

06/10/12

Understanding Your Source of Power

- I'd like to begin this am with a little audience participation...are you up for that?...
 - 3 questions...
 1. How many of you have ever run out of gas?
 2. Where?...what city?...
 3. How far did you have to go to get it?...
- I've mentioned to you before that my dad and his friends would take me with them every summer to Canada to go fishing...and my dad's friends would come up from KY and TN—meet us in Gary—and then we'd go up to Canada from there...
- and my dad was known for two things...
 - he liked to drive and he was very good at it...
 - and he was the cheapest person on the planet...
 - and that was especially true when it came to the price of gas...
 - for some reason, he hated to pay too much for gas...in fact it's funny what you remember from being a kid...but I recall a conversation where the guys had driven up from TN that day—and they were talking in hushed tones about how they actually had to pay 40 cents for a gallon of gas...and according to them, that was practically the end of the world as we knew it...
- anyway, my dad was driving up in Canada and it was wilderness up there and we were getting really low on gas...
- and you know that feeling...you're watching the gas gauge, and wondering how many miles you can go after the needle hits empty...and looking for any sign of an upcoming town...
 - finally we saw a place and we were all relieved that we weren't going to be stuck somewhere...
 - but then my dad saw how much it was...and it could not bring himself to filling up the truck...
 - so he bought \$5 worth and announced that we would fill up when we found something more reasonably priced...
 - well, you can probably finish this story, can't you?...
- we ran out – and here we are in the middle of nowhere thinking—we had as much as we wanted back in the previous town...and now we're stuck for sure...
 - nothing quite like that feeling of the needle going all the way down...and then under E...and then the engine knocking a few times and then sputtering out...and then your car might coast for 50 feet or so and then you're done...you're out of gas...
- have you ever felt like that personally?...where you're just running on fumes?...just out of gas?...
- what about in a ministry responsibility the Lord gave you?...
 - with a particular person, or something in your family, maybe a ministry here at church...
 - you've been trying to be faithful...trying to serve the Lord...
- but maybe it's a lot harder than you thought...
- or you're not seeing the results you hoped for...maybe there's some pushback or criticism...

- but you're starting to feel really tired...like you're running out of gas...
- maybe you've lost your joy and you find yourself complaining a lot...you feel like quitting...
- there's a passage of Scripture that could possibly be very helpful to you – Luke 9 – page 53 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you...
- if you've been attending here you know our church's theme this year...is **Building Core Strength**
 - emphasized in verses like - **Psalm 138:3 - On the day I called, You answered me; You made me bold with strength in my soul...**that's it—core strength...
 - today we're thinking about what you do when you feel like that strength's almost gone...
 - we'd like to look for opportunities to apply these verses to...
- remember our three areas of emphasis...
 1. **Shoring up foundational areas in our walk with Christ and our church ministries that comprise the basis of godliness and effective community service.**
 2. **Planning and praying for the construction of Faith West and the successful launch of a cluster of new ministries in West Lafayette.**
 3. **Preparing for the next round of ministry dreaming as we embark on a new strategic planning process in 2013.**
- so we're talking about **Building Core Strength by Understanding Your Source of Power.**
- read Luke 9:1-36
- so, building core strength by understanding your source of power...
- with the time we have remaining, let's think about **3 steps to always having gas in your tank.**

I. Accept the Ministry Assignment God Gives You.

- one of the points that we made at the beginning of the study is that it is not the task of any of the gospel writers to give a comprehensive discussion of the life and ministry of Christ...or even a chronological treatment of the subject...
- this is a good place to point that out because Luke skips over some material found in Mark apparently because that was not important for what he was trying to communicate to the man he wrote this to – Theophilus...
- remember we mentioned this at the beginning of this study...

John 20:30–31 - Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.
- he said at the end of the next chapter...**John 21:25 - And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.**
- so it's important to understand that when we get to Luke 9 – we're at the halfway mark in Jesus' public ministry...this is about 18 months from the crucifixion...
- that's why we just read about a very important transition...last week we saw Jesus healing people...and it was a great reminder of His power...
- but now...

