

A sermon delivered by Peter Worley at the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, February 8, 2009, Youth Sunday.

“God: A Perfect Tonic for Life”

Do you find yourself in long periods of time feeling excessively weak, stressed, or unmotivated? You might be suffering from Separation From de Lordus, a common problem amongst human beings when people disconnect, or separate, from their Lord and savior.

Well today we have the solution for you. It's called God. An all-natural supplement made from the best and most organic item found on earth: love. We found, through countless tests, that using the love in God has been able to give people that extra burst of energy, strength and motivation to get them back to normal.

If you try now, we will even throw in a free all-expense paid trip to the six-star resort “The Pearly Gates,” where the sand is so soft it feels like you're sitting on clouds. All this can be yours for just three easy payments of your heart, mind and soul. Plus shipping and handling.

Don't you wish you could get this advertisement, this calling every time you felt weak, stressed, unmotivated or lost? In life we have these emotions far too often. More often than not, we need to be the children and followers of God almighty. Nonetheless, there will always be those times in life when things don't go our way and we become depressed and we start to lose contact with God. We start worrying about our problems more than asking God for help. We've all been there, some people more than others. It can be striving to meet work

deadlines, trying to care for struggling family members, or even seeking to finish another overwhelming week of school.

Earlier this year my dad had one of these moments. He had so much work due by the end of the week that he was sleeping at the office and working numerous of hours overtime, rarely having the chance to spend time with the rest of us. He felt overwhelmed, deeply stressed, unmotivated and lost at church service that Sunday, until God sent him a personal shot of strength. My dad was tiredly walking up to receive communion, when Van Bart came up to him and gave him one of the greatest, most powerful hugs he had ever experienced. He said it was one of those hugs that was so heart-felt and overpowering that he knew God was behind it. My dad's spirit rose and he felt energy he hadn't experienced the entire week before. God's strength to my dad came by love from God and Van.

Like my dad, I too have experienced a week of despair and hopelessness. Through high school I've learned the hard way, that worrying isn't the answer to my problems but asking and depending on God for strength is.

I'm a self-proclaimed overachiever, although my parents would claim no true overachiever would have all the time I do to watch TV. But still, in my own mind, I feel like I'm the busiest guy at school. For instance, earlier this school year I had one of those weeks where it seemed as if everything I have ever participated in had something for me to do: Tests in all my classes, two AP tests, two AP projects, four-hour football practice, skits for Young Life, student council canned food drive, and on top of that, still manage to get at least five hours of sleep so I could function the next day.

I spent so much energy worrying and stressing about my projects that I forgot about the most important thing in my life: God, which is the worst thing I could have done. We forget that God is the most powerful thing in the universe, and what could be a better source of strength than that. We try to

get strength from false sources such as caffeinated beverages, energy shots, and even drugs. All of which only make the experience worse in the long run, whether it's crashing, gaining weight or getting addicted. That's why God is the best source of strength for anyone, no matter his or her age or condition.

If we look back to the Old Testament reading in Isaiah, we hear God telling us this very advice. He tells us he is "the everlasting God. . . . He does not faint or grow weary." God's love will always be there for us, it's eternal. We may turn our back on him but he never turns his back on us. He loves us through the thick and thin, holding the strength we need so desperately. He knows we will grow weary at some point no matter how healthy we are, for he said "even the youth will fall exhausted, but for those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles." God gives us the opportunity, the wings, to fly out of the depths of our weaknesses. All we have to do is take it.

But how do we get these wings, how do we get the strength from God? Easy: love God with all your heart, mind, and soul and depend on him for the strength to get you better. It's easier said than done. For me, this has been a work in progress, a lot harder than I thought because today we put so many things before God: sports, academics, work, relationships and money, to the point where we put God on the back burner, consequently barring him from the opportunity to strengthen us.

In these times of trouble and weakness, we need to put God first, rely on him, depend on him and ask him in prayer for the strength that we have been missing. We need to have faith in God that he will give us strength. I have started to full-heartedly put my faith in God and he has given me the strength I need to successfully get through the tough times. He gave me the strength to get through my crushing week: I aced my tests, I completed my AP projects and didn't fall asleep in class the next day, I survived football practice (God

gave me the strength to run away from our 250 lb. middle linebacker), and he gave me the power to tug my radio flyer wagon full of tomato soup and expired Spam up and down the hills of my neighborhood.

God worked for me; it can work for you. If I'm not famous enough to effectively endorse this product, then remember that Jesus Christ endorsed it. And he has over a billion fans and followers, way more than Oprah.

Time is running out on the exclusive offer for a free resort trip to the "Pearly Gates." So please call now, God is waiting. Results may vary.

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