

### A. DON'T LOSE HEART

- Prayer is one of the primary ways Scripture gives us to lean on God. Paul, in his prayer in Ephesians 1 asks God to flood the eyes of our hearts with light.
- When our hearts are full of light we have hope, wisdom, and understanding. We're secure and able to enjoy a deep connection with the Holy Spirit inside. (Eph 1:17-20)
- However, when we lose sight of the truth, we begin to "lose heart." This can lead to discontent, weariness, unbelief, giving up, and slipping back into coping vs. leaning.
- Paul prefaces his prayer in chapter 3 with the acknowledgement that tribulation or pressure sometimes causes us to lose heart. He prays instead for our strengthening: Eph 3:13-21-- I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>15</sup>from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, <sup>16</sup>that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, <sup>17</sup>that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup>may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height— <sup>19</sup>to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. <sup>20</sup>Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, <sup>21</sup>to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.
- Causes for losing heart found throughout the Scriptures include:
  - Tribulation: Eph 3:13--Do not lose heart at my tribulations...
  - Waiting: Gal 6:9--Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.
  - Loneliness: Ps 69:20 NET-- Their insults are painful and make me lose heart; I look for sympathy, but receive none, for comforters, but find none.
  - Rejection: Heb 12:3 NAS-- For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.
  - Physical Infirmities: 2 Cor 4:16-- We do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day.
  - Grief: Ps 143:7 NIV-- Lord, answer me quickly. I'm growing weak. Don't turn your face away from me, or I will be like those who go down into the grave.
  - Enemy Attack: Ps 143:13-14 NLT-- The enemy has persecuted my soul; he has crushed my life to the ground; he has made me dwell in darkness like those who have long been dead. Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is distressed.
  - Prayerlessness: Luke 18:1 MSG-- Jesus told them a story showing that it was necessary for them to pray consistently and never quit.
- Whenever we feel weary, heartbroken or ready to quit, let's remember the model provided by Jesus and by Paul. Let's choose to lean on God through prayer.
- Insights:

## B. INNER STRENGTH

- We need inner strength to overcome our weaknesses when we are tempted to lose heart. Paul begins his prayer for inner strength with the phrase “for this reason.” (v. 14)
- The apostle, earlier in the letter, sets forth many reasons we can have inner strength and hope when facing life’s pressures. Let’s consider and lean into them:
  - Spiritual Riches: Eph 1:3ff—God...has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ
  - New Life: Eph 2:5 AMP-- When we were [spiritually] dead *and* separated from Him because of our sins, He made us [spiritually] alive together with Christ
  - New Identity: Eph 2:10-- We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.
  - New Family: Eph 2:19 NIV-- You are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household
  - Belonging: Eph 2:22a JBP-- In him each separate piece of building, properly fitting into its neighbor, grows together into a temple consecrated to God.
  - God With Us: Eph 2:22b EXB-- In Christ you, too, are being built ... into a place where God lives through the Spirit.
- When we take these truths (e.g. we have riches, new lives, belongingness) and pray for HS to apply them to our weary hearts, we strengthen ourselves in the Lord.
- Paul’s first prayer in Ephesians asked for us to understand the power provided by our status in Christ. He prayed that we would know it by experience: Eph 1:19 AMP-- [That you can know and understand] what is the immeasurable *and* unlimited *and* surpassing greatness of His power in *and* for us who believe
- We know the Spirit’s inner strength by experience when we pray in faith, surrendering our own strength for His: Ps 62:7-8 AMP-- With God rests my salvation and my glory; He is my Rock of unyielding strength *and* impenetrable hardness, and my refuge is in God! Trust in, lean on, rely on, *and* have confidence in Him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts before Him. God is a refuge for us (a fortress and a high tower). *Selah* [pause, and calmly think of that]!
- LISTENING EXERCISE:  
*Lord, please show me anywhere that I’m susceptible to losing heart (places where weary, grieving, discontent, or doubting):*

*To what degree am I leaning on my own strength instead of depending on Yours?*

*Jesus, by faith, I want to surrender this place to You. I lay down my best efforts and choose instead to lean on You and the strength of Your Spirit.*

- Insights:

### C. INDWELLING CHRIST

- Paul, writing from prison, knows firsthand that staying fully present to the indwelling Christ is a great source of strength and comfort. That's why he prays as he does.
- He was also aware that when we lose heart it's easy to lose sight of the promise that Jesus would come to take up permanent residence in our hearts: Jn 14:23-- If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.
- We are susceptible to doubt and temptation when we lose heart. Sometimes we even get to the place where we give up and give in.
- Once we become out of touch with God's presence inside, it becomes easy to revert back to the old nature. Mindsets and behaviors of the flesh begin to resurface.
- By leaning into prayer, we avoid succumbing to unbelief and giving into temptation. We connect with God's indwelling presence vs. grieving Him: Eph 4:30 NLT-- Do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.
- If we find that we have grieved the Spirit, let's quickly turn back to Him and pray for His forgiveness. He has promised to forgive and cleanse us when we do. (1 Jn 1:9)
- Pray for HS to reveal unforgiveness inside. Choosing to forgive removes an obstacle to our fellowship with God and other people: Eph 4:31-32-- Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.
- Christ once again reigns as Lord of our hearts as we deal with these grievances. We are now free to lean on Him and receive His comfort and strength: Is 50:4 NAS-- The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.
- Insights:

### D. PERSONAL APPLICATION

- 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:

- PONDER THE TRUTH

Which verse stood out to you this week? Write it out below and take some time to review it often. Be still and expectant in God's presence, alert for new insights. Write it down.