A. For the disciples

1. They were given power and authority

- **Luke 9:1 - And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases.**

- please think about what an incredible act of grace this was...

- obviously Jesus didn't have to use people in the accomplishment of His plan...but He is...and so He sends his disciples out and entrusts them with the same kind of power He has been modeling for them...

- but that's not an end in itself...

2. They were given the mission of proclaiming the kingdom of God

- **Luke 9:2 - And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.**

- one way you can always tell whether a ministry is truly from the Lord is whether there is a message and a mission involved...

- but thankfully it was clothed--as is often the case--with works of compassion for those who were hurting...

- Jesus isn't just a king – He's a good king...and the message we have to proclaim is one that brings abundant life to those who will repent and believe...

3. They were to trust God to provide.

- **Luke 9:3–4 - And He said to them, “Take nothing for *your* journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not *even* have two tunics apiece. “Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city...”**

- so there's this overarching theme of God providing for those who have accepted a ministry assignment...if we're running out of gas, there's some kind of disconnect going on...and thankfully...the disciples accepted the mission...

4. They had a willingness to obey.

- **Luke 9:6 - Departing, they *began* going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.**

- these weren't perfect men – but here's an example of them taking a step of obedience and doing what God asked them to do...

- now what do we do with this little parenthetical statement about Herod?...I think there's an important point there...

B. Undoubtedly some will be confused.

- **Luke 9:7–9 - Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen again. Herod said, “I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man about whom I hear such things?” And he kept trying to see Him.**

- how could you get it any more mixed up than that?...and yet if you let people who either confuse the message or your motives – either purposefully or innocently—if that makes us run out of ministerial gas...we're going to be in trouble...

- cf. Clara Barton – Isaac's Storm – accusations and criticisms against the Red Cross – "It is an unfortunate trait in the human character to assail or asperse others engaged in the performance of humanitarian acts."

C. Sometimes (often?) the ministry opportunities come at inopportune times.

- this is yet another time where looking at the parallel passages in other gospels provides crucial data...

- **Mark 6:31–32 - And He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.” (For there were many *people* coming and going, and they did not**

even have time to eat.) They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves.

- the point is – after this preaching tour – they were going to take some vacation...nothing wrong with that at all...
- but you and I will run out of gas very quickly if we become irritated whenever a ministry opportunity arises that doesn't fit our schedule...
- that's part of what it means to live in the kingdom of God...understanding that the king sometimes sovereignly ordains opportunities to serve Him when we already feel like we've served Him a lot...
- and that's exactly what happens next...because the people come find them...and Mark adds crucial data...**Mark 6:33–34 - The people saw them going, and many recognized them and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them. When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things.**
- well, that's a problem...why?...
 - because where are all these people going to eat?...there isn't a Subway in sight...
- **Luke 9:12–14 - Now the day was ending, and the twelve came and said to Him, “Send the crowd away, that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside and find lodging and get something to eat; for here we are in a desolate place.” But He said to them, “You give them something to eat!” And they said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless perhaps we go and buy food for all these people.” (For there were about five thousand men.)...**

- do you see what's happening?...

II. Understand that the Lord May Purposely Bring You to the End of Yourself.

- isn't that exactly what's unfolding here?

A. The reasonable solution to the disciples.

- we're out of gas here...

- **Luke 9:12 - Now the day was ending, and the twelve came and said to Him, “Send the crowd away, that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside and find lodging and get something to eat; for here we are in a desolate place.”**

- have you ever said that?...

- I've been kind to this neighbor long enough...

- I've been patient with this child long enough...

- I've put up with this job, or this boss, this co-worker, this in-law long enough...

B. Jesus' challenge

- **Luke 9:13 - But He said to them, “You give them something to eat!”**

- maybe you're not out of gas...maybe there's a source of fuel within your grasp that you've not considered yet...

