

Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



The Good Side of Inadequacy

KEY PASSAGE: 2 Corinthians 3:1-5 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 46:1, 10 | Matthew 6:9 | Luke 24:49
John 14:16-18, 27 | Acts 1:8 | Ephesians 1:13 | Philippians 4:13

SUMMARY

How do you respond to challenges that seem beyond your capabilities?

Some people feel overwhelmed with a sense of inadequacy, and therefore give up and walk away from the situation. Others approach the undertaking with confidence in themselves and their own abilities. For believers, neither of these is the appropriate response because one exhibits a lack of trust in God, and the other displays pride. The apostle Paul described the right approach in 2 Corinthians 3:4-5. Our confidence is not in ourselves, but in Christ. There's nothing within us that makes us competent for the opportunities God gives us. He alone is the source of our adequacy. In each difficult situation, we must make a choice to believe that the Lord will equip us. Neither our circumstances nor our feelings of insecurity can ever negate His promise.

SERMON POINTS

Although feelings of inadequacy are difficult and painful, there is a good side to them if we respond the right way.

When we understand the benefits, we'll be able to face our times of testing knowing that the situation is not just a source of insecurity and fear but a God-given opportunity.

Inadequacy drives us to God.

Every overwhelming challenge presents us with two options. The negative route focuses on our inability and leads to disappointment or despair. The other response looks at our inadequacy in light

of the greatness of God. In our weakness, we turn immediately to Him for help and guidance. We don't become instantly competent, but as our faith in Him increases, our fearful emotions subside. Furthermore, our relationship with the Lord deepens as we draw near to Him and trust that He will make us adequate for the situation we're facing. Whatever drives us to God is good. In our helplessness and dependence upon Him, we gain an understanding of Him and His ways, which we've never known before.

It relieves us of the burden of trying to do God's will in our own strength.

The Lord doesn't intend that we accomplish His work in our limited power and knowledge. That's why He sometimes gives us tasks or situations that remind us how weak we really are. The apostle Paul first learned this lesson at his conversion when he was blinded on the Damascus road. Later in his ministry after numerous trials and hardships, he wrote, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). Whatever the Lord requires of us, we have the promise of His presence and His power to encourage and help us.

We are forced to depend upon the Spirit of God.

The night before His crucifixion, Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit to His disciples as a Helper (John 14:16-18). He would not only be with them, but in them. After His resurrection, Jesus told them to stay in Jerusalem until they were "clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). He knew that without the Spirit's power working in and through them, they were not adequate for what He'd called them to do. The same Spirit who came to them also dwells within every believer today. At the moment of our salvation,

He sealed us as children of God, and there's nothing we can do to break the seal. From that point onward, the Holy Spirit works to enable us to become who the Lord designed us to be and accomplish what He's planned for us to do. When the tasks feel beyond our abilities, we have the privilege of relying upon and walking with the powerful Spirit of God—the third member of the Trinity.

It provides the Lord the opportunity to demonstrate what He can do with a little.

At one point in His ministry, Jesus was followed by a crowd of over five thousand people who became hungry and had no food. There was only one boy who had two fish and five loaves of bread. His contribution was small, but Jesus multiplied it to feed the entire crowd. The Lord doesn't need much to accomplish something awesome. He can take whatever abilities, talents, or gifts we have and do amazing things. The apostle Paul was the least likely person to be used by God because he had been an enemy of the church. But when Jesus changed his heart, he became the greatest evangelist apart from Christ Himself.

Our human judgments regarding capability are totally inadequate because we tend to evaluate ourselves and others based on who we are right now, how we look, what we have, and any number of other criteria. But God sees what He can do in a surrendered life. He rejoices to take the little we have to offer and produce what He desires. That's why we should not compare ourselves with others. His plan for each of us is unique.

It frees God to use us to the maximum of our potential.

One thing that undercuts our fruitfulness is pride. That's why a sense of holy inadequacy is good. Only through dependence upon the Holy Spirit can we reach the goals God has set for us. He knows exactly what He wants us to do and can transform us to become the person He designed us to be. The key which unlocks our potential is humility—that sense of holy inadequacy and submission to God.

Our inadequacies allow God to receive all the glory.

When we are incapable in ourselves, and God is accomplishing His will through us, all the credit goes to Him. Our insufficiencies constantly remind us that apart from Him we can do nothing.

It enables us to live in contentment and quietness.

When we're relying on Jesus to work in and through us, we don't have to struggle and strive. If feelings of inadequacy come, we can immediately turn them over to Him. In the midst of the situation, He will bring calm and relieve our stress as He promised: "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful" (John 14:27).

RESPONSE

- Have feelings of inadequacy ever driven you to the Lord? How was your relationship with Him deepened because of your dependence upon Him? What did you learn about His ways, character, and promises?
- Remember the story of the boy who gave his fish and bread to Jesus. What do you have to offer the Lord which seems little in your sight? Are you sometimes tempted to compare your abilities with those of others? How does this affect your emotions, motivation, or attitude?
- What do you think would happen if instead of bemoaning your inadequacies, you thanked the Lord for them? If you are uncertain, you can check out 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 to see how Paul's attitude shifted when he understood the value of his weakness.

To purchase this message on CD or DVD,
please visit store.intouch.org or call 1-800-789-1473.
To download this Sermon Note, visit intouch.org/sermonnotes