

Empowered to Stand Back Up

“Thank you, you may call in the next competitor.” I swallowed my tears as I hurried out of the speech room. Away from the embarrassment. Away from the failure. That had been the worst Apologetics speech I had given that entire speech and debate tournament. I cringed as I remembered my fumbled words, disorganized points, and how I even managed to go over the time limit with nothing to say. Little did I know that this defeat would be my first step into learning a life-long lesson about what was farthest from my mind right then: resilience.

After that round of speeches, I escaped outside where I let my tears fall in solitude, crouched against the brick wall. I knew I was being weak, I knew it wasn't worth tears, but at that moment, I didn't care. Soon, it wasn't even the speech I was crying over, but my disappointment in myself. With that thought, my tears dried, and I realized that crying wasn't going to help myself or the situation.

It had been a while since I'd read my Bible, so I flipped over to Job to try to catch up on my Bible plan. His feelings would match mine, I thought. But in the first verse of that day's reading, Job chapter 38, God appears. “Look at the incredible world around you,” He tells Job. “Do you know the secrets of the earth, why the sun rises and sets, what makes rain, and why birds fly?” And at that moment, it was like God was speaking to me too. “Get your eyes off your own failures,” God seemed to say. “Look at Me, see how mighty I am.” All of a sudden, a messed up speech didn't seem like anything worth crying over anymore. Because my Father in Heaven created the whole universe, my Father in Heaven is mightier than I could imagine, my Father in Heaven is King over all, and somehow, He loves me.

This realization boosted me to my feet and I finished the tournament at rest in the love of Almighty God. And God is so, so gracious. Not only did I do better on that speech than I

thought, I qualified for finals in Apologetics too. So God taught me not to look at momentary failure or success, and even gave me a second chance, (I'm convinced) just because He loves me.

Six months later, I was facing another tournament. I tried to remember my purpose of glorifying God, but I still couldn't stop the overwhelming sense of failure when I learned that I had done terribly in debate; worse than my friends, even worse than myself at my first tournaments. How was I giving God glory if I lost? At the same time another part of me wondered, am I really this fragile? One sub-par tournament and I'm broken? Because it certainly felt that way. Every time I thought about debate, I wanted to cry. But wait. Didn't I learn to be resilient at my last tournament? Why am I struggling with this again?

But then I realized what God had been trying to show me. Resilience isn't just keeping strong despite failures or obstacles, it's choosing not to dwell on my failures. As a Christian, my identity is in God's victory, not my own performance. As Jesus tells us, in this world we will have trials, but we can be of good cheer because He has overcome the world. So I started remembering the incredible things God had done through that tournament: the relationships I'd built, the inspiring examples I'd seen, and the love of Christ evident between all the competitors. Instead of letting my failures discourage me, I decided to use them to stand up stronger than before and propel me to prepare even more diligently for the next tournament.

Through these experiences, I've learned that the reason people can be resilient is not because of how tough they are, but because they have a greater purpose that propels them to get back up and keep moving with optimism. As a Christian, I should be more than filled with both purpose and hope because of the finished work of Christ. Resilience means keeping my eyes on the ultimate goal, my true purpose. The challenges of today become small in comparison to eternity.

I also learned that resilience is built over time, like any other character. Although I've messed up in my past two tournaments, I've since been motivated to improve and am excited for my next tournament (in a few days) because my ultimate goal isn't to win, but to glorify the mighty God who loves me. I'm ready for whatever comes, failure or success, because the God of the universe stands behind me.