



*You came near when I called on you; you said, 'Do not fear!' You have taken up my cause, O Lord, you have redeemed my life.
– Lamentations 3:57-58*

Our sermon series, Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption, explores the subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle ways we can undermine our faith, damage our relationships with others and distance ourselves from God.

Together, we'll learn how to recognize these struggles, bring them into the light and ground ourselves in God's promises, truth and vision for who we are becoming.

Week Two

Wednesday, February 25 – Tuesday, March 3

What to expect this Week:

On Thursday and Monday, you'll have your choice of related topics. Pick the topic that speaks the most to you, or feel free to tackle multiple. Remember you have the "Free Days" available if you want to spread out any of the readings.

Suggested Week Two Schedule:

Wednesday, February 25

- Attend worship at 6:15 p.m.
- Read Devotional: Hide Your Struggles – Pretend You're Fine and Never Confess or Seek Help

Thursday, February 26

- Read a Devotional (choose your own adventure):
 - *Option A:* Isolate Yourself - Act Like You're Alone – Live like God isn't with you or for you.
 - *Option B:* Stay Busy to Avoid Dealing with Pain – Mask Wounds with Distractions.

Friday, February 27 – Free Day

Saturday, February 28 – Free Day

Sunday, March 1

- Attend worship at 9:30 a.m. or 10:45 a.m.
- Read Devotional: Neglect Your Spiritual Life and Drift
- Optional Bonus Devotional:* Stop Reading God's Word – Starve Your Soul and Wonder Why You Feel Distant.

Monday, March 2

- Read a Devotional (choose your own adventure):

Topic A - The Voice of Others

- *A.1* - Live Without Accountability – Surround Yourself with People Who Won't Challenge or Sharpen You
- *A.2* - Make Decisions on Your Own - Stop Listening to Advice and Rely Solely on Your Own Insight

Topic B - God's Voice

- *B.1* - Dismiss the Voice and Prompting of the Holy Spirit
- *B.2* - Think You Know Better Than God – Trust Your Way Over His Wisdom.

Tuesday, March 3 – Free Day

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Wednesday, February 25

Hide Your Struggles

– Pretend You're Fine and Never Confess or Seek Help.

James 5:16 - 16 Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.

FROM RUIN...

If your goal is to stay isolated, overwhelmed and spiritually stuck, start here: **Hide Your Struggles – Pretend You're Fine and Never Confess or Seek Help.** Wear a mask. Keep everything polished on the outside while your heart quality breaks on the inside. Avoid vulnerability at all costs. Let pride or guilt keep you quiet. Tell yourself you don't need help and believe the lie that admitting weakness is failure.

Keep your prayers polished, distant and superficial. Build walls around your heart by refusing to be real with God and assume that He only wants the cleaned-up version of you. Let the fear of judgement, rejection and what others may think keep you from being honest. Hide behind smiles and surface-level conversations answering, "I'm fine" while silently falling apart. When life gets hard, withdraw, isolate yourself, avoid community, stop showing up and keep people at a distance. Tell yourself no one would understand and that you don't need help.

Stay busy enough that you don't have to deal with what's really going on. Hiding may feel safer for a moment, but it only deepens the hurt and postpones healing.

...TO REDEMPTION

What does scripture have to say?

Healing often begins with honesty, honesty with God, honesty with others and honesty with self. While hiding your struggles keeps you isolated, confession brings you into community where healing can take place.

- What are the struggles or wounds that you've been keeping hidden?

Let's begin by reflecting on **Proverbs 11:2 - 2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace; but wisdom is with the humble.**

- How has pride kept you from being honest about your struggles?
- What would humility look like in your relationships right now?

Now with that in mind, take a moment to read the invitation found in **James 5:16 - 16 Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.**

Confession is not punishment, it is freedom and God designed you for connection, not secrecy. **Psalm 32:3-5** reminds us that silence drains the soul but confession restores life. **3 While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. 5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord', and you forgave the guilt of my sin.**

- How has silence (hiding, pretending, avoiding) affected your heart, mind, body and spirit?
- What relief might come when you stop hiding and acknowledge your struggle before God?

