

- I. ONE THING—The One Thing that I'd like to take away from today's class and believe God to accomplish in my life is:

II. MEDITATION

A. Review your class notes from Tuesday.

- Take some time to think about the main ideas of the lesson. If you want to add details to your notes, you'll find the audio message on our website under the Resources tab. ([www.DivineDesignDiscipleship.com](http://www.DivineDesignDiscipleship.com)).
- Which of the scriptures referenced were particularly meaningful to you? Write out those verses below and spend some time studying them this week.

B. Rewrite your One Thing into a prayer, expressing your heart's desire for God to make this truth become your experience.

### III. PRINCIPLES

The God of All Comfort ministers to us in so many different ways. Meditate on these truths to better recognize and receive God's comfort:

#### A. Comfort: What It Looks Like

1. Reassuring words, tenderness, and forgiveness are God's means of comfort In Isaiah 40 to a people who have wandered into a barren place.
  - We need to know the God of All Comfort and Father of Mercies daily because we all fall short of God's glory. (Rom 3:23) Be reassured that your sin has been paid for. (Is 40:2)
  - *Are you "fully convinced" way down deep that God is not mad at you and His love is unconditional?*
  - Our part in comfort is to stay connected to God even in our sin and brokenness.
2. Grace, strength, purpose, and power can be ours in painful, long-standing, and unchanging circumstances. (2 Corinthians 12) Paul was able to glory in weakness!
  - Our part is to wrestle honestly with God and be "willing to be weak."
3. Redirecting our goals and our focus brings comfort by removing the power of lies and other voices in the midst of suffering. It's so helpful to know our pain has purpose.
  - Paul learned that God's purposes for his life could never be thwarted despite hardships and what seemed like unanswered prayers. (2 Corinthians 1, 12)
  - Our part is to fix our focus on God and His character vs. our problems and pain.
4. God's voice of truth helps us accept our reality and frees us where we're stuck. We're able to receive comfort where we've been uncomfortable with the truth.
  - Ask God to challenge your thinking whenever you are in a heart-broken or wilderness place: *Are there any lies, judgments, or vows keeping me here?*
5. Correction and teaching was Jesus' method of comfort to his disciples as they faced loss. (John 14-16) He showed them a better way to process their pain and fear.
  - Instead of openness and vulnerability, our flesh wants to respond to pain or loss by:
    - Being hypocritical, honoring the Lord with our mouths only: Stop it/Don't give lip service to God. Instead follow My example in prayer. (~Mt 6:5ff)
    - Worrying instead of focusing on God's promises & provision: Stop it/Do not worry. Instead consider the lilies and think about the birds. (~Mt 6:24ff)
  - Stop, listen, and heed God's voice so that you will not remain comfortless.
6. Guidance is one of the key ways the Holy Spirit acts as Comforter. In our "not knowing," it is comforting to know the One who does know and will lead us through.
  - Jesus is the Good Shepherd. His voice will comfort and guide: Ps 23:3-4 TV--He makes me whole again, steering me *off worn, hard paths* to roads where *truth and righteousness* echo His name. Even in the *unending* shadows of death's darkness, I am not overcome by fear. Because You are with me *in those dark moments*, near with Your protection and guidance, I am comforted.
7. Encouragement from God's Word and His people brings comfort that will enable us to endure our suffering. (2 Cor 1, Rom 15:4)
  - What comfort for a flesh-and-blood human being to tell their story of how the Lord showed up for them in similar circumstances (or to do that for someone else)!
  - God puts stories of real people with really gritty problems in the Bible. They are there to give us comfort and boost our faith in the God of All Comfort.
  - Pray that you will learn patient endurance like this: Job 14:14 TV-- Through these days of toil and struggle, I will *patiently* wait until my situation changes.

Insights:

## B. Grieve

- God is the “God of What’s Left.” Call on Him when grief comes in its many forms:
  - Death of a loved one
  - Death of a dream
  - Death of a season of life
  - Death of a relationship
  - Death of a plan
  - Failure
  - Not attaining the love or approval of a significant person
  - Not being the person one wishes he or she were (loss of ideal self)
  - Not getting what we want
  - Loss of health due to illness
  - Financial reversals
  - Death of anything we need, want, or desire, good or bad

(Adapted from *How People Grow*, Henry Cloud)

