

CHAPTER ONE

You Are Stronger than You Think

We all face pressure in life and times when we could feel overwhelmed. The obstacle looks too big, we never dreamed we'd be dealing with a sickness, or we thought the trouble at work would be over by now. It's easy to feel as though it's too much, and we can't take it anymore. But the Scripture says, "God will not let you be tempted beyond what you can endure, but He will make a way of escape so that you will be able to bear it." When God designed you, He took into account everything you would face—every struggle, every unfair situation, every setback—and He put in you the strength, the courage, and the determination to withstand it. When you feel overwhelmed, as though the pressure is too much, it's because you're stronger than you think. You haven't discovered all that's in you. You'll never know how strong you really are until you face pressure that you've never faced. It may seem unbearable, but the fact that God allowed it means you can handle it.

God didn't say He would make a way of escape so you can run from it, or so you can avoid it. He said it was so you can bear it. You can look back at times when you didn't think you could go on, the

pressure seemed unbearable, but somehow it didn't defeat you. You had the strength to get up another day, and you kept going when you didn't feel you had anything left. Why didn't it break you? Because you were stronger than you thought. God designed you to handle that pressure. He wouldn't have allowed you to get in that pressure if He hadn't already put in you what you needed to handle it. You will always be able to bear whatever comes your way.

I read about a little fish called the Mariana snailfish. It lives at the very bottom of the ocean, almost five miles underwater. No other fish can survive at that depth. The pressure at that depth is more than a thousand times the pressure at the surface. It would crush any other fish. But when God designed this snailfish, He made its bones flexible so they could withstand the pressure. These fish have special cells and a unique digestive system. Most fish have one gene to stabilize proteins, but this fish has five. Because they're designed to handle the pressure, they don't live burdened, struggling, or overwhelmed; they thrive there. In the same way, when God designed you, He knew what pressures you would face—financial pressure, relationship pressure, raising children pressure, dealing with an illness pressure. If that pressure was going to crush you, if it was going to be unbearable, God wouldn't have put you there. He doesn't make mistakes. Whatever you face, remind yourself that you can handle it. You've been designed for it. You wouldn't be at that depth if the pressure was going to defeat you.

Now you have to get in agreement with God. If you go around thinking, *This is too much. I can't raise these kids. This pressure at work is overwhelming*, that's going to defeat you. The Scripture says you are full of can-do power. You are well able to overcome opposition, to outlast adversity. But I've learned that can-do power doesn't

do you any good if you have a can't-do mentality. Quit looking at all the things you can't do. Have a new perspective: *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. This obstacle may be big, but I can overcome it. This trouble is taking longer than I thought, but I can outlast it. This situation feels overwhelming, but I can handle it. I've been designed for it.*

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I'm strong, I'm anointed, and I'm equipped. Don't have a weak mentality. You weren't created to fall apart when pressure comes. You are stronger than you think. You are more favored than you think. You are more anointed than you think. Like God designed that small fish with special cells and special bones to withstand the pressure, how much more has God designed you with special strength, with courage, with fortitude, with stamina. When you start seeing yourself as strong, empowered, and well able, you won't live overwhelmed. You'll discover strength that you didn't know you had.

Mighty Hero, Stand Strong

This is what happened to Gideon in Judges 6. He was hiding in the winepress as he threshed wheat, afraid of the Midianites who had surrounded his city. You can imagine the pressure he was under, how he felt overwhelmed, worried, wondering what was going to happen. Just when it seemed like he couldn't bear it anymore, an angel showed up and said, "Mighty hero, the Lord is with you." Other

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translations say, “Valiant man of fearless courage.” Gideon didn’t feel like a mighty hero. He was hiding. He didn’t feel courageous. He felt weak and intimidated. This angel was saying in effect, “Gideon, you are stronger than you think. You’re letting this situation overwhelm you. You think it’s unbearable, too much to handle, but I’m here to tell you that you have what it takes. You’re courageous, you’re talented, you’re favored, and you’re well able.” Gideon didn’t know what was in him. He saw what was around him—enemies that looked too big, opposition that seemed insurmountable. The angel showed up to remind him of what was in him.

The angel went on to say, “Gideon, you are to lead the people of Israel against the Midianites.” Even though he saw an angel, Gideon wasn’t convinced. He said, “Are you kidding? I come from the poorest family, and I am the least one in my father’s house.” He was saying, “You’re calling me strong, you’re calling me a hero, but do you know my background? Do you know where I come from? Do you see what I’m up against?” Gideon didn’t understand that God won’t let us get in a situation if He hasn’t already equipped us for it. If it was going to be too much to bear, too big a challenge to defeat, God wouldn’t have allowed it. The fact that you’re in it means you can handle it. As with Gideon, you may not think so—the odds are against you, it feels overwhelming, you don’t see a way out—but you are stronger than you think. You are more powerful than you think. The Most High God is breathing on your life. He’s saying to you today, “Mighty hero, rise up. Mighty hero, stand strong. Mighty hero, you are well able.”

