

- 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 following principles will aid you in overcoming anxiety, worry, and fear of conflict:

#### A. FEAR OF BEING ALONE

- In this semester, we have been examining Relational Fears beginning with FOM, FO Conflict (with people and with God), FO Pain & Suffering (emphasis on relational pain), FO Conflict, and FO Confrontation.
- A powerful fear underlying most relational fears is the Fear of Being Alone.
- We reason that if we please people, avoid conflict, ignore painful relational dynamics, and steer clear of awkward confrontation, we might protect ourselves from the frightening prospect of being alone.
- Our culture enjoys many easy and varied channels of connectivity and yet loneliness is widespread.
- Electronic communication, while convenient and efficient, has the potential to move us away from authentic connection.
- Recent research found feelings of loneliness in 3 out of 4 Americans. (*US News and World Report*, December 18, 2018)
- Loneliness in this world is the result of the fall. Pre-fall, Adam and Eve enjoyed constant, unbroken connection with God and each other.
- God tells us in Scripture that we were made to connect: Gen 2:18—It is not good for man to be alone.
- We can experience loneliness and FO Being Alone even when people are around.
- Autophobia:
  1. Auto (self) + phobia (fear) = people afraid of loneliness
  2. Anxious feelings of being ignored, unloved, not noticed and not valued
  3. Can be rooted in past abandonment and rejection
- Though we are social beings that tend to fear being alone, it is helpful to remember:

#### **ALONE ≠ LONELINESS**

- Throughout Scripture we see many of God's people experiencing periods of solitude. Insights:

#### B. CAUSES

- The Apostle Paul, an extroverted people-person, experienced seasons of being alone. He must have felt loneliness during his imprisonment: 2 Tim 4:9ff-- Timothy, please come as soon as you can. <sup>10</sup> Demas has deserted me because he loves the things of this life and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus has gone to Dalmatia. <sup>11</sup> Only Luke is with me. Bring Mark with you when you come, for he will be helpful to me in my ministry. <sup>12</sup> I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. <sup>13</sup> When you come, be sure to bring the coat I left with Carpus at Troas. Also bring my books, and especially my papers. Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm, but the Lord will judge him for what he has done. <sup>15</sup> Be careful of him, for he fought against everything we said. <sup>16</sup> The first time I was brought before the judge, no one came with me. Everyone abandoned me. May it not be counted against

them. <sup>17</sup> But the Lord stood with me and gave me strength so that I might preach the Good News in its entirety for all the Gentiles to hear. And he rescued me from certain death.

<sup>18</sup> Yes, and the Lord will deliver me from every evil attack and will bring me safely into his heavenly Kingdom. All glory to God forever and ever! Amen. <sup>19</sup> Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila and those living in the household of Onesiphorus. <sup>20</sup> Erastus stayed at Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick at Miletus. <sup>21</sup> Do your best to get here before winter.

- There's much to learn from how Paul describes his situation, its causes and cures.
- Fear of Being Alone and loneliness are triggered by common life events:
  1. Change
    - Any time we leave one thing and begin something new, there will be opportunity for loneliness and Fear of Being Alone (FOBA).
    - This can be true for positive transitions (ex: advancement in job or academics) as well as more painful changes (ex: sickness, separation, divorce, or death).
    - Scholars believe that Paul was facing a death sentence. He wanted connection with the people he loved before making the biggest transition of all. (Vv, 9, 11, 19, 21)
  2. Distance
    - There is potential for FOBA whenever there is physical distance between us and our loved ones.
    - Paul mentioned the absence of 7 of his friends and ministry partners in the passage.
    - Five of these distances were the result of ministry assignments meant to further the Kingdom of God. One separation was due to illness and one due to desertion.
    - Distance that results from defection or abandonment has its own particular pain. (v. 10) These situations also make us vulnerable FOM, FO Conflict and FO (More) Loss.
    - Paul urged Timothy to come quickly to his side. He considered him his "son in the Lord" and obviously wanted him nearby (1 Tim 1:2).
  3. Differences
    - Separation is painful, but it's even more difficult and lonely when caused by disagreement or opposition.
    - Commentators suspect that Alexander may have spoken against Paul at his trial. It's also possible he was the one who turned him into Roman officials (vv. 14-15).
    - We may be called to stand alone when other people differ with us, whether openly or covertly. These situations can open the door to anxiety, fear, and doubt.
  4. Rejection
    - Fear of Being Alone brought on by rejection is the most difficult to overcome.
    - It can be incredibly lonely to be excluded, deserted, or betrayed by someone we thought we could trust.
    - Paul, after giving so much of his life to others, wound up without a friend at his trial. What a hollow feeling that must have been (v. 16).
    - All humans have a legitimate emotional need for acceptance. When we lose the acceptance of other people, it can be so devastating that we want to give up hope.

