



# F Words

## Forcing Ourselves Forward

June 1, 2025

Today we're learning to **overcome the obstacles that we least want to push past**. Cuz, some struggles can feel so insurmountable that surrender starts to sound like success – even though the whole purpose of some problems is to press forward in the face of failure! So, if you want to learn the lessons that come from sticking it out when you most want to give it up, you gotta ask yourself: **How do you power through?**



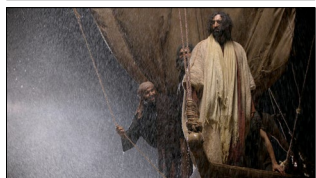
Cuz life is just chock-a-block full of daily difficulties that we don't get to ignore away: we gotta keep cool when our toddler throws a tantrum; we gotta speak our spouse's foreign love language; we gotta thank the mechanic for fixing our car when it drains our account; and we gotta get up early to go on a walk even if it makes us feel more achy than healthy.



And there's a lot of different techniques people use to get through the tough stuff – some meditate and some escalate; some innovate and some mutter curse words as they try to headbutt their hurdles head on! But regardless of the specific strategy, our approach usually falls in one of two camps: **we can try to tough it out or we can try to figure it out**.



And although it is important to learn to weather a storm, it's a waste of energy if we don't seize the opportunity to study the storm. Cuz every obstacle we ever face contains some lessons that can only be learned by engaging. Tolerating our toddlers teaches us patience, speaking with our spouses teaches us perspective, tipping our mechanics teaches us appreciation, and maintaining our bodies teach us perseverance – and on and on the struggles go, cuz **"smooth seas never made a skilled sailor!"**



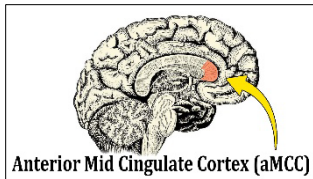
And since God doesn't want the deadly danger of amateur boat owners, He stirs up our storms to teach us to appreciate His approach; cuz overcoming obstacles teaches us His truth, like Psalms says:

It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn [God's] decrees. – Psalms 119:71 NIV

[And listen how Paul's same pursuit also centers on struggle:] I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of His resurrection and participation in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and ... attaining to the resurrection from the dead ... [So,] I press on ... Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal – Philippians 3:10-14 NIV

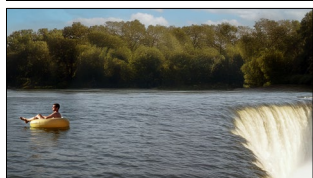
[So, like Paul's push,] Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. [And like we said, to 'not give up'] – Galatians 6:9 NIV

**We can brace ourselves or embrace our struggle** – but a life of merely bracing ourselves makes us weary, while a life embracing struggle builds tenacity! And tenacity is the power-through muscle!



You wanna see it? There it is! **It's called the anterior mid-cingulate cortex (aMCC)** and it's directly *related* to our ability to *push through* the things we specifically *don't want to do*! So, no surprise that it's been shown to be *larger* in people who *routinely engage* difficult tasks, such as highly successful *athletes* with intense training regimens.

And because it's become *synonymous* with *tenacity*, my wife and I *printed one out* and put it on our *front door* to *remind* our whole family that *we're not just* called to *endure* hard things – but to go out and *chase down more* challenges so we can *learn the lessons* from *embracing adversity*! Cuz it should be clear to *Christians*: **God's plan is more about figuring it out than toughing it out.**



That's *why* our brains *aren't* wired to just *suffer* through problems; they're *wired* to solve them. So, we shouldn't *just* ask God for *strength*, we should ask for *insight*: **"Why is this a struggle for me?" "What other ways could I attack this obstacle?" or "What possible purpose could this problem contain?"** Cuz *those* questions *ward off* weariness by *engaging* parts of our brain that *renew perception*, *restore motivation* and *refresh exhaustion* – while **relying on willpower alone only drains our brains.**

So, *here's* the bottom line: if we want our *adversity* to build *tenacity*, **we shouldn't merely cuss and complain, we should listen and learn.** And *that* shift in *perspective* means shifting our *focus* to the right "F" words: **Frustration, Failure, Faith, and Finishing.** Cuz we *overcome* our obstacles by *understanding* their purpose – and *these* words provide the *context* we *need* to see the *reason* we *struggle*.

