

160. WHAT TRUE STRENGTH LOOKS LIKE - FRIDAY - OCTOBER 2, 2026

Good morning, Grace Harbor – it's Dan. Happy Friday!

Today marks the end of "squash week" as Ted so eagerly called it. And what a week it's been!

Monday and Tuesday, I went up to the farm to help out, and I learned how to harvest winter squash, why rain can be such a problem, and what a hoop house is!

Monday, we got a solid start and headed home exhausted but feeling good. Tuesday was a challenge. Thankfully, pretty early on Ted noticed that I was tiring out and invited me to switch from cutting and lifting to wiping down the muddy squash.

We didn't hit our goal of getting everything done Tuesday, but we made it so much further than seemed possible at the beginning of the day. And then it was time for a surprise – Ted invited us all over to the barn where my wife had gotten a huge spread of food donated by some of our local restaurants to feed everyone dinner.

The rain on Wednesday paused the work. And Thursday morning, the fog was so thick it wasn't really safe to drive up to the farm. But the fog burned off through the morning, and after lunchtime, I got the itch to head back up and see how things were going.

It turns out, I wasn't the only one. As I was getting out

of my car, I heard Mr. Rutherford call out, “We got another special!” That meant he had found a squash that was bruised or had a broken stem, and it would need to be used sooner than later. He called them “specials” and put them in a separate crate.

When I reached the field, I saw a handful of others who had returned as well. Through the afternoon, there was a steady trickle of returning volunteers – which was good because most of what we had left were the big boys – the Blue Hubbards! The small ones are the size of a large house cat, but the big ones – it took two of us to lift each one!

When twilight hit, Ted once again invited us all to the barn for dinner. He assured us that his team could easily finish what was left on Friday, and he didn’t want to miss the opportunity to thank everyone for their help. Lilly had made a big pot of butternut squash stew with some of the “specials,” and it was **so** good.

I ended up sitting with Lilly, and I told her what we’ve been talking about on the podcast this week – loving God with all our strength – and how helping out this week had really deepened my understanding of what that meant.

I said, “I came into the week wanting to do the hardest job and show how **strong** I was. Not to show off. I mean, I know I’m no Superman. But I wanted to put my love for the farm and all the people who would be fed by the harvest into action. And when my physical strength gave out, I was embarrassed.”

"But when I changed jobs, it also changed my perspective. I started to see the strength of the whole team. And I noticed the ways that everyone was giving all they had – just in different ways."

"Take Mr. Rutherford. His knees won't let him get down in the dirt, but he was essential in the building of the temporary greenhouses. And him sitting at the end of the rows encouraging everyone helped keep us going."

"I think of my wife. She didn't touch a single squash, but she recognized that the volunteers were going to be hungry. She used her gift for hospitality and the relationships she had with some of the local restaurants to get all that food donated and set up. That's a strength that contributed to the goal."

Lilly then spoke up, "Don't sell yourself short, Dan. Tuesday night, Fern could *not* stop talking about how much fun she had wiping down the squash with you and your daughter. It gave her a sense of purpose, and, if I'm being honest, kept her out of trouble! And I'm grateful for that."

As we wrap up this week on loving God with all our strength, was there a time this week when you saw someone sharing one of their strengths or passions? When someone was giving all they had – maybe in a way that surprised you? Go ahead and share with each other now, and if you need more time, feel free to pause the podcast. I'll be right here when you get back.

[PAUSE]

Lilly and I ate in silence for a few minutes, probably because we were so tired. But then, I noticed there were tears in her eyes. I asked, "Hey, are you ok?"

"Yeah..." she replied, clearly holding back some emotion. "This just reminds me of when we first took over the farm. So many friends and neighbors and neighbors who would become great friends came out to help. Ted and I didn't know what we were doing half the time, but somebody did – mostly Mr. Rutherford," she added with a laugh.

"It's great to have everyone up here for the Farmer's Market and celebrations," she continued, "but I am serious when I say, without the help of Grace Harbor, this place wouldn't exist. I'm just so grateful."

As she was finishing, Fern ran up and told her mom how much she liked the stew.

"That's great," Lilly replied, "because there are enough specials still in that crate that we'll be eating this for weeks!"

Fern's eyes suddenly widened like she had gotten an idea. "Mom, is it ok if *I* do something with the specials?"

"Sure," Lilly said. "As long as you put them to good use. They're good food, and we don't want to waste them."

“Don’t worry, Mom!” Fern shouted, already turning to run away.

A few minutes later, I saw Fern and my daughter going table to table, handing out the specials to the volunteers who had helped harvest them. Many of the ones in the crate had been dropped or cut wrong or someone had absent-mindedly grabbed it by the stem and broke it off. But now, what had been a crateful of mistakes was truly a crateful of special gifts.

Ok, let’s close in prayer. If you want to, you can close your eyes and fold your hands.

Dear God, we thank you that strength comes in many forms. The kingdom of God needs people who can lift heavy things, but it also needs people who can lift the spirits of their neighbor. Show us where our strengths lie, and may we have the courage to love you with everything we have to give. Amen.

Ok, Grace Harbor, have a great weekend, and I’ll see you on Monday.

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