C. The great lesson

- **Luke 9:16–17 - Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and broke them, and kept giving them to the disciples to set before the people. And they all ate and were satisfied; and the broken pieces which they had left over were picked up, twelve baskets full.**

- see, I wonder how many times we've concluded that we were out of gas when we had access to resources at our very fingertips?...

- I realize you might say – but PV – God hasn't called upon us to heal diseases or cast out demons...

- no, but He's called us to significant ministry if we'll trust Him for the power and the sustenance, even when we can't see where it's coming from...
- I'd like you to hear today from Jocelyn Wallace, our director of Vision of Hope and then Reann, one of the young ladies God has brought to us...
 - and please ask yourself regarding whatever ministry opportunity God has given you right now that's challenging...as you listen to these stories...are you really out of gas?...are we really out of gas...Is God really out of gas?

- Jocelyn

In 1995, after serving God on the mission field in a 3rd world country for 10 years and then serving God in Campus Ministry at a Big 10 university for 5 years, my family was sent to Faith Church to receive counseling. We came to Lafayette defeated. My parents were hanging together by a thread.

At that time I was 18, and I had made the decision that if a broken and bitter family was God's way of repaying us for our faithful service to him, then I wanted nothing to do with him anymore. I didn't spend any time or energy hating God; **He was simply dead to me.** Over the months there moments I reconsidered that perhaps God was worth thinking about again, but it was really only on occasions that served me. During that time of rebellion and loneliness, while searching for anything that would satisfy me, I decided that being married and having my own family would fill that need. Before anyone knew what had happened I was married as a teenager. My poor husband had no idea what he had gotten himself into when he chose to marry someone that was that sad, angry, fearful, and bitter. He had no chance of ever being able to satisfy me, and for four years we struggled to make a marriage work that was founded on my emptiness needing to be filled.

During our early marriage we encountered a couple that loved us in a shocking and radical Christ-like way, and we eventually both made decisions to have a relationship with God. When we began attending Faith Church again, as an invisible, in-the-shadows kind of couple, we began to learn about the power of God available to us, even in the middle of the mess we were in. For the next 2 years we listened, studied, learned, cautiously got involved, got our college educations, and got good jobs. Although there was growth as we applied God's word, there were areas that were still troubled.

In 2002, our daughter Hailey was born 3 months early, weighing 1 lb 13 ounces. Facing the near death experiences of both myself and my daughter, while being a wife, running a business, trying to keep up with NICU visits, and also facing some extended family problems left me out of strength. Within six months of our daughter's birth I was completely exhausted, barely surviving, and questioning why this God that I was now

following and serving again would have saved my life in the hospital only to allow me to be in this position of depression severe enough that I was begging Him to kill me.

Contemplating death but afraid to hurt my family, I turned to the only person left that could help, the God who wouldn't let me die. What I found was a God who's not freaked out by my questions or disappointed that I couldn't make myself want to stay alive. When I was honest and transparent with Him, I found that He was kind enough to not only answer my questions but powerful enough to fill my life with purpose and meaning. Over the next 18 months of asking hard questions and finding real answers, I found myself connected to a source of power that energized me for life with the same supernatural strength that was used to raise Jesus from the dead. I started living the passage from Philippians 3:10 that says "I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him..." 2 Corinthians 4:7 says that I have the treasure of knowing Christ in a weak and failing human body to show God's all-surpassing power. Since that time ten years ago *there have been many instances where I've needed to grow as a wife or mother and in my other relationships, but I am growing while being connected to that supernatural source of strength.*

I was an empty, miserable excuse of a human being... such a failure that I should have been disqualified from ever doing anything for God. But like Psalm 106:8 says, I believe God saved me and is sanctifying me **for his name's sake.... to make his mighty power known.** I have failed in more ways than I would ever want anyone to know. But like Psalm 77:14-15 says He is the God who performs miracles. He displays His power among His people, and with his mighty arm He redeems them.