You would think that after the angel called him a mighty hero, Gideon would be full of faith, ready to take new ground, but he

still wasn't convinced. God could have thought, *Forget it, Gideon. If you don't know what you have, if you see yourself as weak, then I'll find somebody else.* But God never gives up on us. You may think of all the reasons why you can't overcome, why that problem is too big, and how it's unbearable, but God is going to keep calling you a mighty hero. He's going to keep telling you that you're stronger than you think. He's going to keep pushing you forward, showing you signs of His favor.

Gideon and one of his men snuck down into the enemy's camp to see what was going on. Several armies had united with the Midianites to fight the Israelites. Gideon only had three hundred men. It seemed impossible. But just as they crept up to the camp, they overheard one of the Midianites telling about a dream that he had. The other Midianite said, "I know exactly what that dream means. God has given Gideon and the Israelites victory over us." When Gideon heard that, something came alive inside. He returned to camp, and he shouted to his men, "Get up! The Lord has given us the victory." He no longer felt weak, overwhelmed, and intimidated. He knew he was well able. At midnight, they attacked the enemy armies, and even though they were greatly outnumbered, Gideon and the Israelites won the victory.

Discover What's in You

I don't think we'd be talking about Gideon if the angel had not told him that he was stronger than he thought. If the angel had not called him a mighty hero, if he had not challenged him to see himself differently, Gideon would have missed his destiny. You're not

reading this by accident. God is saying to you that you're stronger than you think. You're bigger than what you're up against. You were created to overcome, born with what you need to defeat what's

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you feel.*

trying to stop you. You may feel weak, intimidated, and overwhelmed. That's okay. God made us with feelings. I'm not saying to not feel things. I'm saying to not let your feelings

have the final say. Don't let your feelings run your life. You have to go by what you know, not by what you feel. When you feel weak, you need to say, "I am strong." When you feel overwhelmed, you need to say, "I can do all things through Christ." When you feel intimidated, you need to say, "I am a mighty hero." When the pressure feels too much, you need to say, "I can handle it. I'm well able to bear it."

It's significant that Gideon heard what the enemy in the Midianite camp was saying about him. That's what convinced him to see himself the right way. If you could hear the enemy talking about you, he'd be saying, "That's William. Don't mess with him. He serves the Most High God. That's Maria, and that's Susie. You better be careful, because they're powerful, they're favored, and they're strong." Sometimes the enemy knows who we are more than we know who we are. God is not only saying that you are stronger than you think, but even the enemy is saying, "If they find out who they are, surely they will defeat us. If they realize they are a mighty hero, we are no match for them." Are you seeing yourself the right way? Have you discovered what's in you? That situation that seems overwhelming, that pressure that feels unbearable, it's not there to defeat you but to help you discover strength that you didn't know

you had. You're not weak or at a disadvantage; you are a mighty hero. You are a man or a woman of fearless courage.

The pressure on you from the outside may be great. Other people may not be able to take it, but God knew you would face it. That's why, as with that little snailfish, He's already giving you even more than what you need to just survive. To survive is one thing, when we just make it through life, burdened down, and feeling it's unbearable. You weren't created to survive but to thrive. When things come that should be unbearable, you've tapped into strength that you didn't know you had. You still give God praise, you still shine at work, and you still accomplish big dreams. Don't go your whole life and never discover what's in you. You are stronger than you think.

You Have Can-Do Power

Think about a little seed. It's just a quarter of an inch long, doesn't look like much. When you bury that seed in the ground, the dirt that's on top of it is thousands of times heavier, far more powerful. The little seed could think, *Just my luck. I was doing fine, then someone put me in this dirt. Someone buried me.* But what that seed knows is that God already took into account that one day it would be buried, that one day it would feel overwhelmed and be surrounded by pressure and forces that were much greater. So God put in that seed supernatural life, supernatural strength, supernatural ability. After it's

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buried, been trapped in the dark, and it looks as though it's over, that seed will germinate. It will open up and somehow begin to push the dirt out of the way. It was designed to be buried; it was designed to have dirt put on it. God knew the seed would face opposition that looked much bigger, which is why He put in it the strength to push up dirt, strength to move something many times stronger out of its way. God was showing us that it's not the size of what you're up against. What matters is what the Creator put in you. Don't be intimidated by how big the opposition is, by how bad the medical report looks, or by how powerful the people are who are against you. Like that seed, you have the life of Almighty God. You have the favor of God. You have can-do power. You are stronger than you think.