- Where do you sense God inviting honesty, confession or openness today?

You need people who will fight for you when you can't fight for yourself. In fact, community is part of God's design for healing. **Ecclesiastes 4:9-10** gives us a bit of insight on community and caring for others we need others. **9 Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help. 11 Again, if two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone? 12 And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken.** Strength multiplies in companionship; weakness deepens in isolation. In fact we hear this call in **Galatians 6:2, 2 Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.**

- What step toward healing might begin with confession?
- Who might God be asking you to trust with your struggle?
- How might your burden become lighter if you allowed others to carry it with you instead of standing alone?

God does not despise your weakness; He meets you in it. When we hide our struggles, we miss experiencing His power. Read **2 Corinthians 12:8-9 - 8 Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, 9 but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.'** So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. **10 Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.**

- Where have you been trying to appear strong instead of admitting weakness?
- What fear keeps you from sharing your struggles with God or others?
- How might God's grace show up in the very place you feel weakest?

We need to remember that God does not move away from brokenness' He moves towards it. **Psalm 34:18** reminds us of this promise, **18 The Lord is near to the broken-hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.**

- In what areas of your life do you feel broken or crushed and where is God inviting you to lay down the need to appear "okay" but have been afraid to admit it?
- What would it mean to trust that God is near to you, not disappointed, not surprised, but tenderly close?
- How does God's nearness encourage you?

Note to self: Which of the statements below speak to you? Why?

- Hiding your struggle doesn't make it go away; it just makes you more exhausted.
- Pride builds walls that keep people out and you stuck.
- Hiding may protect the image, but it destroys the soul.
- Unresolved struggles always leak out... eventually... and sometimes sideways.
- Let weakness become a doorway for Christ's strength.
- It's not Halloween; take off the mask
- The God who formed your heart isn't afraid of its mess.
- False facades only work in movies
- God didn't create you to fake strength, He created you to walk in grace.
- The first step in having it all together is admitting you don't.
- It's hard to heal what you hide.

Here's the Truth:

Hiding our struggles can isolate us and prevent healing. Scripture encourages honesty with God and others. Trusting that God's grace meets us in weakness and that community is part of His design for restoration brings healing. Yet no one can help you with what you won't reveal. Pretending to have it all together only allows shame and darkness to grow, but bringing your struggles into the light opens the door to healing, connection and God's grace. Isolation may feel safer, but it leads to spiritual and emotional suffocation. True growth starts when you take ownership of your life, release blame and embrace honesty before God and trusted companions.

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Thursday, February 26 – Option A

**Isolate Yourself - Act Like You're Alone
– Live like God isn't with you or for you.**

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 - 9 Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help. 11 Again, if two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone? 12 And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken.

FROM RUIN...

If you want to deepen loneliness, cut yourself off from help, grow isolated and shrink your perspective, start here: **Isolate Yourself - Act Like You're Alone – Live like God isn't with you or for you.** Pretend you don't need others and that you can handle everything on your own. Withdraw from relationships, avoid community and shut down emotionally. Hide your struggles, refuse to share your burdens or ask for support.

Put on a “brave face” and refuse to be vulnerable. Keep pain, fear and doubt to yourself and believe you're better off alone and that no one “really cares” about your struggles. Let pride convince you that asking for help is weakness or failure.

When you act like you're alone, you build walls instead of bridges, making life harder and heavier than it needs to be.

...TO REDEMPTION

What does scripture have to say?

While the Bible doesn't directly say, “Don't isolate yourself,” it often speaks about the value of community, relationships and the dangers of withdrawing from others. Scripture offers wisdom that points to the importance of community, connection and how isolation can often lead to poor decisions, spiritual stagnation and emotional vulnerability.

Let's begin by acknowledging that there's a difference between healthy solitude (like Jesus often practiced for prayer and rest) and harmful isolation. Trying to go it alone breeds exhaustion and discouragement.

