

Godly Living Requires Supernaturally Empowered Effort

Premise:

In order to live godly lives, we need supernaturally empowered effort. We can't afford to ignore the need for empowerment (reliance on God) nor to ignore the need for effort.

It's very easy to fall for the trap of neglecting one of the two.

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- Matthew 26:41; Romans 7:18; Galatians 5:16; Galatians 5:22-23
- 2 Peter 1:5-7; Philippians 2:12-13
- Colossians 1:29; 2 Timothy 2:7

Three Biblical Word Pictures

I want to look at three illustrations in relation to each other in order to show how the Christian life requires Supernaturally Empowered Effort.

1. Christians are Like Athletes

- 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 2:3-6; Hebrews 12:1; 2 Timothy 4:7; Galatians 5:7
- Athletes perform by putting in effort and improve by putting in effort
- Performing as an athlete takes a good amount of effort, no matter what sport it is
- Athletes get better by practicing. That is how they grow. By putting effort into practicing.

2. Scripture is Like Food

- 4:3-5; 1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:12-14; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3
- Eating gives you a boost of energy for 6-12 hours
- Merely eating will not make you a good athlete
- The Word of God has power to it. Jesus found actual nourishment from it in the wilderness
- Eating physically gives you physical strength; eating spiritually gives you spiritual strength.
- The Bible teaches that we need the Scriptures about as often as we need food (Joshua 1:8; Psalms 1:1-2)

3. The Holy Spirit is Like Water

- John 7:37-39; Isaiah 44:3; 1 Corinthians 12:13
- Physical exertion dehydrates you, but water replenishes you.
- Without staying hydrated, you will have a lack of energy and other problems
- We need regular fillings of the spirit just like our bodies regularly need more water (Ephesians 5:18)
 - "Be filled with the Spirit" means "Be being filled continually"

Similarities and Principles

- 1. We need God's Supernatural Empowerment
 - A person thinking they can be sanctified without regular time in God's Word and regular fillings of the Spirit is like a person thinking they can become a professional athlete without food and water
- 2. We need to put in effort
 - A person thinking that all they need to do to grow spiritually is to spend time in God's Word and in worship and prayer and then God will take care of the rest is like an athlete who thinks that all they need to do to improve is to eat food and drink water and that they don't need to practice
- 3. More effort requires more empowerment
 - An athlete might start to put higher levels of effort into their game or their practice, but higher levels of effort require higher levels of empowerment.
- 4. Progress is not made over night
 - Even if an athlete eats well and drinks enough water and practices hard, they won't make significant improvements over night
- 5. There will always be room to improve
 - No matter how much an athlete trains, they will never be perfect
- 6. We must seek to remove hindrances (Hebrews 12:1)
 - Runners are slowed down by unnecessary weight, so they have to remove it

Problems that Come From Neglecting Supernatural Empowerment

- Failures and lack of growth
- Pride
- Performance-based attitudes

Problems that Come From Neglecting Effort

- Failure and lack of growth
- Neglect of responsibility

Empowered Effort and Grace

- God's empowerment is crucial, and we don't deserve it
- God is in some sense the initiator of our effort because He drew us to Himself (John 6:44)
 - We wouldn't have ever come to Christ except by God's initiative
- We don't put in effort in order to merit favor
 - Putting in more effort won't cause God to love you any more
 - Putting in less effort than you should, won't cause God to love you any less (Romans 8:38-39)
- Supernaturally empowered effort is most glorifying to God
 - The Christian life requiring supernaturally empowered effort leads to God being more glorified than if it only required effort or if it only required empowerment.

We Need Supernaturally Empowered Effort in Every Area of the Christian Life

- Obedience and Character Growth (Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Peter 1:5-7)
- Ministry (Ephesians 6:18-19)
- Knowing God (2 Timothy 2:7)