- The only way to be truly comforted in our losses is by honestly grieving them.
- Our default (the flesh) is to pretend, rationalize, or spiritualize our loss = Denial.
- Jesus asks us to face the truth that loss and death are real in order to receive comfort: Mt 5:4-- Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- Grieve (penteo)—grieve; lament; sorrow over affliction, sin, or death (Vines)
- Grieving over sin is necessary to get past the regrets involved in our loss: 2 Cor 7:10 NIV-- Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.
- Grieving over loss and death is often characterized by anger. Righteous anger declares that it wasn’t meant to be this way: Jn 11:33 NLT-- When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him, and he was deeply troubled.
- Grieving with hope invites the God of All Comfort into our loss. In this type of grief we open ourselves and our situation to redemption, resolution, newness, and joy:
  - 1 Thes 4:13 NLT-- Dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope.
  - Is 58:11 MSG--I’ll give you a full life in the emptiest of places
  - Is 53:3 TV--He was despised and forsaken by men, this man of suffering, grief’s *patient* friend.
  - 2 Cor 6:10 NLT-- Our hearts ache, but we always have joy.
  - 2 Cor 7:6-7 NLT--God, who encourages those who are discouraged, encouraged us by the arrival of Titus. His presence was a joy, but so was the news he brought of the encouragement he received from you. When he told us how much you long to see me, how sorry you are for what happened, and how loyal you are to me, I was filled with joy!
- When we enter into the grief process in the way prescribed by God, He faithfully provides comfort for us and brings glory to Himself: Is 61:1a, 2b-3 NIV—The Lord has anointed me...to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.
- David found comfort in God’s provision after the death of Bathsheba’s baby. (2 Sam 12:20ff)
- David put on garments of praise instead of a spirit of despair when Solomon was born. And God literally gave David a crown of beauty instead of ashes: 2 Sam 12:30--From the head of the idol of the Ammonite god Molech David took a gold crown which weighed about seventy-five pounds and had a jewel in it.
- The basic comforts of life—a hot bath, a warm meal, or human touch--can be are God’s means of healing in loss. Returning to productive work can also be comforting.

### Insights:

### C. Shine

- When we are able to grieve and to receive God's comfort, it brings the glory to God: Is 61:3 NIV-- They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.
- In the preceding chapter God gives the command to shine in the midst of darkness. This is a theme throughout the Bible: Is 60:1-3 NIV-- Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.
- The God of All Comfort has promised His glory will be revealed. (Is 40:5). But, as long as we are sojourners in this world, it will only be a partial glimpse.
- The Lord is able to either move mountains or move us over our mountains: Hab 3:17-19 AMP-- Though the fig tree does not blossom and there is no fruit on the vines, [though] the product of the olive fails and the fields yield no food, though the flock is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the [victorious] God of my salvation! The Lord God is my Strength, my personal bravery, *and* my invincible army; He makes my feet like hinds' feet and will make me to walk [not to stand still in terror, but to walk] *and* make [spiritual] progress upon my high places [of trouble, suffering, or responsibility]!
- God's glory comes when the "Christ in us" shines more and more brightly:
  - Allowing suffering to be "good pain" which leads to personal growth (2 Cor 7:10)
  - Letting our light shine before men: 2 Cor 4:5-6 MSG—(It is not about ourselves; we're proclaiming Jesus Christ, the Master. All we are is messengers, errand runners from Jesus for you. It started when God said, "Light up the darkness!" and our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ, all bright and beautiful.
  - "Expanded borders" of ministry: Dan 3:28-30 MSG-- Nebuchadnezzar said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel and rescued his servants who trusted in him! They ignored the king's orders and laid their bodies on the line rather than serve or worship any god but their own. "Therefore I issue this decree: Anyone anywhere, of any race, color, or creed, who says anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be ripped to pieces, limb from limb, and their houses torn down. There has never been a god who can pull off a rescue like this." \*\*\*Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

#### Insights:

### IV. PERSONALIZATION

#### A. Cultivate intimacy with God by connecting with Him daily:

- Practice the Middle of the Page technique of journaling with God:
  - Find a quiet spot
  - Fix your eyes of Jesus
  - Find the flow of God's voice (sounds like spontaneous, biblical thoughts)
  - Facilitate communication by journaling

#### B. Spend time in God's presence through prayer and song using the names of God.

#### C. Get to know God better by meditating on His names using the Nuggets" booklet.

- Ask the Lord "Who do You want to be for me?" in my day, issue, or season.

#### D. Keep a written record of how God ministers to you this week. Come back ready to share what you've experienced.