Proverbs 18:1 contains probably the most direct warning against isolation as it can lead to selfishness or rejecting wise counsel. **1 The one who lives alone is self-indulgent, showing contempt for all who have sound judgement.**

In contrast, what does *Proverbs 11:14* teach us about the importance of community? **14 Where there is no guidance, a nation falls, but in an abundance of counsellors there is safety.**

- Who and what are your “go-to's” for connection and community?

While isolation can feel safe, it often leaves us carrying burdens alone, increasing fear, anxiety and loneliness. Scripture reminds us that strength and hope are found in trusting God and walking in connection with others. When you trust God and others, you find strength and hope.

Check out *1 Peter 5:7 - 7 Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.* and *Deuteronomy 31:6 - 6 Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.*

- What anxieties or fears are you trying to carry alone?

- How does it change your perspective to know that you are never truly alone and that God's presence is constant and unchanging?

Remember that God cares deeply for you and wants you to give these worries to Him.

- How does God's promise to never forsake you challenge the choice to isolate yourself?
- What practical steps could you take today to cast your worries on God instead of carrying them in isolation?

Hebrews 10:24-25 encourages regular connection and engagement in community especially during difficult times. **24 And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.**

Take a moment to read **Galatians 6:2 - 2 Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ."**

- Are there burdens you are holding that could be shared with a trusted friend, mentor or family member?
- Who in your life could you lean on for support or accountability?

When we walk in connection with God and others, your burdens will feel lighter and your joy will grow.

Note to self - Which of the statements below speak to you? Why?

- It's hard to move a couch on your own, everyone needs help.
- Trying to go it alone breeds exhaustion and discouragement.
- A single coal pulled from the fire quickly grows cold.
- Being open to help is not weakness, but part of holy interdependence.
- Being stranded alone on a tropical island is not as much fun as it sounds.
- When you act like you're alone, you build walls instead of bridges, making life harder and heavier than it needs to be.
- It's easier to lift 100 lbs. with two people.

Here's the Truth:

You are never truly alone. God is always with you and He places people in your life to walk alongside you in your journey. Walking in connection and community allows your burdens to feel lighter as you are supported and encouraged. When you isolate, you build walls that keep healing, connection, encouragement and joy out.

While community, vulnerability and support are gifts from God to help you thrive, refusing help leads to unnecessary struggles.

Let down your walls, embrace community and share your journey.

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Thursday, February 26 – Option B

Stay Busy to Avoid Dealing with Pain – Mask Wounds with Distractions.

Psalm 34:18 - 18 The Lord is near to the broken-hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.

FROM RUIN...

If you want to keep your pain bottled up and never heal, start here: **Stay Busy to Avoid Dealing with Pain – Mask Wounds with Distractions.** Fill every moment with activity, distractions and noise so you never have to face what's really hurting inside or give yourself time to process. Fill your schedule to the brim, overcommit to work, social events and projects so there's no room to breathe or reflect.

Let busyness distract you from your pain. Let temporary escapes replace true processing and prayer. Turn to TV, social media, food, shopping or other distractions to numb your feelings whenever painful emotions arise. Refuse to open up to trusted friends, mentors or counselors about your pain and keep your struggles hidden behind a forced smile.

Avoid honest conversations, dodge moments of silence and solitude because they bring painful memories and uncomfortable questions.

Mistake being busy for making spiritual or emotional progress. Keep moving but never stop to assess your heart or invite God's transformation.

When you avoid pain by constant motion, you'll miss out on healing, growth and true peace.

...TO REDEMPTION

What does scripture have to say?

It's important for us to begin with a few verses where we see Jesus being real with His emotions.

John 11:35 - 35 Jesus wept

Matthew 6:38 - 38 Then he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.'

Luke 22:44 - 44 In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.

Matthew 26:39 - 39 And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.'

Matthew 27:46 - 46 And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

How does it make you feel in knowing that Jesus knows your pain?

With that in mind, take a moment to read Jesus' invitation in **Matthew 11:28 - 28** 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.'