Insights:

### C. COMPLICATIONS

- Paul is the one who warns us about a spirit of fear (2 Tim 1:7). He also describes the complications of a strongholds of fear: 2 Cor 10:5 NAS-- We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ
- Speculation = thought, reasoning, imagination, or computation (Strong's)
- Our thinking can get skewed in times when we have little human contact.
- Lies are able to lodge in our minds when isolation and FO Being Alone are present:
  1. LIE: When I feel lonely it's because I am truly alone.
    - TRUTH: Even when other people are not present, Jesus is always with me: Mt 28:20 AMP-- I am with you always [remaining with you perpetually—regardless of circumstance, and on every occasion], even to the end of the age.
  2. LIE: If I feel alone it's because I don't have enough faith.
    - TRUTH: All believers have a measure of faith (Rom 12:3) It is more nearness to the abiding presence of God that is needed in lonely times: Jm 4:8—Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.
  3. LIE: There is no one who can understand me and my situation.
    - TRUTH: Jesus knows suffering Himself and provides other people who bring us comfort from their times of loneliness and pain: 2 Cor 1:5 JBP-- For he gives us comfort in our trials so that we in turn may be able to give the same sort of strong sympathy to others in theirs.
  4. LIE: If I am alone then God must not love me. He is holding out on me.
    - TRUTH: When isolated and consumed by fear, we can become offended, bitter, and judgmental toward God: Ps 73:21-25 NLT-- Then I realized that my heart was bitter, and I was all torn up inside. I was so foolish and ignorant—I must have seemed like a senseless animal to you. Yet I still belong to you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny. Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth.
  5. LIE: Being alone is a bad thing.
    - TRUTH: Being alone can be a good time for enriching our inner life: Lk 5:16 NIV--Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.
- LISTENING EXERCISE: *Lord Jesus, will You help me see any lie I've believed in the place where I feel the most alone?*

Insights:

