

Three Reasons Why We Don't Feel Empowered/Anointed And One Solution Series

Contributed by Dr. Madana Kumar, Phd on Nov 30, 2020

Scripture: John 10:7-11, 1 Kings 17:8-24, John 15:5, Matthew 28:18, 1 John 5:4, John 6:35, John 14:6, John 17:18, John 17:15, Matthew 5:16, John 11:25-26, 1 Peter 2:12, John 15:16, John 15:8, Matthew 5:13-14, Philippians 2:3-4, Mark 6:35-43, Numbers 11:4-21, 2 Kings 4:1-6, 2 Corinthians 8:21, Psalms 23:1-6

Denomination: Evangelical/Non-Denominational

Summary: Psalm 23 is a great Psalm to read and be comforted. There are times when we get excited about Psalm 23, and say Amen. But there are other times when we read Psalm 23 and heave a sigh, thinking "I don't feel like the sheep in Psalm 23 right now. What prevents us from feeling Psalm 23?"

Three reasons why we don't feel empowered and one solution

Through past several weeks Pastor has taken s through a detailed study of Psalm 23, and many of us are blessed by that. It is certainly a great Psalm and gives us the confidence to face any challenges in life.

I don't know about you, but there are several times in my life when I don't actually feel Psalm 23. I am not talking about those of you who are so mature in your Christian lives that you do feel Psalm 23 all the time. I am not one of them. There are several times, when I don't "feel" Psalm 23. If you are in the first category , you don't need this sermon. If you are in the second category like me, please take a listen. I do read that He is my shepherd and I shall not want, and yet I worry about my future. I know that the Psalmist says, though I walk through the valley of shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, and yet , I am afraid of a thousand things on a daily basis. Even though I read that He prepares a table for me in the presence of my enemies, I still spend anxious moments trying to figure out how to make my business succeed. There are several times when I don't feel that my cup is running over.

Have you felt like that? If so permit me to explore some reasons why we feel so. Why we do not feel empowered and anointed?

The Lord has placed on my heart to share three reasons for this today.

1. Assumed constraints
2. Lack of knowledge of our points of Power
3. Pursuing our own success.

Let us look at the three briefly.

Susan Fowler, a well known author talks about the Elephant Syndrome to explain assumed constraints. When the elephant is a baby , the trainers tether the baby elephant to a pole with a rope. The baby elephant tries to free itself from that by tugging and pulling, but fails. Finally, it gives up knowing that it cannot break free. However, even when the baby elephant grows up to be the mammoth, powerful animal that it is, it fails to realise that it can easily break the rope and free itself. The adult elephant

once it is tethered with a rope, assumes that it cannot break free, and stays put.

How many times have we felt like the adult elephant? How many times have we assumed that it will not work out, you will not be heard, your idea will not be accepted, you might be ridiculed, your question might be considered silly, your friend request will be rejected, your will not pass that test, etc etc? If you have , don't worry, we have biblical company. We have people who have exhibited the "I don't have enough" syndrome. Take the case of the widow at Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8-24) who tells Elijah that she might not be able to give him anything because she didn't have enough and she was going to use the past grain she had have the last meal and die. Or take the case of the widow who cried out to Elisha in 2 Kings 4:1-6, that she had nothing to pay back the creditors who were going to take away her sons because of that. Or take the case of Moses himself in Numbers 11:4-21, where he affirms the complaints of the disgruntled crowd about the lack of meat and not having the strength to take care of all of them. Look at the attitude of Jesus's disciples when Jesus asks them to feed the 5000 people in Mark 6:35-43. (They don't have anything to eat, and we cannot give them because it will cost us 200 denarii (8 months of wages) to buy bread for all of them.). The common refrain in all these examples is clear. I don't have enough to take care of the situation/ requirement/ request/ need. Apart from the I-don't-have-enough syndrome, there is what I call as the Moses syndrome that makes us assume constraints. You now the story, when the Lord asked Moses to go to Egypt to liberate His people, Moses tried finding all reasons that he could pull out of his bag to escape the call. He talked about his lack of skills, his lack of proper identity and credentials, his fear of rejection etc. He had numerous reasons why it was a bad idea. He even suggested to the Lord that there are so many more qualified people whom He could send in Moses' place. This is really what happens when we have the issue of Assumed constraints. We assume that there are so many constraints that prevents us from responding to His call, to take initiative and do something, to step forward and volunteer, the list can go on.

Interestingly in all these cases, God had only one answer. Whenever people tried to highlight what they did not have, God asked the question, "What do you have?" Elijah asked that. Elisha asked that. The Lord asked Moses that. Jesus asked His disciples that. "What do you have?" So the message for me is clear. God knows what you don't have because all that we have is given by him. He certainly is interested in what we are willing to do with what we have, and he promises Psalm 23 when we are willing to offer up what we have, rather than dwell on what we do not have. He did that with the widow of Zarephath. He did that with the widow Elisha had an encounter with. He did that with Moses. He did that with the five loaves of bread and two fish that the disciples could muster.

This morning, the Lord is asking us to examine ourselves to see what assumed constraints we have that is preventing us from feeling Psalm 23.

Let us move onto the 2nd hurdle.

There are times in our lives when we feel utterly powerless to do anything. This is possible when certain situations overtake us and we are left to stand in the by lines and just watch events unfold. This is understandable. However, there are few of us who constantly live as if we have no powers at all. In organisations this is true when we are considered "individual contributors". Research shows that this lack of knowledge of our own powers is a key hurdle that results in poor performance. Spiritually, this can impact us negatively too. That is why I would like us to understand that all of us have been given powers. Let us look at some of the powers. Research shows that each of us , immaterial of what our position is, are given a set of at least five powers, viz,

- **Task power:** This is the power that you have because of the Task that is assigned to you or you have volunteered for. Let us not underestimate the importance of this. In a church context, it could be worship or managing technology or making coffee. Each task has a power associated with it.
- **Position or legitimate power:** is the one you have because of your position/ legal title. The pastor, the treasurer, the board member etc are examples of that in a church set up. Generally we all misunderstand that this is the only power that is out there.
- **Relationship Power:** As the term suggests, this is the power we have because of the relationships we hold. It could be our family, by marriage, by friendship or by church membership. The joke going around in Chennai currently is about how one can cook up a relationship with Kamala Harris. Some of the conversations go like this "I have once attended a tea meeting with someone who is the cousin of the sister-in-law of the brother of the niece of the second cousin's son of PV Gopalan (Kamala Harris' Grandfather)". You see the power of Relationships.
- **Expert or Knowledge Power:** You all might have heard the cliché "knowledge is power". It is true. We have enormous powers because of what we know or where you have expertise in.
- **Personal Power:** This is the power you have because of who you are. It is a combination of your skills, your values, your intellect, and even your physical strength and your good looks. You have powers just because of who you are.

This list is not exhaustive, but it gives you an idea of the type of power that each one of us have. What prevents us from feeling empowered and being able to practice Psalm 23 is our reluctance to acknowledge and accept the powers that we have.

While ignoring our "Points of Power" is bad, there is a risk in knowing the powers we have too. Power tends to get misused than appropriately used. If we just run a Character study of several people in the Bible we will realise this quickly. King Saul, who when given the task of annihilating the Amalekites, misused to impose self-will during the task. On the other side we see Nehemiah after volunteering to pick up the task of rebuilding the wall, going all out to complete the task in an excellent manner. Rehoboam misused the position/ legitimate powers he inherited to trouble his subjects more. On the contrary we see how Esther used her legitimate power as the queen to save the Hebrews from extinction. Gehazi had a trusted relationship with Elisha, but he got greedy and decided to misuse the power of that relationship to get material wealth (2 Kings 5:20-27). Barnabas on the other hand uses his relationship with Paul to mentor him and accompany him in his early missionary journeys and let God use Paul in a might manner. We see the Pharisees mis-using the knowledge power they have. We also see Ezra using the power of the knowledge of scriptures to lead the heart transformation of Israelites. We see Cain using his personal power to eliminate his brother from the equation. We see Daniel using his personal powers to build up the Kingdom of God.

