

## Strength and Weakness

I used to work with someone who said almost every day, “Your strength is your weakness.” For example, some people are very stubborn. They refuse to budge on their view of things, and they won’t try something new. Stubbornness is a weakness. But people who are stubborn can also be stalwart. Someone who is stalwart is loyal and reliable. If you ask a stalwart person to help you for a day, they will be there. Unfortunately, if their stubborn side reveals itself, you’ll end up doing it their way.

Of, as another example, we might meet someone who is disorganized, seemingly unable to make a decision and always living in a bit of a mess. That same person is probably also very creative and has the ability to think outside the box. Don’t let that kind of person take minutes at a committee meeting, but listen carefully to them as they come up with new ways of thinking about things. They may not be organized enough to be able to carry through with their ideas, but their ideas usually will be very novel and helpful.

When in a job interview, the potential employer will often ask, “What are your strengths?” Most people who are applying for a job have thought this through carefully enough, and they are able to give a clear summary of what they are good at. This same question is usually followed up by, “And what are your weaknesses?” We are less inclined to want to list those, and the interviewee may struggle. Perhaps the best answer he/she could give is, “I am not only dependable, but I can be a little stubborn.” Or, “I am able to think creatively, but I can’t always implement my ideas.” A good employer will appreciate the candidate’s strengths but will also understand that these same strengths can become a problem if not recognized and used effectively.

When I was in university, I took a course in which we filled out a survey which resulted in a strengths profile. We spent a couple of class periods talking about what we had discovered, and I quickly realized that I was fairly unique among my classmates. As the professor talked to us about our various profiles, he spoke of people of my type of profile in a fairly negative way. I went home rather dispirited because I felt that God had given me strengths that he could not use. I struggled with this for a few hours, and when I returned to class, I challenged the professor who continued to disparage my strength type, for I felt that he was concentrating the weaknesses of who I am rather than on the strengths. I don’t know if he heard my challenge, but I do know that I learned to accept myself for who I am, at least a little more. True, I don’t have the personality or strengths that pastors normally have, but I have something that God can use in his church.

We often talk about how the Holy Spirit has given gifts to all those who believe in Jesus. There is no believer who has nothing to offer. We would say, further, that all the gifts necessary for a local congregation to fulfill its calling are already present. God always equips a congregation to do the work that he calls it to do, and thus we can say with confidence that Nobleford CRC has all the gifts necessary to carry out the ministry that God has called us to. At the same time, we recognize that our strengths, among them the gifts of the Holy Spirit, can become our weaknesses. The very strengths that God has

---

given me can also be used for harm, for the devil likes to take what God has made good and turn it toward evil. Thus, we would have to admit that all the gifts that God has given to us are not always used as they should be. As a result, the church does not always fulfill its calling.

This is precisely why we need each other. Again, because each of us has gifts, we need each other because none of us has all the gifts. But we also need each other to help us grow in the use of the gifts and strengths that we have. A stubborn person needs others around them to encourage them when they are stalwart and challenge them when they are digging in their heels. A creative person can make our church more beautiful but may need to be encouraged to keep working at the task at hand. We all have gifts, but we don't always use those gifts as best we could, so we need others to help us grow.

It can be our tendency to notice others more when they use their gifts and strengths inappropriately and criticize them for their failings. We would do well if we could see how someone's weaknesses can also become their greatest strengths and appreciate each other for how God made us. Further, we should always expect that as time passes, if we continue to rely on the Lord, we will grow in our strengths and our weaknesses will become less and less obvious. After all, the Holy Spirit not only gives us gifts that we can use, but he also causes us to grow in faithfulness. So, let's be thankful for stubborn people, not because they're stubborn but because we can be sure that as they grow in Christ, they will be the stalwart people our church needs.

*Pastor Gary*