

## Grateful for the Challenges

### *"It Was God's Strength and God's Power for God's Purposes"*

We all face challenges in our lives, many of which are major. The sports world publicizes some of those challenges, especially for star athletes. One of the familiar stories is that of Paige Bueckers, who recently guided her college basketball team to the NCAA women's championship. Bueckers took the NCAA by storm, being honored as the NCAA Player of the Year in her freshman year of college. Six games into her sophomore season, she suffered a season-ending injury and then suffered an ACL tear before the start of her next season. As a result, it would be 584 days between regular-season action on the court.

What caught my attention was Buecker's attitude immediately following the ACL injury. My first reaction was to "feel sorry for her," as I wanted her to realize her dream. Paige didn't play the "woe is me" game. At the time of her injury, Bueckers wrote: "It's hard trying to make sense of it all now, but I can't help but think that God is using me as a testimony as to how much you can overcome with Him by your side." She realized that her story could be a source of motivation for other young girls. Bueckers wrote, "Some little kid that just tore their ACL or had a major surgery might need this story. I am going to show what it takes." "There are going to be good days, and there are going to be bad days, but my absolute love for the game and Godly strength will get me back to where I need to be." Bueckers believed that God had plans for her.

Paige Bueckers has always been one to speak up about her faith. In a post-game interview after her final home game, she said on national TV that she was *grateful* for the injuries that took away nearly two seasons of her collegiate career and required three major surgeries to return to the court. Following the NCAA national championship game, Bueckers said, "I give all glory to God, all glory to my coaching staff, and my teammates for



instilling that confidence within me just to have fun and play my game." After winning the NCAA championship last week, Bueckers answered a reporter's question about how she had the strength to overcome the injuries and win the national championship. She said, "It was God's strength and God's power for God's purposes."

"God's purposes" are what you do with the opportunity to impact others. Athletes have a public platform to be positive role models for overcoming adversity, giving all the credit to God. We have a platform, too. People in our lives see how we handle adversity. Instead of lamenting about our misfortune, they listen as we witness for Christ. People need role models who are comfortable crediting God for their success and relying on His strength to carry them through the difficult

times of life.

**What's the point?** Setbacks in life aren't the end of the journey, and they may be the situations God uses to accomplish His purpose through us. *And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).* As He brings you through the difficulties of your life, give God the glory by pointing to Jesus.

## How can setbacks help you in your faith walk?

- Be grateful for the trials in your life that teach you valuable lessons you would otherwise not experience.
- Trust the Lord, even when you don't know why something is happening.
- Turn to God as you grow spiritually, inviting the Lord to draw near to you. He is there for you.
- Be patient with God's timing as you look for the Lord's purpose in what you face.
- Accept God's timing and His plan.
- Be thankful, as with God's help, you overcome your problems instead of being overcome by them.
- Thankfulness replaces anxiety with peace and gives our Christian witness a greater impact.

Your platform is what you overcome as you give God the glory.<sup>1</sup>

**The Bible says:** *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).*

**Questions:** How would a life of consistent gratitude to God equip you for the most difficult moments you might encounter? How can you inspire others because of how you handled the challenges in your life?

**Closing Prayer:** Dear Lord. You are preparing us for "one shining moment," when we can be the person you created us to be and accomplish your purposes in our lives. We thank you for the struggles that bring us closer to you and inspire others. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Points made in a sermon by Dr. Charles Stanley