

# Bridges or Barriers: Bringing Generations Together

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*Spiritual "equipment" for the contest of life.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Older women have time and wisdom...but need energy and health. Younger women have energy and health...but need time and wisdom.

Does the older generation have anything that could benefit the younger generation? Does the younger generation have anything that could benefit the older generation? Does it even matter?

Titus 2:3-5

“The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”

1 Timothy 5:3-4

“Honor widows who are really widows. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.”

We can see from these verses that God expects His older daughters and younger daughters to give to each other as needs arise. This give and take is the circle that keeps everyone’s needs met.

Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

Unfortunately, many times we seem to segregate into groups with people we have things in common with, ones our own age, or those with children the same age as our own. Going through God’s word we can find many examples of older women and younger women working side by side. We need to study these examples to see how God wants us to work together. Broadening our horizons this way will open doors we didn’t even know existed.

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Chapter One

# ELIZABETH & MARY



SHARING STRENGTH

## Women Serving Together...

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Strength could be defined as being strong. This gives us an image in our mind of Popeye, Superman, or some fictional character that could perform amazing feats effortlessly. However, the strength that we need to cultivate the most in our lives is spiritual. Ephesians 6:10 states, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” How can we accomplish this?

### **Mary’s Strength**

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is an excellent example of strength for us. Imagine being a young girl engaged to be married. That is a happy time with much anticipation. Then an angel appeared to Mary and changed her entire future. Since Mary’s child was miraculously conceived, she might have been subjected to ridicule. People would not have understood. Joseph might have walked away. In fact the scriptures tell us that he was considering putting her away quietly (Matthew 1:19). Mary also might have worried about what others would think. Everyone would assume she was guilty of committing fornication. Her reputation would be ruined! These could be distressing thoughts for a young woman.

However, after the angel’s explanation in Luke 1:34-37 verse 38 says, “Then Mary said, ‘Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.’” She showed amazing strength with that small statement!

What did Mary do next? She went to an older woman, Elizabeth (who had been barren but had conceived in her old age). This wise older woman encouraged Mary with her council. Luke 1:39-56 shows the respect and love Elizabeth had for Mary and Mary had for Elizabeth. Mary is strengthened by her time with Elizabeth and is ready for the task God has given her. Mary remained with Elizabeth about three months. Mary chose a wise older woman to learn from. One might say, “But Mary is different. She was handpicked by God.” God picked her because of her spirituality. She had free choice.

This wonderful opportunity given Mary also had its trials. Imagine standing at the foot of the cross and watching your firstborn son suffering for other’s sins. Imagine the strength Mary must have had to endure that day.

### **Finding Our Strength Today**

What can we do today to prepare ourselves to be ready with spiritual strength for what lies ahead in our lives? Romans 10:2-3 says, “For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.” We need to study God’s word

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daily. We then must submit to His will. We will not be afraid of Satan if we are living by God's word. This provides an avenue of strength. But is knowledge and obedience enough?

Romans 1:16 tells us that the gospel is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. We, who are strong, will be using the power to teach others so that all who believe can be saved. This is not an option. Souls are at stake! But is having knowledge, zeal, and teaching others enough?

Galatians 2:20 shows us that we will be strong when we practice what we have been teaching. We cannot be spiritually strong unless we allow Christ to live in us. Ephesians 6:11-18 shows us how to put on the armor of God. This is the blueprint for spiritual strength for the Christian to fight the devil. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 shows us that we will have everything we need for guidance in any situation. So why then do we have spiritually weak individuals among us?

Sometimes, we study and acquire the knowledge and may even have the zeal to teach others... Then we do not stand strong but give in to temptation. Having the knowledge, our conscience will then condemn us and we will feel guilt. Our guilty conscience will make us weak until we repent. See 1 John 3:21.

Everyone has problems, so what can we do? God has provided us with everything we need. This is where our sisters-in-Christ come into play. Romans 15:1 says, "We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves." Galatians 6:2 also tells us to bear one another's burdens. Jesus told Peter in Luke 22:31-32 to "strengthen his brethren." The strong must strengthen the weak. How does this apply to us today in our lives? When we have something going on in our lives that is confusing or disturbing, we need to seek out an older woman to discuss it with, just as Mary did with Elizabeth. Older sisters, you need to work to make sure your younger sisters feel they can turn to you when they need to.

Younger or older women, do you hear yourself in any of the statements below? Can we work together instead of segregating?

### **Finding a Connection**

How can we unite our generations? Or do we even need to? Titus 2:3-5 states, "the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet,

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chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.” This shows us that God expects us to interact. God expects us to depend on one another. Older women are much weaker physically than young women. However, because of their life experiences and wisdom, many times older women are stronger spiritually. We must use our talents, whatever they are, to unite ourselves to fulfill God’s commands.

### **A Look at Ourselves**

Younger women, could it be that because you have no constant health problems yet (thankfully), you cannot understand how constant aches and pains can affect someone’s outlook? Could it be that you do need to develop some patience? Do you take advantage of all opportunities for adult Bible study? Have you asked an older, wiser woman for help with raising your children? The older women need our respect and love. They also may need our physical strength.

Older women, could it be that because you have constant health problems you have forgotten that God has commanded you to teach and admonish your younger sisters-in-Christ? Have you offered classes for your younger sisters on homemaking or raising children? The younger women need our respect and love.

We may not be able to physically do what we did in our younger years; however, we still communicate something to someone every day. We can educate, encourage, edify, rebuke, love, strengthen and support through our words when our physical strength fails. We can also discourage, misinform, spread bitterness, weaken, and divide sisters. It is our individual choice what we decide to communicate. We need to remember that we never retire from God’s service. We may be too frail to get down on the floor with the toddlers, but that doesn’t dismiss us from all teaching.

All Christian women need spiritual strength. None of us can do it all without help. We need to strengthen each other. When we do not take the time and effort to understand and help each other, we lose a valuable asset. We are a natural resource given by God to each other. God who created us knows what we need and has supplied us with these needs. Look around for someone who is weak and work to strengthen that person.

### **Take Time**

Make a list of your sisters-in-Christ that you do not feel close to and reasons why you think you feel this way. Then list ways YOU could work towards strengthening these relationships.



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Make a list of things that you feel weaken you spiritually. Brainstorm with your sisters for ideas to strengthen your weaknesses.

**For Group Discussion:** List Scriptures and/or biblical examples to support your responses.

*Younger women - what can you do to help older women have strength?*

*Older women - what can you do to help younger women have strength?*

*Younger women - list things you could do to hinder older women from developing strength.*

*Older women - list things you could do to hinder younger women from developing strength.*



**Scripture text covered in this chapter:** *Ephesians 6:10; Luke 1:46-55; Romans 10:2-3; Romans 1:16; Galatians 2:20; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 John 3:21; Romans 15:1; Galatians 6:2; Luke 22:31-32; Titus 2:3-5*

### Questions:

1. How are we “strong in the Lord”?
2. How was Mary strong?

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3. What can we do to obtain knowledge? To obtain zeal?
4. How is the gospel our power?
5. How does Christ living in us make us strong?
6. What can the scriptures do for us?
7. How can our conscience give us strength?
8. What do the strong and the weak have in common?
9. What do the older women need to educate the younger women on?

### **Personal Application:**

1. Do you think of yourself as strong spiritually? List the reasons for your answer.
2. Are you an older or younger woman?
3. If younger, what do you want the older women to know about you?
4. If older, what do you want the younger women to know about you?
5. List things you could do to help strengthen your sisters.
6. List ways your sisters could strengthen you.