

- 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).
 - 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, doubt and fear:

A. FEAR OF SUFFERING

- Whenever we have felt like victims at the mercy of a scary world, fear of suffering can enter. Because we're powerless as children, it often starts early: Lam 3:20 NAS—Surely my soul remembers and is bowed down within me.
- When fear of suffering is present, we're prone to developing a victim mindset.
- A victim mindset is driven by fear. It's accompanied by emotions of anxiety, shame, sadness, and especially anger (though anger is often hidden and hard to spot).
- "The victim mindset is stagnant and heavy. It keeps us paralyzed, small, and inadequate. It makes us believe that we are at the mercy of circumstances beyond our capacity to change. Most of all, it allows us only a small number of possible reactions to life situations. Deceptively, this victim response can look like strength or soldiering through a difficult time—when in reality, it's just a coping mechanism to numb out from our pain." (Kelly McNenis)
- Peter provides a vivid example of someone who was afraid of pain and suffering and probably had some victim thinking, too: Mk 8:31-33 NLT-- Then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead. As he talked about this openly with his disciples, Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things. Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples, then reprimanded Peter. "Get away from me, Satan!" he said. "You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's."
- With fear as his motive, Peter tried to convince Jesus to avoid the pain of the Cross.
- In our fleshly nature, human beings will shrink away from the prospect of suffering. Only by seeing things from God's perspective will we find strength to face pain.
- Peter needed Jesus to deliver him from fear many times before he became fearless.

Insights:

B. EXPECTATIONS

- Jesus began setting realistic expectations immediately after He spoke of the suffering to come: Mk 8:34 NLT-- Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.
- He wanted Peter and His other followers to understand the path they were choosing.
- All of us who follow Jesus are called to self-denial. Deny (*aparneomai*) = completely disown, to utterly separate oneself from someone or something.

- When we choose to submit to Jesus as Lord, we are not victims. We, like Him, voluntarily take God's path, strength and resources vs. our own: Jn 10:18 NLT-- No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded
- In Jesus' day, a cross wasn't just a symbol of pain and suffering; it was mainly a symbol of death. What Jesus was telling them is that they needed to put to death their own plans and desires, and then turn their lives over to Him and do His will every day. (Billy Graham)
- Jesus modeled victory by His surrendered life, obedience, and sacrifice: 1 Jn 2:6 NLT--Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did
- Jesus plainly set the expectation that following Him was not a free pass to avoid suffering. However, we need not fear it either: Jn 16:33 NLT-- 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.
- We're not promised lack of pain, but we are promised of God's peace and victory.

Insights:

C. PURPOSE IN OUR PAIN

- "It is much easier to die than to lay down your life day in and day out with the sense of the high calling of God." (Oswald Chambers)
 - The Father will always bring good things from our pain and suffering: Gen 50:20-- You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.
 - A great strategy for overcoming the fear of suffering is to remember its purposes:
1. Growth
 - As we partner with Him, God uses hard, painful circumstances to mold us into the image of Jesus: Rom 8:28-29 AMP-- We are assured *and* know that [God being a partner in their labor] all things work together and are [fitting into a plan] for good to *and* for those who love God and are called according to [His] design *and* purpose. For those whom He foreknew [of whom He was aware and loved beforehand], He also destined from the beginning [foreordaining them] to be molded into the image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness], that He might become the firstborn among many brethren.
 - Peter's faith needed to grow: Mt 14:30 NLT-- When he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" he shouted.
 - Peter learned faith by experiencing God's power in fearful times: Acts 4:13-- Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.
 2. Grooming
 - The Father uses pain to develop purity of heart in us: Heb 13:9-10 MSG-- This trouble you're in isn't punishment; it's *training*, the normal experience of children. Only irresponsible parents leave children to fend for themselves. Would you prefer an

irresponsible God? We respect our own parents for training and not spoiling us, so why not embrace God's training so we can truly *live*? While we were children, our parents did what *seemed* best to them. But God is doing what *is* best for us, training us to live God's holy best.

- Instead of denying himself and facing his fears, Peter denied Jesus 3 times. (Mt 26:70ff) He may have fallen prey to a victim mindset thinking he was disqualified from his call.
- But Jesus forgave Peter and freed him from fear and self-reliance as evidenced by his humility and gratitude: Acts 10:34-35 AMP--Peter opened his mouth and said: Most certainly *and* thoroughly I now perceive and understand that God shows no partiality *and* is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he who venerates *and* has a reverential fear for God, treating Him with worshipful obedience and living uprightly, is acceptable to Him *and* sure of being received and welcomed [by Him].

