

# Purpose Driven Life, X

*Things that "Are Not" (Chpts 33-35)*

May 2, 2004

## A BUNDLE OF FLAWS

Q: Who has weaknesses and imperfections?

Q: Have you ever compiled an accurate list of your flaws?

Everyone has 'em, but usually we deny 'em, defend 'em, excuse 'em, hide 'em, and resent 'em.

Q: Why do we put so much work into concealing the obvious?

1. It's partly pride: I don't want people to think less of me.
2. Also it's fear: when we expose our flaws it makes us vulnerable - to ridicule and rejection - and that's scary!

Q: Don't you hate those florescent lights that reveal every blemish and blotch on your face? Who invented those things?!

- We don't like having our imperfections and flaws exposed.
- (And yet) Effective ministry begins with vulnerability

The more we let down our guard, take off our mask, share our struggles, and let people see who we really are, the more God is able to use us to help and to serve one another.

I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. - 2 Corinthians 12:5  
NIV

- Humility isn't denying strengths, it's admitting weaknesses

In the spirit of humility, I sat some of my staff down and forced them to help me make a list of my flaws.

- Not a comprehensive list - just the top twenty or so.

Here's my "official" bundle of flaws. These are the things that you'd have to put up with if you worked with me.

They are in a general order starting with most severe:

- Hard-to-please and fussy
- Critical, sarcastic, and mocking
- Impatient, demanding, and intimidating
- Skeptical, cynical, and generally distrusting (I don't think that's true!)
- Agitator, troublemaker, argumentative, and pest
- Unable to remember faces
- Introverted and reclusive
- Unsympathetic and uncompassionate (that's their problem!)
- Discontented and restless

So in conclusion: I should not be the pastor! Oh, and by the way staff, "You're fired!"

We get this idea that God only wants to use our strengths. But He has never been impressed with strength or self-sufficiency.

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. ... Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." – 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 NIV

The Lord is drawn to people who are weak and admit it. But, we should understand that there are two types of weaknesses:

1. Faults (sins that we're given strength to overcome)
  - Like impatience, bitterness, or indulgence.
2. Flaws (limitations that we're more-or-less stuck with)
  - Like feelings, tendencies, or disabilities.

A man told his pastor, "I have a terrible temper ... but I guess that's my *thorn in the flesh*." The pastor said, "No, that's your wife's *thorn in the flesh*, it's your sin!"

We need to recognize the difference. You might say that your weakness is chocolate ... or lust ... or lust for chocolate!

- The flaw may create a temptation, but the fault acts on it

## WHY WEAK AND FOOLISH?

Q: But why the foolish, weak, and lowly?

Q: Why not the smart, strong, and lofty?

There are five functions of our “things that are not”:

### 1. They demonstrate God’s power

All of God’s “giants” were weak people:

- Moses’ weakness was his temper.
- Gideon’s weakness was his deep insecurities.
- Peter’s weakness was impulse and fear.
- David’s weakness was lust and adultery.
  
- God enjoys putting His great power into fragile containers

But this precious treasure – this light and power that now shine within us – is held in a perishable container, that is, in our weak bodies. Everyone can see that the glorious power within must be from God and is not our own. – 2 Corinthians 4:7 NIV

God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things, so the world will know that it’s by His power and not our strength.

We are a living testimony when our flaws are transparent and as our faults are transformed.

### 2. They cause us to depend on God

When God called Gideon to defeat the Midianites, there was a slight problem: Gideon’s army was too strong and too skilled.

The LORD said to Gideon, “You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands. In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her, announce now to the people, ‘Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand men left ... – Judges 7:2-3 NIV

God continued to whittle Gideon’s army to 300. Then He let them fight and defeat the 135,000 Midianites (*Judges 8:10*)

- When the odds are 450 to 1 you have to depend on God.

### 3. They promote our humility

Q: Would you rather be important or significant?

There are a lot of very important people who have made no significant impact on the lives of those around them.

- We're given a choice: to impress or to influence

We can impress people from a distance, but we have to get close if we're going to influence them.

- And when we get close they *will* see our flaws.

Instead of posing as self-confident and invincible, we should see ourselves the way Paul saw himself: as a trophy of grace.

### 4. They encourage fellowship between believers

Strength breeds independence - limitations show how much we need others. That's why vulnerability is such an endearing quality.

- *My* weaknesses reveal that *you* have value ... I need your help.
- *Your* weaknesses reveal that *I* have value ... you need my help.

The more honest we are the more grace we get, from God and people.

### 5. They increase our capacity for sympathy/ministry

Jesus had a way of affecting people other believers avoided:

- The prostitute that needed to be protected
- The lepers that needed contact and healing
- The tax collectors that needed to be loved

He didn't do these things *in spite* of His greatness; He did them *because* of it. He came so that the hurting could find healing in His wounds ... and He expects us to follow His example.

- Jesus wants people to find healing in my wounds

Q: Are you limiting God's power in your life by trying to hide your faults and flaws?

Q: What could you be more honest about in order to help others?