Every day I am faced with needs at home or at Vision of Hope where ministry opportunities happen at inopportune times, when I'm cranky, sick of studying, or exhausted from a full day's work, and I have to choose whether I will rely on myself, or whether I will use God's power, perfectly suited for that occasion. It has been exciting to see that when there is nothing left of me but the Christ that is in me and I'm not in the way, God's glory shines the brightest.

If I had never been loved and taught in my weakest moments, when it probably wasn't very convenient for others to be involved, I wouldn't know how to work with the girls at Vision of Hope that I have come to love so dearly. I have answers to share with them because I have experienced Christ working powerfully in my life, and I want them to experience a relationship with Him too. Like Colossians 1:28-29 says "He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present

everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.”

- Reann

Hi my name is Reann Weber. I'm 19 years old and a current resident at Vision of Hope Residential Treatment Center. I'm here today to tell you how life changing God's Word has been for me and how amazing it has been learning to love and trust him.

I was introduced to drugs at age 13. By 15 I was partying almost every weekend. Drinking and smoking were the cool things to do, right? The first time I got caught I was 16. My family was no longer important to me and neither was school. Now finding the party that weekend or buying my next bag, that was important. I was put on a year probation and told to straighten up. Did I? No!

I violated probation and was put on house arrest for 6 months as a 16 year old. I continued to rebel against anyone who thought they could tell me what to do. While on house arrest I continued getting high. I didn't care and thought I surely wouldn't get caught again. Well, I did. And two probation violations later and another six months on house arrest I thought to myself "Why can't I just stop getting high?"

Even after thinking that, I let myself fall deeper and deeper into the pit of destruction, and before I knew it I was a full blown alcohol and drug addict. I was given 2, 3, even 4 chances at redeeming myself, and I threw it all away.

At age 18, I became a convicted drug felon and was sent to Rockville Correctional Facility with a 3 year sentence. In other words, as an 18 year old, I went to a maximum security prison.

Almost a year before all of this my probation officer told my parents and I about Vision of Hope. When I was put in jail my mom started looking for somewhere for me to go to get help. She remembered Vision of Hope and again told me about it. I thought about it but wondered if God really wanted to help me now and where has he been this whole time? Was I ready to change?

I spent my 19th birthday getting out of prison then came to Vision of Hope on early release. I have found out that I'm not alone in this struggle and that there are reasons that my life got so bad, but more importantly that there were answers to get out of this mess. I am learning the reasons behind my drug and alcohol addiction and how to resolve those issues on a daily basis.

Throughout the years of my juvenile delinquency and addictions I cost my community thousands of dollars in court costs, lawyer fees, failed drug testing, and the cost of housing an inmate in the prison system. Altogether I cost my community a little over \$29,000. On top of the cost to my community is the cost to my family. I never once thought about how this would affect them. I was a liar and a manipulator and didn't weigh how my actions would affect anyone. I influenced other juveniles to break the law and get involved with drugs.

That is why I am so excited about the help I've gotten and for my future. I plan to keep growing and utilizing the resources around me to help me make better decisions. I'm hoping to one day go back to school, complete a college degree, become a faithful employee, and begin living responsibly. That would give me the opportunity to serve others and give back what I've taken through my drug and alcohol addiction. I believe through the power of God nothing is impossible. With the love and support I receive through Faith's ministry I am learning how to show the hope I've found with others. I'm excited to show my community that real change is possible through the power that is available to me in Christ.

- now, how is all of this related to the transfiguration?...
- Luke says that 8 days after these sayings...Jesus took Peter, James, and John up to a mountain to pray... **Luke 9:29–31 - And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing *became white and gleaming*. And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.**

- the point is...

III. Be Prepared to See Christ in Entirely New Ways.

- this about a situation in which you might feel out of gas...and how continuing to serve in the midst of your weariness could be the very means of learning more about Christ...

1. Kids home from school for the summer
2. Going on vacation
3. Serving in a new ministry like VBS
4. Taking the intro class

5. Not giving up on that child who has gone astray

6. Sticking in that job situation even though it is challenging