

The Right Kind of Strong

AUTHOR Q&A

1. Why did you write this book?

This generation has been raised with the idea that *strength* is the most important trait for women. Hollywood resolutely marches out a parade of capable female heroines to show us what it means to be strong. A crop of Girl Power anthems fills the airwaves to rally our hearts to the cause. We are literally bombarded with the message that women should be bold. Brave. Strong. Weakness must be avoided at all costs.

But if you're at all familiar with the Bible, you'll know that being weak isn't necessarily a bad thing. In 2 Corinthians 12:10, for example, Paul told his friends that he delighted in weakness: "for when I am weak, then I am strong."

And there's the rub.

The Bible's concept of weak and strong doesn't line up with culture's. This is especially the case when it comes to ideas about womanhood. All too often women think that being strong means foregoing their femininity and denying the most integral and beautiful aspects of who they are as women. Sadly, a woman who thinks she is strong may just be headstrong. A woman who thinks she is brave may just be rash. A woman who thinks she is bold may just be aggressive. A woman who thinks she is confident may just be arrogant. A woman who thinks she is independent may just be standoffish. A woman who thinks she is smart may just be foolish.

Many women have embraced the wrong kind of strong. And Christian women aren't immune to having a skewed image of what constitutes a strong woman. We've all sipped the cultural Kool-Aid.

We tend to think of weakness and strength as opposites. To be strong is a positive trait; it means to be without weakness. To be weak is a negative trait; it means to be without strength. But the Bible doesn't adhere to this definition. It redraws the lines.

Scripture teaches that everyone who relies on God is strong and that everyone who relies on self is weak. Our personal ability or inability doesn't indicate whether we are weak or strong; our dependence on God does. It's a great paradox that, regardless of our inherent capability, embracing the right kind of weak will make us strong, and embracing the wrong kind of strong will make us weak.

I want to be a strong woman. I think most women do. I wrote this book to help women know how to be strong in the right kind of way.

2. What is your hope for readers?

My hope is to teach women some simple habits from Scripture that will help them grow stronger. The habits in this book specifically counter the strength-sapping habits of that group of *weak women* in Ephesus. These habits would have prevented these women from becoming weak and made them spiritually strong.

Habits are such small, seemingly insignificant things. The actions, in the moment, don't seem like much. The changes they produce are so subtle they're almost imperceptible. So it's easy to minimize the importance of them. What difference does it make if I miss getting exercise today? Or if I enjoy a soft drink? Not much. But if I consistently fail to exercise and continue to consume a soda each day, a year from now my body will seize up like an old rusty bike and I will have put on an extra fifteen pounds.

The individual choices may be small, but they certainly aren't inconsequential. Little choices compound over time. Small things done consistently produce big results. A series of small, negative choices will lead to significant negative results. A series of small, positive choices will lead to significant positive results. It's the consistency of the habit over time rather than the magnitude of each individual action that makes the difference.

My greatest hope with this book is that women will learn to be strong in the right kind of way. I'm not talking about the brash, worldly kind of strength that relies on our own capacities—the kind of strength that's brittle and fragile and shatters when tested—but a soft, quiet, confident strength that relies on the power of the Holy Spirit. The kind that makes us bold to stand for truth and brave to navigate through any kind of storm.

3. What do you want readers to take away from the book?

I want readers to understand what it will take to become a truly strong woman. There is no secret formula, quick fix, or magic pill. There are no shortcuts. Becoming a strong woman doesn't just happen overnight. It takes years of consistent habits, thousands of small, seemingly insignificant steps of obedience. These small steps, taken consistently, over time, will make a radical difference in our lives. Godly habits are what will turn us into strong godly women.

We live in a secret-formula, quick-fix world. So we often lose sight of the simple but profound fundamental truth that steady, consistent effort over time is the best way to make progress. Small things done consistently produce big results.

The seven strength-building habits in this book are not big, sweeping changes that will take huge amounts of time and effort. They aren't difficult tasks readers will need to add to their daily to-do list. Some may require greater follow-through, but mostly they're just small correctives to attitudes and ways of thinking that won't take much energy to implement. They're surprisingly simple, little things we can do all the time.

But women who do these things consistently will grow stronger, while women who just think about doing them, or only do them from time to time, won't.

4. Who do you think will benefit most from the book and why?

The people who will benefit most from this book are women who are committed to growing stronger God's way. A woman who views herself as strong will benefit because it will help her know whether she's pursuing the right kind of strength. A woman who views herself as weak will benefit because she'll discover what it takes to be strong. Any woman who incorporates the seven strength-building habits into her life will grow spiritually stronger.

5. If you had to summarize the book in one sentence, what would that be?

This book shows readers how to avoid the strength-sapping habits detailed in 2 Timothy to become the strong women God made them to be.

6. If readers only remember one thing from the book, what should that be?

By developing simple habits based on Scripture, a woman can walk in wisdom and freedom and become the right kind of strong.