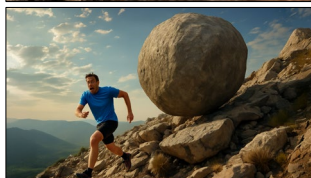
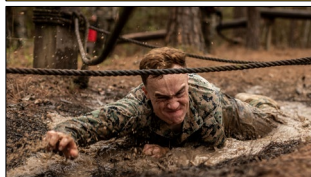
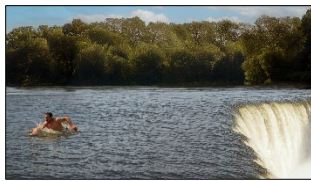
So let's start with **frustration. What possible purpose does the ongoing frustration of your problem provide?** Cuz *personally*, it seems to *shorten my fuse* and *rob me of hope*; so how on earth can it *help us perceive* a problem's purpose if it *prevents* us from being our *best selves*?

[Well, we're actually told pretty *plainly*:] The [whole] creation was subjected to *frustration*, not by its own choice, but by the will of the One who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its *bondage to decay* – Romans 8:20-21 NIV

And just **how does frustration free us from bondage to decay?** Gotta be one of my *favorite* questions! And to *answer* it, *first*, let's examine the *alternative*; what do you call a life *free* from frustration? *Comfort*! And as nice as that *sounds*, **comfort ain't our ally – it's our enemy!** Cuz *comfort* means *going with the flow* and *ceasing the struggle* with our surroundings – but that's a *death sentence* down here! Cuz in *this world everything* is in *bondage to decay* due to *entropy* – so *going with the flow* means *accepting* a life of ongoing *degradation* that leads to *death*.

There's a great quote by the Biologist and longevity expert Gary Brecka that sums it up really well; he says, **"Aging is the aggressive pursuit of comfort."** Ain't *that the truth*! The *less* we *fight against* this world's *natural force*, the *faster* we'll *follow* it down a *dead end*!

Door Dash, Roombas, and grocery store scooters may have made things *feel* more *managable* – but they haven't *added* a single *minute* to our *physical lives*! And that *same* principle is at play in the *spiritual* sense cuz the *self-serving comfort* our *heart* wants *also* lets us wander in the *wrong* direction.



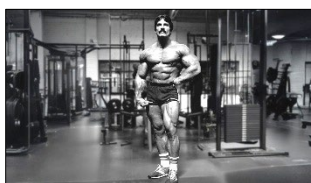
So what do we do?! Well, if **we don't go with the flow we gotta swim against the current**. Perpetually. We have to spend our lives stuck in some level of ongoing *discomfort* cuz *that's* the direction of "better." Which means *frustration* breaks the bonds of *decay* cuz it keeps us *away* from the deadly *comfort* in the path of *least resistance*. Which is exactly what *Daniel Coyle* found in his book *The Talent Code*; cuz after studying what makes us *skilled* and *successful*, he concluded *difficulty* was the difference, saying **"Struggle is a biological requirement of greatness."** So, no *surprise* that *God* already tried to tell us in *His Word*:

*Frustration* is *better* than *laughter*, because a *sad face* is *good* for the heart. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of *fools* is in the house of *pleasure*. – Ecclesiastes 7:3-4 NIV

Cuz whether it's the wisdom of *Solomon* or the conclusion of *Coyle* – the *takeaway* is the same; the **more we reject comfort and embrace frustration, the more we grow**. And *ultimately*, that's because it leads us to our next "F" word, **Failure**. But **what possible purpose does failing serve when your problem forces you to admit your inadequacy?** Well,

**[Paul?]** We do not want you to be uninformed ... about the troubles we experienced ... We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself ... But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God – 2 Corinthians 1:8-9 NIV

Get it? *Failing* to overcome adversity actually *helps* push us *through* our problems because **failing forces us to let go of things beyond our ability!** And that *humility* makes *room* for *God's* help.