3. Glory

- Doing life God's way is vastly different than what we would ever choose on our own: Mk 8:35-37 MSG-- Don't run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I'll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to saving yourself, your true self. What good would it do to get everything you want and lose you, the real you? What could you ever trade your soul for?
 - Jesus is suggesting that death is better than forfeiting the opportunity of becoming the true you, the new creation that came to life in Christ!
 - Fear of suffering blinded Peter. He didn't want Jesus to be a victim of the religious leaders even though the Spirit has revealed to him that Jesus is God! (Mk 8:29, 32)
 - Eventually, Peter comes to understand that God brings glory from our suffering: 1 Pt 4:12-13-- Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.
- Let's find hope and strength in God's promises to bring benefits from our hardships.
- Insights:

D. SUFFERING IN RELATIONSHIPS

- Relationships have a particular likelihood to bring out our fears: Fear of Man, FOMO, Fear of Conflict, and Fear of Pain and Suffering!
- Jesus sets the example for suffering: 1 Jn 3:16-- By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren
- "God intends for the afflictions of Christ to be presented to the world through the afflictions of his people. God really means for the body of Christ, the church, to experience some of the suffering he experienced so that when we offer the Christ of the cross to people, they see the Christ of the cross in us." (John Piper)
- Peter spent the years after Pentecost inviting others to new life in Christ. He was often mistreated and in trouble, yet he responded in security and love like Jesus did:

1 Pt 2:21-23 NLT-- For God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow in his steps. He never sinned, nor ever deceived anyone. He did not retaliate when he was insulted, nor threaten revenge when he suffered. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.

- In Peter's instructions for relational suffering, he affirms our new identity. We are not victims! 1 Pt 2:25 MSG-- You were lost sheep with no idea who you were or where you were going. Now you're named and kept for good by the Shepherd of your souls.
- People who haven't had their legitimate emotional needs fully met (love, acceptance, security, significance) probably have a measure of victim thinking. That's most of us!
- If we think like victims we are likely to develop unhealthy relating patterns. We can get stuck in self-pity, blaming, entitlement, and one-down attitudes.
- "Victims' deal in judgments and 'shoulds' in interactions with others. They operate on the basic assumption that the world should be fair: 'I should have been loved by my parents.' 'My children should call me or write to me.' 'After all that I've done for her, the least she could do.'" (Robert Firestone)
- Healthy relating is hindered when fear tempts us to be judgmental, critical, defensive, self-protective, and unwilling to be vulnerable.
- Healing and freedom come when we get in touch with painful memories and allow the HS to re-parent us through our safe people and listening prayer.
- Jesus demonstrated this with Peter. He revisited the painful memory of Peter's FOM and fear of suffering when he betrayed Jesus. (John 21:15ff)
- The interaction between Jesus and Peter shows us the Lord's willingness to deal specifically with our pain, shame, fears, and failures.
- Jesus desired to restore intimacy with Peter and continue on in committed relationship. This healing moment transformed Peter from victim to victor.
- "Nothing fosters courage like a clear grasp of grace. And nothing fosters fear like an ignorance of mercy...If you haven't accepted God's forgiveness, you are doomed to fear. Nothing can deliver you from the gnawing realization that you have disregarded your Maker and disobeyed His instruction. No pill. No pep talk, psychiatrist, or possession can set the sinner's heart at ease. You may deaden the fear, but you can't remove it. Only God's grace can." (Max Lucado)
- Rom 8:35-38 NLT-- Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,^[a] neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.

Insights:

D. CONTINUE TO PRACTICE

- Ask God to search your heart concerning Conflict, both without and within. Use Psalm 27 as a weapon to battle your anxiety and fear. Make the choice to “let your heart take courage.”
- Be alert for anxious thoughts and fearful emotions that indicate Fear of Man in your life.
- Use the Handout “Tools & Techniques: Liberation” to reinforce that truth that your love and acceptance by God are unconditional.
- 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.
- Use “Tools & Techniques: Listening to God” for biblical support and practical suggestions.
- Find general promises for all God’s children on “Tools & Techniques: Spiritual Blessings” or look up verses using an online search engine such as BibleGateway.com.
- 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).
- *Here are some additional suggestions for Listening Prayer as you deal with events or environments from the past, distant or recent. Ask God:
 - “What is the message that I came to believe from this memory?”
 - “What is Your truth that counteracts the message(s) I believed?”
 - “Where was my omnipresent Savior in that memory?” (Let the HS use your imagination to replace your old mental pictures with His new one.)
 - Ask the HS to remind you of the new message and/or picture that you received whenever your button gets pushed.
- Come next week prepared to share something that you learned from the lesson or this listening exercise, and how you are using that truth to combat your fear.