So we all have a choice to make. Acknowledge and understand the power we have, and then commit to use it appropriately. This morning let us ask God to lead us to the right choice when it comes to power.

The third and last hurdle that I want us to look at is the concept that I have spoken about here before. The concept of Success Vs Significance. We all have the choice to the type of lives we lead. There are several people who get up in the morning and live through the day just because the day is there. These are people who go by the motto of eat-sleep-repeat. They just survive through the day, and it is called

the life of survival. They do not add any value to themselves nor to others. While this is bad enough, there is another category who go around saying I am useless, I am a worm, etc, and allow others to use themselves as foot mat. They de-value themselves so much that anyone can feel better than them. These are people who lead a life of self-abasement. Then there is a third category that the world loves, corporates adore them. These are people who get up in the morning and want to go and achieve something better than what they did yesterday. They want to acquire a new gadget, get a new property, gain a new degree, break the record of what they did yesterday etc. The world adores them and calls them successful You might think that there is nothing really wrong about these people who lead a life of success. But look again at the graphics. You will realise that they are adding value to themselves and not to others. This is the problem with Success. Successful people can end up adding value to themselves without adding any value to others. This is where the fourth category of people come in. Please who add value to themselves with the explicit purpose of adding value to others. People who acquire knowledge to help the unlearned. Please who acquire wisdom to help the foolish. People who acquire wealth to help the poor. People who acquire health to serve the sick etc. These are people who lead a life of significance.

It is rhetorical to ask what type of life the Bible asks us to live. But if you want proof, here are some of the places where the Bible asks us to lead a life of significance. Philippians 2: 3-4, Matthew 5:13-14, John 15:8, John 15:16, 2 Corinthians 8:21, 1 Peter 2:12, Matthew 5:16, John 17:15, John 17:18.

Once we are convinced that we need to lead a life of significance, we still need to admit that we may need some human help in being significant. This is where we must learn to ask for what we need to be significant. Many of us assume that others should know what we need, but let us remember that human beings are not mind readers. We need to ask for what we need and clearly. James tells us that James 4:2 - You do not have because you do not ask. James also tells us that we will get what we ask for only if it is meant for leading a life of significance and not for our selfish purposes. James 4:3 - You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

In summary, these are the three imperatives for feeling Empowered and feeling like living Psalm 23.

- Understand and overcome our assumed constraints
- Understand and use our Points of Power appropriately
- Understand and ask for our Needs for Significance.

Lastly, let us know that if we could do it all by ourselves, we would have done it. We cannot do it by ourselves. And the solution is to turn to Jesus and Jesus alone. Because He said, John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. This morning we need to understand that however hard we try, we cannot live a life of Psalm 23 without Christ in us. When we are faced with our Assumed constraints Jesus tells us through one his "I Am" statements John 6:35, I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. 1 John 5:4-5 further confirms it that only the belief in Jesus can help us overcome our assumed constraints. 1 John 5:4-5 (NKJV) 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith. 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

When we are feeling powerless, Jesus Tells us Matthew 28:18 (NKJV) "All authority has been given to

Me in heaven and on earth. " and then comforts us that the same power is available to us through his I am statements. John 15:5 (NKJV) I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

John 11:25-26 (NKJV) "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. "

And finally when we are tempted to seek our own success and work for selfish motives, Jesus reminds us that He is the Good shepherd and the Good shepherd gives his life for the sheep, much unlike the thief who takes care of his own welfare. John 10:7-11 (NKJV) Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

So we have the three imperatives for feeling empowered and the one solution. The one solution being that we need to lead a Christ Centered Life, believing that it is only in Christ we can achieve things. Let us close our eyes and reflect on these.

You can watch this sermon on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/nzSh6ljFIV4>