

## **Getting Stronger**

### **Ready:**

“Not only so but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” - Romans 5:3-4 (NIV)

**Set** If you think about it, the idea of lifting weights seems like an odd concept. “You want me to do what to my body? Why would I intentionally hurt myself? That doesn’t make any sense.” But we all know that even though our bodies are initially torn up they rebuild themselves to become much stronger and tougher. In games, especially away games, we often face taunting and criticism. At first it might be distracting, but once we’ve gone through it, we find that it has thickened our skin so that we can focus when it matters most. Every time I see a professional basketball player shooting a free throw at an away court with the fans in the background waving anything and everything they can, I always think, “They have to be distracted; they’re going to miss it.” Yet, most of the time, it goes in just as it would if they were alone in practice. Spiritually, we often face similar persecution. Our friends, family members, teammates and colleagues may not understand why we believe what we do. They may tear us down for not going out with them or for reading our Bibles in the morning instead of sleeping in, but we shouldn’t be discouraged by that. While these seemingly destructive acts may seem like they have no benefit at the time, in reality, they are strengthening us spiritually. When our lungs burn after a series of sprints, we may be so worn out that we can only think, “That was too much.” But when it comes to the game, those sprints will have proven useful because they created strength and perseverance. Similarly, we will reach points in our faith when we feel like the world is crashing down on us and we’ll think, “This is too much. How could this ever be for my benefit?” Yet, afterward, we realize that in those times God was doing amazing work. Only when we’re broken can we be rebuilt stronger.

**Go** 1. Have you ever worked out so hard that you felt like it was more destructive than productive? How did you feel after your body had recovered? 2. Even when it seems like everything is going wrong, are you still able to rely on God as a source of strength?

**Workout** Romans 5:1-5 1 Corinthians 15:58 James 1:2-8



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