You ever hear of Mike Mentzer? He's a former *Mr. Universe* who is famous for only working out *1 ½ to 2 hours a week* while *others* went *10 times* as long. And you know the *secret* to his *success*? *Failure!* His whole plan was pushing his muscles to *total failure* cuz he saw *that* as the *sign* his *human* effort was *fulfilled* and now *nature* could do *its* part.

Well *likewise*, **hitting our limits when dealing with difficulties doesn't mean defeat** – it's simply the *sign* that it's time to *stop* relying on *ourselves* and start depending on *God* – so *His* strength can *enhance* ours. Which is why Christianity is an inherently *impossible* proposition *by design*:



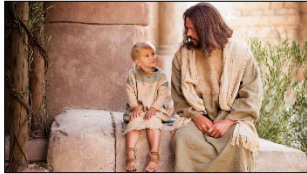
Be perfect ... as your heavenly Father is perfect. – Matthew 5:48 NIV

We don't grow by *avoiding* failure, but by *reaching* it cuz **God's strength replaces ours at the breaking point, not before**. So frequent failing means faster success cuz it leads to our third "F" word; **Faith!**



Reaching the *end* of our abilities actually *releases* us from *worry*, cuz we can *rest* in the knowledge that *we did* all *we could do* – and *now* it's up to *God*. And that *trust* is the basis of *faith*!

Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. – 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NIV



**Frustration and failure are part of a positive process** when it leads us to *trust* that coming to the end of *our* ability means *making way* for *God* to show *us* a *new way* He wants to *grow us*, cuz:



Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. – Hebrews 11:1 NIV



And when we encounter our *obstacles*, **the hardest things to see are ultimate outcomes**. But when we *embrace* adversity by trusting *God* to produce *more* than *our* frustrating *failures*, we learn to *see by faith*.



**EXERCISING** – will make you feel *weak* while it's making you *strong*.  
**LEARNING** – will make you feel *stupid* while it's making you *smart*.  
**SAVING** – will make you feel *poor* while it's making you *rich*.  
**CONFRONTING** – will make you feel *scared* while it's making you *brave*.

Y'see, the *disciplines* that *deal* with our *difficulties* are meant to *teach* us to *trust* that when our *own efforts* make us feel *weak, stupid, poor, and scared* – **God's actually making us strong, smart, rich, and brave!**

Which is why the *faith* that puts *purpose* into our frustration and failure – rests on our *fourth* “F” word, **Finishing**. Cuz it's the *future* of our faith that *enables* us to power through *present problems*.

[So,] Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the *joy* that was set before *Him* endured the cross ... *consider Him* who endured such hostility ... lest you become weary – Hebrews 12:1-3 NKJ

Got it? **Jesus fended off weariness by fixing His eyes on finishing His engagement of adversity**. And He *didn't* just *tough* it out, He *figured out* that temporary **troubles produce eternal glory**. So *now*, when we fix our eyes on *Jesus*, we *too* can focus on *finishing*, cuz we can see the *end* of our *faith*:

Our light and momentary troubles [are allowed by a loving God because they] are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. – 2 Corinthians 4:17 NIV

So *what's the problem?* If we *know* the *tough stuff* is just the price we pay for *perfection*, **why can't we stick it out?** Well, *temporary* doesn't *feel* temporary. Life is the *longest* experience any human will ever have! And *adversity* is only *good* if it has an *end*. Otherwise, it's literally *hell*. But **the best way to power through our problems is to see through our problems** – so, we gotta *practice* looking *past* the frustration and failure of *each* obstacle to find the *purpose* they serve when we *faithfully finish* the fight! Cuz that's when you'll realize, **your mess is just the beginning of God's message!** And if we can *learn* to simply *let Him finish* – we'll *all* see that *in the end*, He's *always* got *Good News!*

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Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.