

GREETING/OPEN IN PRAYER

MISSION STATEMENT: In a loving and grace-filled environment we will share the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ and explore its daily application in the lives of those struggling with addiction, suffering and trials.

Addiction, sin and suffering through trials may look different on the outside for each of us, but the heart struggles and solution are the same. This is why we gather, encourage one another, and walk through these hard times together.

REVIEW: Begin with a review of the previous week's topic. Discuss homework questions.

NEW TOPIC: Weakness

[Assign scriptures to be read at the appropriate time]

Weakness is something none of us like. We are conditioned by our culture to "do the right thing," "be strong," "just do it." How about "pain is weakness leaving the body" or even, "God helps those who help themselves?" Weakness is presented as failure. We don't want others to know who we really are or we want people to believe that we are something we aren't. We want people to believe that "we've got this!"

What do you think of when you consider weakness either in yourself or others?

Are you afraid to admit that you are weak?

Are you comfortable letting others know that you are weak?

How has trying to be strong on your own led you back to using?

Do you realize that scripture tells us that weakness is actually a godly trait? At Recovering Hope we want the Bible to guide how we think so we are going to talk about what the Bible says about weakness.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (have someone read)

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 11:28-30 (have someone read)

And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.

Not only does the Apostle Paul admit that he is weak, he **boasts** of his weakness. Why does he do this? The why is found in 2 Corinthians 12, when he says, "so the power of Christ may rest upon me." Our weakness puts the power of Christ on display.

"God uses the hardest and most shameful experiences of our lives to soften us and bring us to fuller understanding of his surpassing benefits. In our isolation from the world's provision, we learn that we are fully satisfied when he is our portion. He uses our sufferings to demonstrate his sufficiency. And he uses our afflictions as the occasion for dispersing comfort and the deepest realities of his abiding care." (Gospel Transformation Bible commentary on 2 Corinthians 11)

Once again, the gospel turns our thinking on its head. Jesus died for sinners and took our guilt and punishment. Then He conquered sin and death by rising from the dead. This changes everything! Because of Christ and His all-sufficient grace, we are able to boast in our weakness. To boast means: *to magnify or put on display*. We are only able to boast in our weakness if we have placed our faith and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Boasting in weakness is not possible outside of the strength of Christ.

Have you ever thought about weakness in this way?

How do you feel about putting your weakness on display or magnify your weakness?

How do you feel about weakness now?

Still not sure? Let's look at strength.

Psalms 27:14 (have someone read)

Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!

Proverbs 18:10 (have someone read)

The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.

According to these verses how do we gain strength?

Ephesians 6:10 (have someone read)

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Psalms 18:1, 31-32 (have someone read)

I love you, O Lord, my strength. For who is God, but the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God?—the God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless.

Psalms 28:7 (have someone read)

The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped;

John 15:5 (have someone read)

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

According to these verses where is our strength found?

When you feel weak, what do you normally do first — isolate, hide, or reach out?

Is it possible to find strength in the Lord and boast in our weakness? This is contrary to our natural inclinations, and contrary to what the culture tells us. We want to be strong and we don't want to need anyone. But when we honestly look at the mess we make when we rely on ourselves, we see that we cannot do this life alone, addiction struggle or not. Left to our own way of thinking and living we make a giant mess. The solution is to honestly admit that we need help, cry out to our Savior and ask Him to be our strength.

[Sample prayer: Father, I am weak and weary. I don't have the strength to endure one more minute. I am waiting on You, I am running to You. Will you give me strength? Will You help me? I know that in Your strength and power, I can overcome. I am trusting in You. Will You help me reach out for encouragement? Will You help me walk this path? Thank You for giving me strength, thank You for equipping me with power so that I can obey You and walk in victory. - Amen]

If Jesus is not your Savior or you aren't sure what it means to put faith in Jesus, please talk with us after the meeting. Without the power of Christ at work in us, we cannot face the hardships of life with hope.

God gave us other Christian brothers and sisters to help us. We need to talk about our weakness, admit our need to another person and ask for help. Whether the help is for prayer, a reminder of where our hope is found, where God is growing us, where we need to repent, how to do the next thing, help to resist temptation or to just cry with us. We need people.

What would it look like to magnify your weakness and put it on display? How would you do this?

What do you fear will happen if people really see your struggle?

Do you have Godly people in your life that you talk to? If not, are you trying to be strong on your own?

Is there an area of weakness that you are unwilling or unable to share with others?

If you won't talk about this weakness how will you be able to boast in it and rely on Christ's power?

If this is all new and unfamiliar, or even if you have been in church for years, it may seem scary to trust others and reach out. Start by reaching out to others in this group and join me at church this week.

We're going to practice what we have learned tonight and break into small groups. Each one will briefly sharing an area of weakness and then we are going to pray for one another. **THIS** is how we can practice boasting in our weakness and rely on the power of the Holy Spirit.

CLOSE BY BREAKING INTO GROUPS TO PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER IN OUR AREAS OF WEAKNESS

Homework:

- In what ways are you trying to live in your own strength instead of boasting in your weakness? Talk to a Christian friend and find encouragement and help.
- Pick one of the scriptures shared tonight to meditate upon this week.
- If you don't know what Jesus accomplished at the cross, talk to a Christian friend.

Scriptures Used:

- 2 Corinthians 12:9-10
- 2 Corinthians 11:28-30
- Psalm 27:14
- Proverbs 18:10
- Ephesians 6:10
- Psalm 18:1, 31-32
- Psalm 28:7
- John 15:5