in obedience, trusting in God's provision. God also understood her fears, but He also understood that through her offspring, a great nation was to be born and the Savior of the world was to come! Jesus came through her lineage.

-Have you ever considered that through whatever you may be struggling with, that something eternal may come of it? (...) Someone may be watching your journey through it, watching you trusting in God in all things, seeing your hope, peace and joy in the midst of that journey and that may attract that person to know Him as their own Lord and Savior.

-If we try to remember this, it may give us more hope and peace as we take the journey with our Lord.

-But God didn't just leave Rebekah feeling this way, you can tell in her short words of obedience that He gave her the strength to do what He called her to do by her simple three words: "I will go!" There was no huge battle of reasoning with family and friends, no questioning, just those three simple words, "I will go."

-Can we say that when God calls us to the same unknown places, whether physical, mental or spiritual? (...)

-It takes a huge amount of faith in knowing Who God is and Who He is to each one of us.

-But Rebekah knew Who He was to her, He was her Protector, her Provider, and her Strength and she trusted completely in Him.

-Can we trust Him completely as she did when we are weak and afraid of the changes before?

-Let's look at some verses together about this. Let's continue with our next verse, #3 on our Verse Sheet: (Isaiah 40:29 "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.")

-According to this verse, Who gives us the real strength, the supernatural kind that comes when we are totally weak and feeling powerless to handle what we are facing? (God does! Not friends, not self-help books, but the supernatural Spirit of God!)

-Let's read verse #4 together: (Isaiah 41:10 "Fear not, for I am *with you*; be not dismayed, for I am *your God*; I will *strengthen you*, I will *help you*, I will *uphold you* with My righteous right hand!")

-What does He say after each "I am" and "I will"? (I am with you, I am your God, I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you!)

-Does that sound like a God that is going to leave us to our situation, helpless and lonely? (No! He loves us and wants to strengthen us!)

-Let's read our next verse together, #5 (Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.")

-According to this verse, what does God do for us? (Strengthens us for all things!)

-Let's read verse #6 for more encouragement: (Psalm 46:1 "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.")

-When we are in trouble Who is "ever-present" with us during them? (God!)

-And what is He to us during those times? (Our Refuge and our Strength)

-Let's read another verse, #7 (Isaiah 40:29 "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.")

-According to this verse, is God leaving the weary and weakened heart to figure it out on their own? (No, He is giving them strength.)

-But, you may be asking, "Why am I not *feeling* it?"

-Because strength is not a feeling, it is a doing! It is God giving you the ability to walk through what you are having to face, moment by moment, *doing for you what you cannot do for yourself!*

-Last but not least, let's read verse #8 together: (Isaiah 40:31 "But those *who hope in the Lord* will *renew their strength*. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint!")

-What do you think it means when it says "But those who hope in the Lord"? (...)

-Have any of you waited for a bus to take you somewhere?

-Did you wait expectantly and hopefully for that bus that it was going to show up as its' schedule said?

-And you didn't want to move because you knew it was going to show up and you didn't want to miss it?

-That is what "those who hope in the Lord" means! You are waiting with expectation and hope for the Lord, knowing and believing He is going to show up! Trusting that God will come through for us, even when life seems to be beating us down, we continue to wait in hope for God to come through!

-And then, according to this verse, what does God do for us when we hope in Him? (He renews our strength!)

-God RENEWS our strength, our weakened hearts and struggling minds!

-As we go through difficult times, keep your hope in Him and don't give up, He will strengthen us! He will give us wings to soar through those difficult situations and when we get to the other side, we will look back and say, Wow! He was there the whole time after all, even when I didn't feel Him! There's no way I could have gone through that without His supernatural strength. That is the God Who loves you and I. Always "ever-present" and strengthening us in the journey we are on. So, tie a knot and hold on, He is hanging there with you and giving you the strength to hold on and persevere through it all, giving you His power and presence to overcome. He loves you!

“STRENGTH IN CHANGE” VERSE SHEET

1. Genesis 24:55-58 “Her brother and her mother said, ‘Let the young woman remain with us a while, at least ten days; after that she may go.’ But he said to them, ‘Do not delay me, since the Lord has prospered my way. Send me away that I may go to my master.’ They said, ‘Let us call the young woman and ask her.’ And they called Rebekah and said to her, ‘Will you go with this man?’ She said, ‘*I will go.*”
2. Isaiah 40:28-29 “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary and *His understanding* no one can fathom.”
3. Isaiah 40:29 “*He* gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.”
4. Isaiah 41:10 “Fear not, for I am *with you*; be not dismayed, for I am *your God*; I will *strengthen you*, I will *help you*, I will *uphold you* with My righteous right hand!”
5. Philippians 4:13 “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”
6. Psalm 46:1 “God is our *refuge and strength*, an ever-present help in trouble.”
7. Isaiah 40:29 “He *gives strength* to the weary and *increases the power* of the weak.”
8. Isaiah 40:31 “But those *who hope in the Lord* will *renew their strength*. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint!”