

Our Strength is Insufficient: Why It's Okay to Ask for Help



■ by Katie DeYoung, MA, LCPC, LMHC

As we begin a new year, this is the perfect time for some personal reflection as we determine what we want this coming year to look like. As part of this introspection process, let's think on the following questions:

- Do you find it difficult to ask for help?
- Is it hard for you to accept help when it is offered?
- What things do you value: independence? self-satisfaction? personal responsibility?

As we think about these questions, I want to encourage a change from valuing independence to dependence, from self-satisfaction to community pride, and from personal responsibility to insufficiency in our own strength.

Before I go any further, I want to comment that the aspects of independence, self-satisfaction, and personal responsibility are ALL helpful components to the way we live our lives. What I want you to consider is how these mindsets may be impacting our relationships. So, let's dig in.

"Ideals" Aren't Always so Ideal

In the world today, the characteristics listed above are praised and emulated by all who follow societal and cultural norms. I am no stranger to these "ideals" and can easily fall prey to these perspectives, thinking that if I can do everything by myself, I am a better and more competent person. Being independent and taking care of life's demands alone may feel like we are living a more attractive lifestyle to the outside world. We may think that "so and so" would look highly on our abilities, stamina, and accomplishments, feeling that if we were to ask for help, doing so would diminish our value. Mindsets like these lead us to run ourselves ragged and separate us from the God-given purpose of our communities.

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Living in community and experiencing the ebb and flow of relationships is a biblical concept. The Bible is filled with verses that suggest how we are to love one another (John 13:1-17) and how we all have a part to play, working together in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12). One of the reasons that God gave us communities is so we have a tangible avenue to experience God's love. God provided communities for us to be a part of as a beautiful gift to enhance our lives and fellowship. People are a blessing, and when we engage with them, we echo the fellowship God experiences in the Trinity. So take care not to distance yourself from a family community, a church community, or a work community. Rather, find ways to press in even deeper to these relationships.

Analyzing Why We Do What We Do

Think further about what your reasons are for why you may like to do everything on your own. Some reasons may include pride in one's work, a need to prove something to oneself or others, and maybe even a lack of trust that another could do the job as well as you. Then identify any negative effects that this self-sufficient behavior may have had on your life and relationships. Has it pushed people away? Has it caused people to stop offering help? Maybe it has frustrated your loved ones, because their desire to come alongside has been disallowed. For the Christian, continue on to ask yourself how this independent lifestyle may have impacted your relationship with God.

God designed us to be dependent on him. He is the one who meets all of our needs. He is the one who provides strength and direction. He is the one who supports and comforts us. He is our be-all and end-all. As we start a new year, let us embrace this dependence and turn from the independence that we may have grown accustomed to. Let us feel free to ask for help (whether needed or not) as we lean into our relationship with God and with those who he has placed in our lives. Let us own the fact that we would be broken without God. Let us shout from the rooftops and embrace the fact that we don't "have it all together". As our loving Father, God wants to help us. Do you accept his help? If so, what does that look like?

As we welcome 2021, maybe one of our New Year's resolutions will be to not only accept help but seek help out as well. In this new year, depend on God and let him guide your footsteps. Establish a community, and reach out for help often as you are surrounded by their love and support. Finally, recognize your own insufficient strength, knowing that you cannot accomplish all things in this life on your own. Find the enjoyment and blessing of working alongside rather than individually. May God bless each of you richly in the new year in these unique ways. ■



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