When that seed is buried, I can hear the dirt laughing and saying, "You're done now. You don't have a chance. I'm so much more powerful than you." The seed could panic, live overwhelmed, and say, "What am I going to do?" But this seed knows a secret. It says, "Hey, Mr. Dirt, I may look small, and I know I'm at a disadvantage right now. I know you're much bigger, but I'm not worried. I'm stronger than I look. I'm more powerful than I appear. I have something in me that's not ordinary, that's not common. I have the life of Almighty God." The dirt says, "Big deal. I'm still hundreds of times more powerful than you." But in a few weeks, the little seed opens, and the first shoot from the seed begins to push the dirt back, and push it back, and push it back. Before long, the shoot from the seed has come up out of the ground, and now it's a beautiful bush with blooming flowers.

In the same way, when things look as though they're going to overwhelm you, as though they're too much to bear, remember this

phrase: You are stronger than you think. God knew it was coming. He's already put things inside that you can't see right now, but at the appointed time you're going to push back the dirt. You're going to come out of what's holding you back, but not like you were. You're going to bloom. You're going to blossom, go to new levels, and accomplish greater goals. Don't be fooled by the dirt. The dirt is getting you ready to flourish. There are things in your destiny that can only happen with the dirt. If you weren't buried, so to speak, you would never see what's in your seed. You wouldn't reach your potential.

You can keep an apple seed on a shelf for years. It looks nice. It doesn't have to get dirty, doesn't have to be uncomfortable, but that seed would never become what it was created to be. There are apple orchards in that one seed, but it will never produce a single apple without the dirt. The challenge is that when we get dirt on us, when we face things we don't understand and it feels overwhelming, it's easy to get discouraged, give up on our dreams, and live sour. "God, why is this happening?" That's going to keep our seed from germinating. The right attitude is: *This dirt is not stopping my destiny; it's taking me into my destiny.* God wouldn't have allowed the dirt if it was going to keep you from your purpose. The problem may look too big, the sickness looks too great, the trouble is not turning around. Can I tell you that you are stronger than you think? You can endure more than you think. That dirt is not going to defeat you; it's going to promote you.

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Tap into Your Full Potential

In Numbers 11, Moses felt overwhelmed. He was leading the Israelites through the desert, some two million people, toward the Promised Land. They were complaining, “We’re tired of eating the same food. We liked it better in Egypt. Why did you bring us out here in the desert?” Moses said, “God, why did You lay the burdens of all these people on me? They’re not my children. I’m not able to bear this on my own. It’s too heavy for me.” He felt so pressured and so stressed that he added, “God, I would rather that You kill me than have me carry this heavy load.” It felt unbearable. He couldn’t take it anymore. God told him to call seventy men, seventy elders of the people, who could help him. God said to Moses, “I will take some of the spirit that’s on you and put it on these men. They will help you carry the burden.” One principle is to delegate, because you can’t do everything by yourself. But it’s interesting that God said He was going to take “some of the spirit” that was on Moses and put it on these men. Do you see how strong Moses was? Even though he couldn’t do the work of all seventy, God said, “You have so much potential, you have so much you haven’t tapped into, that I’m going to take from you and give it to them.”

Imagine God taking from what’s in you and giving it to seventy people, and you are still able to do great things. That’s how strong you are. That’s how powerful you are.

The reason you face big challenges is because you have a big destiny.

That’s how anointed you are. I want you to see yourself as a mighty hero, as someone who’s well able. The reason you face big challenges is because

you have a big destiny. The reason you have great obstacles is because you have greatness in you. The reason the pressure feels overwhelming is because you are stronger than you think. That difficulty is an opportunity for you to discover what's in you. This won't happen if you're weak, defeated, and saying, "I can't take it anymore. It's too much for me." If that was true, then God made a mistake when He designed you, or He accidentally put you in an environment that you couldn't handle. No, God doesn't make mistakes. The pressure is showing you how strong you are, how much you can handle. That's getting you ready for how high God is going to take you. He's preparing you for new levels, for greater influence, for unprecedented favor.

When I was growing up, we had a dog by the name of Scooter. My father used to ride his bike through the neighborhood, and Scooter would run alongside him. He was so proud of Scooter, who was a big German shepherd, strong and powerful. Scooter would take off ahead of my father and run through the neighbors' yards, check everything out, as though he were the king of the road. One day as they were riding, a little bitty Chihuahua saw Scooter coming down the street and started barking and barking. Scooter didn't think twice, but he took off toward that dog full speed, as though he was saying, "How dare you bark at me!" My father thought, *Oh no! Scooter is going to tear into that dog. One paw on him and that little dog will be done.* He sped up to try to calm Scooter down. The closer that Scooter got, the louder that dog barked. Finally Scooter got right up to him, the big showdown. My father was waiting for Scooter to show the Chihuahua who was boss, but Scooter rolled over on his back, put up all four legs in the air, as though he was saying, "I give up. Please don't hurt me." My father said, "I was

so embarrassed by Scooter that I turned around and went home.” Scooter was a lot bigger on the outside than he was inside. That little Chihuahua may have been small in size, but he was stronger than he looked, more powerful than he looked. I’ve learned that it’s not the size of the problem, it’s the size of the person.