## D. CURES

- Counterproductive cures that can actually make our situation worse include:
  1. Self-Defeating Comfort is found in the form of food, drink, activity, pills, etc.
  2. Materialistic Pursuits can be wasteful and/or create unnecessary financial burden
  3. Busyness occupies our minds and often fills our time with meaningless pursuits
  4. Fantasizing and other forms of mental escape prevent us from dealing in reality
  5. Meaningless Connection (ex: chit chat or virtual relating) often leaves us feeling more lonely and discontent
- The “cures” above can only provide temporary relief from our anxiety and fear.
- Paul indicated good self-care when he asked for his books, papers, and coat!
- Whenever loneliness and FOBA begin to encroach, be sure to address to your basic needs (people contact, mental stimulus, exercise, healthy eating and sleeping).
- Powerfully effective remedies that Paul used in his lonely season will help us, too:
  1. Reaching Out to trustworthy people for compassion, companionship, and counsel.
    - Paul wrote a letter to Timothy making his needs known (vv. 9, 11, 13, 19, 21).
    - *Are you willing to express your desire for connection without fear or shame?*
    - There was enough history and trust in the relationship so that Paul was able to shamelessly make several requests of Timothy (including significant time and travel).
    - Take time to assess your potential for FO Being Alone and loneliness by asking:
      - *Which people in my life do I feel free to call on when I need a friend?*
      - *Am I the kind of friend that others feel free to call upon?*
      - *Lord, will you reveal the reasons that I lack freedom &/or friendships like these?*
  2. Redeeming the Time by seeking out God’s call and purpose for this season.
    - Paul clearly stated his plan to continue pursuing his ministry despite his isolation (v. 11).
    - He took advantage of his alone time using it to write his epistles and to maintain contact with faraway friends.
    - His circumstances served as a platform for furthering the spread of the Gospel (v. 17).
    - Prayerfully consider how to maximize your moments in this set apart time: Eph 5:16 JBP-- Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days. Don’t be vague but firmly grasp what you know to be the will of God.
    - A wonderful strategy for overcoming FO Being Alone and loneliness is to pray:
      - *Lord, is there something I can do now that would not be possible at any other time?*
      - *Please show me anyone you’d have me to befriend or comfort as a result of my experience of being alone.*
  3. Enjoying God’s Presence is the perfect antidote for loneliness and its kindred fears.
    - Paul turned his attention away from the empty spots left by people and focused instead on God’s faithfulness to be present with him. (v. 16).
    - By setting his mind on God’s nearness rather than on what he lacked, Paul gained the victory over loneliness, fear, bitterness, and hatred.
    - Maybe he remembered God’s promise to strongly support His people: 2 Chron 16:9-- For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.
    - Possibly he thought of Jesus’ words when He was to be left alone: Jn 16:32-33 NLT--But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when you will be scattered, each one going his own way, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. I have

told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.

- The Lord was present when Jesus and Paul were alone. He will do the same for us! Is 30:18 AMP-- The Lord [earnestly] waits [expecting, looking, and longing] to be gracious to you; and therefore He lifts Himself up, that He may have mercy on you *and* show loving-kindness to you. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) are all those who [earnestly] wait for Him, who expect *and* look *and* long for Him [for His victory, His favor, His love, His peace, His joy, and His matchless, unbroken companionship]!
- 2 Tim 2:8-13 JBP-- Remember always, as the centre of everything, Jesus Christ, a man of human ancestry, yet raised by God from the dead according to my Gospel. For preaching this I am having to endure being chained in prison as if I were some sort of a criminal. But they cannot chain the Word of God, and I can endure all these things for the sake of those whom God is calling, so that they too may receive the salvation of Jesus Christ, and its complement of glory after the world of time. I rely on this saying: If we died with him we shall also live with him: if we suffer with him we shall also reign with him. If we deny him he will also deny us: yet if we are faithless he always remains faithful. He cannot deny his own nature.

#### E. PREVIOUSLY ON “BE NOT ANXIOUS”:

- Continue to seek the Lord about relational fears and friction. Do your inner work with Him first using the principles we’ve learned. Also, be willing to have a conversation if necessary.
- Be alert for anxious thoughts and fearful emotions that indicate Fear of Man in your life.
- Use the Tools & Techniques (blue pages) for strategies based on foundational biblical truths
- Keep a journal of your 2-way prayer conversations with God. Be sure to confirm what you’ve heard by being sure it is consistent with the whole counsel of Scripture.
- Here is a suggested format for Listening Prayer:\*
  - Pay attention to your places of fear, dread, doubt, worry, and anxiety this week. These are places you need a promise or a word from God! Choose one to share.
  - Take 5-10 minutes for Listening to the Lord:
    - Spend a few minutes focusing on God. Use a song or a Psalm to stir thanksgiving and worship in your heart.
    - ASK: “Where in my life do I need a promise from You? Is there a specific circumstance or relationship?” Let the thoughts flow. Choose the one place or relationship that rises to the top.
    - ASK: “How am I feeling about this circumstance or relationship?” Write down what comes to mind.
    - Picture yourself giving your negative emotions to the Lord. What do you see or hear?
    - ASK: “What do you want to give me in return?”
    - ASK the Holy Spirit to lead you into all truth as you search the Scriptures. Record the most meaningful ones here or in your spiritual journal. Make sure the verses are in agreement with the whole counsel of Scripture.
    - Meditate on those verse(s) until they become your personal promise(s).