- PRAYER

Take your One Thing and your verse and turn them into a prayer:

*“Lord, where do You want to apply these truths to my particular life circumstances?” How?*

- PRAISE

Praising God in song helps you engage your emotions, taking truth from head to heart.

### PROCESSING THE TRUTH

Prayerfully consider these questions, asking the Spirit to guide you into a deeper understanding of the truth and to reveal His pathway for growth. Keep a written record.

#### Don't Lose Heart

- Prayerfully consider the things that can cause us to lose heart:
  - Tribulation or pressure
  - Loneliness
  - Waiting
  - Rejection
  - Physical Infirmities
  - Grief
  - Enemy Attack
  - Prayerlessness

Which of them apply to your current circumstances? Journal here about your situation:

- In the areas you've identified, do you have any of the symptoms of losing heart?
  - Discontent
  - Weariness
  - Unbelief
  - Giving up
  - Giving in
  - Slipping back into coping vs. leaning
  
- Pray this personalized version of Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3 over these situations:

*Lord, I ask that You fulfill Your Word in my life. I am asking that You might:*

- 1. Protect me from losing heart*
- 2. Give me inner strength out of your glorious riches and by your Spirit*
- 3. Enable me to depend on Your strength instead of my own*
- 4. Help me to stay connected with the truth that I have Christ dwelling in my heart*
- 5. Increase my faith*
- 6. Plant the truth deeply in my heart that I am rooted and grounded in love*
- 7. Help me grasp the dimensions of Your love for me*
- 8. Enable me to believe what You say is true more than what I feel or see*
- 9. Do immeasurably more than I can ask or image by the power that is at work in me*
- 10. Put Your glory be on display in my life! Amen.*

Thoughts and observations:

### Inner Strength

- Find inner strength when you are weary, discouraged or frustrated by surrendering your own strength and choosing God's instead. (Note: this may need to happen often!)
- Look to the truth of what the Lord has done in order to strengthen yourself in the Lord:
  - Spiritual Riches
  - New Life
  - New Identity
  - New Family
  - Belonging
  - God's presence with you
- *Which of these truths ministers most to your places of need?*
  
- *Are there any of these truths that are hard for you to believe or receive?*

- *If so, ask the Lord to reveal what's underneath this place of doubt:*

### Indwelling Christ

- Engage with the Lord this week. Use these suggestions to connect with His presence inside:
  - Be still with the intention of listening and fellowshiping.
  - Ask Him to bless your eyes to see as He sees. (Mt 13:16)
  - Use worship songs to help you put the world aside and enter into His heavenly courts.
  - Visualize Jesus using these passages as a guide: Ezek 1:26-28, Dan 7:9-10, Rev 4:2-3
  - Ask the Lord if there is any topic He wants you to address. Is there something between you or anything you've held back from Him? Agree with Him now and be at peace.
  - Ask for the Holy Spirit to guide, to give wisdom and power in your situation. Realize in so doing, you are giving Him control and leaning on Him!
  - Bring to mind any recent themes in your time with God. Meditate on these truths in His presence, asking Him to give you personal insight into what He's highlighted.
  - Record your interaction in your journal. Craft the truths and insights into a prayer. Pray it often as a means of communion with God to keep you from losing heart.
  - For additional guidance, use the handout "Tools & Techniques: Listening to God."
- *How well are you connecting with God's presence? Is your relationship with Him growing?*
- If you are experiencing trouble connecting with the Lord, refer to the blue page about Listening to God for troubleshooting. Also, consider reaching out to your leader for help.
- Be aware of your emotional overreactions this week. They are clues about where you have unmet core needs, Bring them to God by practicing Listening Prayer. Follow 4 basic steps:
  1. *"Help me, Father, identify my most predominant feelings around this situation:"*  
Get in touch with these emotions and be present to them as you come to God in prayer.
  2. *"Lord, please bring to my mind a time when I felt these same feelings."* It can be a:
    - Specific memory
    - Environment that you experienced over and over in the past
    - Symbolic mental picture
    - Persistent feelings with no memory attached
  3. *"Holy Spirit, I ask you to show me what is the message I came to believe at this time?"*
  4. *"Jesus, what is the truth here?"*
- Come back again and again to the truths you're learning. Continue in it until your triggers diminish in power and your heart grows more and more full of God's love and blessings.