My father was ashamed of Scooter, but I wonder how many times our heavenly Father looks down at us and says, “Why are you

*Why are you rolling over
and putting up all fours?*

rolling over and putting up all fours?

Why are you giving up, being overwhelmed, thinking you can’t handle it, when I’ve called you a mighty hero,

when I’ve given you can-do power, when I’ve surrounded you with favor, when I’ve armed you with strength for every battle, when I’m going before you and making crooked places straight, when I’ve designed you to withstand any pressures that come against you.” If you want to make God proud, stand strong, be courageous, think like a champion, talk like an overcomer, praise when you could be complaining, declare victory when all you see is defeat, and expect favor when it seems impossible. God has awesome things in your future, but there will be awesome challenges in your future. To reach your destiny, you have to discover what’s in you. Every time you realize that you’re stronger than you think, and you overcome, you outlast, and you endure, that strength is going to be instrumental for the next challenge, for the next dream. That’s preparing you for the amazing things God has in store.

You Have the Life of Almighty God

David was a teenager, taking care of his father's sheep in the shepherds' fields. One day he took a supply of food to his three brothers who were in the army. When he arrived at the camp, he heard Goliath taunting the Israelite soldiers. Something rose up in him. He told King Saul that he wanted to fight Goliath. They all tried to talk him out of it, telling him that he was too small, not qualified, that he had no experience, but David was determined. When Goliath saw how small David was, he began to laugh and said, "Am I a dog that you come at me with a stick?" He was saying, "Is this the best you've got?" David looked at Goliath and said in effect, "I may be small, but I'm stronger than I look. I'm more powerful than I look. I'm more experienced than I look." David took his slingshot and with one stone brought down Goliath.

You may have some Goliaths telling you what you can't do. "You're not strong enough to break that addiction. You can't beat that sickness. You'll never accomplish that dream. You're not big enough." You have to do as David did and tell Goliath, "I may look small, but I'm stronger than you think. You haven't

You're going to discover things in you that you didn't know you had.

seen the best of me. You haven't seen the courage, the fortitude, or the greatness. You just see a Gideon. What you don't realize is that you're looking at a mighty hero." That problem is not going to defeat you, that trouble is not how your story ends, and that loss is not going to define you. You're going to discover things in you that you didn't know you had. I believe even now strength is rising up,

courage is rising up, dreams are coming back to life. You're about to see God do things that you couldn't do, turn situations around that look permanent, and open doors that no person can shut.

When I was ten years old, I played Little League Baseball. I was very small when I was growing up, always the shortest one on the team. One day when I got up to bat, the coach on the other team came out of the dugout and started waving his arms and shouting to the outfielders, "Come in closer! Come in closer!" It was as though he was saying, "This guy up to bat is a loser. Look how small he is. He can't hit." He made such a big scene that everyone in the stands was watching him. Something rose up in me. I thought, *You don't know who you're talking about. You don't know what I'm capable of.* The pitcher threw the first pitch, and I swung with all my might. That ball went over everyone's head and with one bounce it hit the fence. I felt like José Altuve. I was so fast that I rounded the bases for an inside-the-park home run. The next time I came up to bat, the same coach came out of the dugout, but this time he was waving his arms the other way and shouting, "Back up! Back up! Back up!" What happened? I was stronger than he thought.

I believe the enemy has misjudged you. He thinks you're a lightweight—you're too small, at a disadvantage, overwhelmed; life's been tough. Why don't you step up and show what's in you? Why don't you shake off the negative voices, quit listening to the Goliaths that are taunting you, quit believing the obstacle is too big, and show this world who you really are? There's a mighty hero waiting to come out. There's a giant killer. There's a history maker. There's an overcomer. You may have some dirt on you, you're going through challenges, but that dirt can't hold you down. You have the life of Almighty God. You've been designed for this time,

equipped for what you're facing, empowered to fulfill your destiny. Now don't live with a can't-do mentality when you have can-do power. Get in agreement with God. If you do this, I believe and declare that you're about to discover strength, courage, ability, and favor like you've never seen. You're not just going to survive, you're going to thrive. You're going to overcome every obstacle, defeat every enemy, and accomplish every dream.