

## A. THE HUMAN CONDITION

- Jesus confronted Saul with his blind spots and self-reliance so that he might be free of leaning on his own limited understanding and strength.
- As we unlearn our old ways, Jesus offers us glorious strength as we lean into intimate fellowship with Him by the indwelling Spirit: 2 Cor 4:7-10, 16-18 NLT-- God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup>We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves. <sup>8</sup>We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. <sup>9</sup>We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. <sup>10</sup>Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies... That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. <sup>17</sup>For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! <sup>18</sup>So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.
- Paul learned to lean and found contentment in his suffering. He experienced Christ's perfect strength in his weakness, even with his deeply painful and unwanted thorn.
- Weakness is intrinsic to our humanity and includes 1) afflictions of body or soul, 2) fleshly ways that continue to cling, and 3) inadequacy for any situation at hand.
- While weakness may include lack on our parts, in no way does it identify us as impoverished orphans or as those disadvantaged with no recourse.
- "In God's economy, our weakness is one of our greatest assets." (Jonathan Parnell)
- Paul was able to persevere when weak because he saw that he was part of the larger story of the Gospel. His weakness gave God's glory a place to shine.
- LISTENING EXERCISE:  
*Where are you in terms of your willingness to embrace your weaknesses (reject outright, embrace completely, or somewhere in between)?*

*What are some of the reasons you are reluctant to being weak?*

- If we want to access God's supernatural sufficiency, we must be willing to be open and vulnerable about our weakness.
- Vulnerability means we are willing to expose ourselves to the risk of rejection or hurt by admitting our imperfections, struggles, temptations, feelings and conflicts.
- "Redemptive vulnerability — a vulnerability that leads to life — is where we share our brokenness...to display the surpassing power & sufficiency of Christ." (Steven Lee)
- Throughout the Bible, God chose weak people to exhibit His power to redeem!
  - Jesus: Is 53:4 AMP-- Surely He has borne our griefs (sicknesses, weaknesses, and distresses) and carried our sorrows *and* pains [of punishment], yet we [ignorantly] considered Him stricken, smitten, and afflicted by God

- Paul: Acts 9:16 NLT-- I will show him how much he must suffer for my name's sake.
- Abraham: Rom 4:19-20 NLT-- And Abraham's faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah's womb. Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God.
- While the Lord prefers to work through weak people and situations, the strength He does desire in His disciples -- faith -- is an attitude of dependence.
- We recognize our need for God when we are weak. It's an opportunity to:
  - See ourselves as God sees us: "We are fearfully and wonderfully weak." (Scott Hubbard)
  - Teach us dependence on the Lord's perfect power: 2 Cor 1:9 JBP-- We believe now that we had this experience of coming to the end of our tether that we might learn to trust, not in ourselves, but in God who can raise the dead.
  - Know Jesus better in our shared sufferings: 2 Cor 1:5 GNT--Just as we have a share in Christ's many sufferings, so also through Christ we share in God's great help.
  - Identify areas where we are pursuing weak or worldly things: Jer 2:13 NLT-- They have abandoned me— the fountain of living water. And they have dug for themselves cracked cisterns that can hold no water at all!
  - Receive the supernatural provision of God directly and through other believers: Eph 4:8-- He ascended up on high, and has led captivity captive, and has given gifts to men.
- LISTENING EXERCISE:  
*Name the weaknesses that cause you the most distress:*

*Knowing that there is much to be gained from being content in your weaknesses (and that they will likely be discovered anyway!) will you invite Jesus into them? If so, tell Him so now.*

- Insights:

## B. OUR HEAVENLY POSITION

- Paul let what the Lord had revealed to him inform his view of his earthly circumstances and he encourages us to do the same: Col 3:1-2 MSG-- So if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, *act* like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ—that's where the action is. See things from *his* perspective.
- Like the apostle, we have the spiritual treasure of revelation from Jesus through the Scriptures and its application to our own lives by the Spirit.
- Leaning involves surrendering our own view, understanding and convictions and coming into agreement with the truth of God's Word and His character.
- Scripture says Jesus has entered heaven and has given us a permanent position in fellowship with Him there: Eph 2:6 NLT-- He raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.
- The Lord has issued a standing invitation to each of His children to come to Him:
  - Eph 3:12 NLT-- Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence.
  - Rev 4:1-3 NLT-- Then as I looked, I saw a door standing open in heaven, and the same voice I had heard before spoke to me like a trumpet blast. The voice said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after this." <sup>2</sup> And instantly I was in the Spirit, and I saw a throne in heaven and someone sitting on it. <sup>3</sup> The one sitting on the throne was as brilliant as gemstones—like jasper and carnelian. And the glow of an emerald circled his throne like a rainbow
- We find God's will being done "on earth as it is in heaven" as we extend an invitation for Him to come and rule and reign in our hearts and life circumstances: Ps 24:7-8 NLT-- Open up, ancient gates! Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter. Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty; the Lord, invincible in battle.
- Let's vulnerably bring our weaknesses to Jesus and seek His redemptive power:
  - Open and lay bare before Him all that clutters your mind and heart.
  - Open your hands to let go of any issue where your strength and wisdom isn't enough
  - Open your mind to receive God's will as "good, pleasing, and perfect"
  - Open your ears to listen for Him to direct your paths
- As our leaning into Jesus presence and power grows in consistency, our hearts will become more progressively content and more in tune with His glory: Eph 3:20 NLT-- Glory be to God, who by his mighty power at work within us is able to do far more than we would ever dare to ask or even dream of—infinity beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, or hopes.
- Insights:

**I. PERSONAL APPLICATION****A. 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:

**B. PONDER THE TRUTH**

- Write out the scriptures in this lesson that spoke to you most. Spend a few minutes meditating on them and make a note of any further insights gained:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Go back to your One Things and the verses you've highlighted from the series. Write a brief version of them here. Is there a theme that you can identify as you've been learning to lean?

**C. PRAY IT IN**

Take your One Things, verses, and themes to the Lord in prayer:

*"Which particular attitudes or issues do You want to bring into the light of this truth?"* Write down anything that comes to mind to keep for further exploration:

*"Lord, what would it look like for me to apply this in a practical way?"*

#### D. SING IT

- Sing a praise song or 2 of your choice to open your time with God. Make this a practice over the holiday break.

Describe the differences you can see or feel in your connection with God:

#### E. PERSONALIZE IT

Use the time away from class to review the previous lessons and the applications you have made. Ask the Holy Spirit to apply more of the truth to your life and to help you recognize the ways He is making your paths straight.

##### Obstacles:

- Review the obstacles to leaning and contentment listed below. Ask HS to continue to reveal any of these things (or others) that are impacting you: How would you describe your level of openness to letting HS identify and then remove obstacles to contentment in your life?
 

○ Doubt	○ Unforgiveness
○ Greed	○ Pride
○ Covetousness	○ Entitlement
○ Self-pity	○ Offense
○ Envy	○ Thorns
○ Jealousy	○ Weaknesses
○ Comparison	○ Lack of Vulnerability
○ Bitterness	
- How would you describe your level of openness to letting the King of Glory come and bring His redemptive power to each of these places?
- Ask for specific revelation about how these mindsets have taken root in your life.
- Prayer Model: Use this simple prayer to explore more deeply anytime you are feeling stuck. Record the answers in your journal or on a prayer page.
- Important: Try not to edit or analyze for now. Write down the first thing that comes to mind. You can check what you've recorded against God's Word. Reach out to your leader if you need help with any of this!
- - *"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.

- *"Lord, please bring to your 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

- *“Holy Spirit, I ask you to show me what is the message I came to believe at this time?”*
  
- *“Jesus, what is the truth here?”*
  
- Return to what you’ve written whenever similar triggers or events interfere with your leaning into God in the future.
  
- Continue to think about situations that might qualify as thorns in your life (painful and unwanted). Beside each thorn recorded, write how you have been choosing to cope with it up until now:  

<b>THORNS:</b>	<b>COPING STRATEGIES:</b>
----------------	---------------------------
  
- Now make a list of the weaknesses that you find most difficult to bring into the light. What are your patterns of coping or covering for these weaknesses?  

<b>WEAKNESSES:</b>	<b>COPING STRATEGIES:</b>
--------------------	---------------------------
  
- Bring these weaknesses to Jesus. Invite His heavenly perspective and His perfect redemptive power to bring grace and glory to each one:
  - Open and lay bare before Him all that clutters your mind and heart.
  - Open your hands to let go of any issue where your strength and wisdom isn’t enough
  - Open your mind to receive God’s will as “good, pleasing, and perfect”
  - Open your ears to listen for Him to direct your paths
- *“Lord, I choose this day to stop leaning on my own ideas and resources and to invite Your redemptive power instead. By faith I say, “I trust You and choose to lean on You here.”*
- Observe and record any changes that happen on your insides as well as in the outward circumstances during the holidays: