

God is everywhere. He is. I have seen him in my phone conversations with my sister lately. Heard his voice, echoing her words, then seemingly sending me some subliminal messages when her words ceased. He barged (yes, barged) into my office a few weeks ago and without skipping a beat he exclaimed, "Kori! Where's your head? Your gifts abound, and what are you focusing on? Wake up, Propst!" I was sipping coffee in a cozy, little shop on a frigid and dreary afternoon last weekend and looking into the eyes of the man across from the table I saw Him. Softly, with compassion, he said, "Listen. Listen closely to what he is going to tell you next. And be open. Be wide open from now on with him as you continue down this path together. His intentions are loving." The laughs I shared with this man, the intense conversation, the important words spoken about the future, the current situation, and our relationship brought us closer. God was right there, contributing, reminding me to pause and listen closely. I hear him in the lyrics of so many songs about unborn love, ravaging heartbreak, beautiful births, tragic deaths, the grip of hurt and the thrill of victory. He sits beside me as I drive to work each morning and then again on my way home. At times I don't want Him there. I reject him sometimes. Those times are fleeting fortunately. Most often, I am asking him to get closer to me, to slide right up next to me, envelope me in his arms, and kiss my forehead. Like my mother used to do when I was a little girl, I yearn for Him to run his fingers through my hair, tenderly, and speak words of encouragement. The peace that falls over me like a warm blanket is quiet yet intense and filled with hope. I'm not alone. Not ever.

God wants me to strive to be like his son. And yet I am so filled with fault and sin and behaviors, thoughts, and feelings that make me so unlike Him. But what I have recognized over the last few years as I've grown closer to Him is that this is what he loves most about me. I am imperfect and yet I still want Him with me. I see that he is forgiving, loving, that he is saving me with every word, every breath, every relationship I create and maintain in my life, every experience, every moment no matter how trivial it may seem in the present. Because he is in a glance, in a gust of wind, in a flake of snow, in a drop of water, in the flames of a fire, he proves to me his allegiance and loyalty to my life. What a glorious revelation! Could there be any better inspiration to live a Christian life?

The Perfect Peaking Forums have a thread called ***What Inspires You?*** As competitive athletes we are often asked by others where our inspiration comes from. Many of us will give thanks to God. Often when we compete we'll hear our names read, the shows we have competed in and possibly some titles won, and then the MC will give some time to those we want to thank. It's more unusual to not hear God mentioned than it is to hear that it is his glory that has "given us the strength to prepare to be on this stage." This article is in no way preaching a belief in God as necessary to successful competition prep. What I'm interested in is what inspires you. I can tell my story. I can take you through what my experience has been like since I began competing in 2005 and how I have evolved in a manner that has lead me closer to God and as such closer to understanding and being myself in a way that was not possible before. I can tell you that without these insights and the relationship I have with him now, I would not be as successful as I am on and off the competitive bodybuilding stage. And I can tell you that within different periods of my life, my inspiration for competition has been different. The circumstances in which I'm involved

and the way in which I'm choosing at the time to travel around or through them shapes my overall feeling that I carry with me and what I strap onto my back to get me to where I need to be. Can you identify your inspiration? Is it a person, a place, a thing, an activity, a goal? And how do you keep it close enough to you so that it guides you through every step of your prep?

I am asked by clients often, "How do I stay motivated?" They struggle with consistency. They start off strong, doing what they need to do, focusing on their goal, seeing success, and then something happens and suddenly there is an enormous downed redwood blocking their path. Instead of jumping over it or grabbing a chainsaw and cutting it to pieces in order to remove it they stare up at it and ask "Why?!" What good is this? What will asking "why" get them except frustration and a feeling of lack of control? When you are faced with an obstacle, something that at first may appear to block you from what you want or need or desire, what do you do? Is there an inspiration that leads you toward action? For example, with the strength I find in my relationship with God, with what I have learned from Him regarding what I am capable of and the power that I possess and can employ, I'd be looking at that redwood and scheming about a way to get it the heck out of my way! I'd be weighing what was actually realistic to think I could accomplish on my own, assess what supports I have that could help me move it, and get going!! Now, I could play the victim. I could be active but take a different approach and plan a party. I could go to my friends and family and tell them what happened. I could ask them "why did this happen to me?" I may tell them that my dreams are gone now. My goal is no longer viable. There's no way I am going to get past this hump. I'd be sending all of them an invitation...PLEASE RSVP TO KORI'S PITY PARTY. Who wants to attend THAT kind of party? Let's plan a tree-chopping party instead!

As I write this, I'm driving with my sister back to her place the day following Christmas this year after visiting my grandma and mom. A car just passed us with a personalized license plate that read "DO WORK." I thought, "how awesome is that?!" How appropriate to what I'm addressing here. Ever seen a license plate that says, "GIVE UP" ? I haven't! So what is it that will get you from seeing that obstacle in front of you to making a plan to conquer it? I-N-S-P-I-R-E is the name of the game.

1. Identify what prompted you to take this route to begin with. Don't rush, and do a serious analysis. Reconnect with your initial motivations for deciding to "do work."
2. Needs assessment: it's likely that you needed something when you took off onto your chosen path. Assess what your needs were. Perhaps they have changed along the way, but getting in touch with them again will lead you toward your initial inspirations and the spark that ignited the fire. I'm speaking here of more emotional needs, but think in terms of practical needs also.
3. Stay in the present. When we're faced with seemingly insurmountable events in our lives, it's easy to go back in time, to circumstances that feel similar, to our old internal monologues that are often very limiting and negative. Focus on this moment and think about driving forward. Use your windshield rather than the rearview mirror.

4. Practice remembering your successes. If you go back in time, this time travel would best be spent identifying how you've come through difficult circumstances before. How did you do? Who did you call upon? What resources did you employ? Where did you think best of alternatives and choices? When were you most open to hearing the advice of others?
5. Illuminate your current skills as well as those that can be improved upon. It could be that breaking through the obstacle means employing your current assets on a larger scale...more time...more energy...more effort. What are these skills? Or it could mean enhancing a skill that may be lacking a bit. You may be able to identify areas that need improvement. Be open to asking others, like your employer, friends, or family members, what they may see could use some "bodybuilding."
6. Remodel your belief system. I'm not telling you to overhaul your life. What I am suggesting is that now might be a good time to pause and assess what is your overriding impetus for living. We are all guided by beliefs and internal scripts oftentimes learned and/or adopted through our experiences we endured as young children. Our caregivers acted in ways that sent us certain messages that we interpreted in a manner that would at the time help us function effectively. As we mature those beliefs may no longer facilitate optimal functioning and can get in the way. If you feel uncomfortable, it may be a signal to being some remodeling!
7. Epitomize success. Identify someone whom you admire or would like to emulate. We are surrounded by individuals whom we would aspire to be like, whose habits we see as admirable, and whose work ethic we could begin to adopt. Be the epitome of this person.

You may find God in each of these steps. You may not. Your inspiration may be hidden, but with these steps, you will reconnect with it. Do the work. Stay proactive. Chop away at the tree in your path step by step. And invite your friends and family to a party in which they can say, "Tell me how I can help" and then "congratulations!"