- How does this invitation speak to the burden that you may be carrying now?
- What would it look like for you to bring your heavy burdens to Jesus instead of trying to escape them through busyness?
- Where in your life are you trying to mask pain with constant activity?

Following Jesus' example of solitude and prayer, let's look at **Mark 1:35, - 35 In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.**

- If Jesus took time to slow down and to bring his needs before God, what does that mean for you in this season of life?
- How might setting aside intentional quiet time for prayer and reflection help you process pain instead of running from it?
- What steps could you take this week to create a "deserted place" in your life where you can be honest with God?

Take a moment to reflect on **Psalm 34:18 - 18 The Lord is near to the broken-hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.**

- How does God's nearness speak into your season of pain?

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 reminds us that through the joys and sorrows, the laughter and tears, there is one constant and that is the love of God our Heavenly Father who walks with us in the midst of all things; life's celebrations as well as life's hardships. **3 For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: 2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; 3 a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; 4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; 5 a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; 6 a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; 7 a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; 8 a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.**

- Rather than avoiding or ignoring the various seasons of life, how does this passage give you permission to deal with the emotions that you may be experiencing?

Much too often we fill our lives with activity to avoid facing our pain, grief or emotional burdens. While busyness often masks unresolved pain, scripture calls us to pause, be honest with God and to bring our struggles to Him. Spiritual and emotional rest allows God's presence to meet us where we are.

Note to self: Which of the statements below speak to you? Why?

- Cars aren't the only things to get stuck in the mud
- Avoiding pain is like running on a treadmill; you're active, but never actually going anywhere.
- Avoiding pain robs you of renewal.
- Pain is like a pothole; you can only avoid it for so long.
- Slow down enough to have God meet you there.

Here's the Truth:

Healing begins when you stop running. Staying busy might numb the pain for a while, but it never heals it. God invites you to slow down, face your hurts, and find rest in Him. Healing starts with honesty and stillness, not endless distraction. Avoiding feelings delays the work God wants to do in your heart.

Psalm 46:10 – "Be still, and know that I am God."

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Sunday, March 1

Neglect Your Spiritual Life and Drift

Hebrews 2:1 - Therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.

FROM RUIN...

If you want to quietly sabotage your soul and wake up one day far from the life God intended, start here: **Neglect Your Spiritual Life and Drift.** Fill your calendar but neglect your spirit. Prioritize everything else and let your relationship with God become an afterthought. Let your Bible gather dust and tell yourself you're too busy to pray, assume church is optional.

Live on "yesterday's faith" rather than pursuing God today.

Allow the culture to shape you more than Christ. Spend more time absorbing the world than abiding in the Word. Let social media, entertainment, news, trends and opinions guide your beliefs.

Ignore the small nudges of conviction and brush off the quiet voice of the Holy Spirit. Dismiss little compromises, minimize or even laugh at sin and tell yourself it's no big deal.

When your soul becomes your last priority, life quickly grows hollow even when it looks full. Over time, your heart numbs, your convictions blur and what once felt wrong no longer even stirs your spirit.

...TO REDEMPTION

What does scripture have to say?

Let's begin by reflecting on the call given in **Romans 12:2 - 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.**

Drifting happens quietly, often by simply doing nothing. When we stop renewing our minds, we naturally drift toward the patterns of the world rather than the will of God.

- In what areas of life do you sense yourself "conforming" rather than being transformed?
- Where do you feel the early signs of spiritual drift (distraction, numbness or compromise) and what renewal might God be inviting you back into?

Interestingly enough, **James 4:6-8** gives both a warning and a promise, that drift comes from pride and restoration comes from humility. **6 But he gives all the more grace; therefore it says, 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'** **7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.**

- What does it mean to be "doubled-minded?"
- How has pride, self-reliance, busyness or believing you can manage on your own played a role in your drift?
- Where is God inviting you to repentance, cleansing or a softened heart and what might it look like to draw near to God again today?
- What grace might be waiting for you on the other side of humility?

Drift happens when we choose comfort over calling, gain over surrender and the world over Christ.

Read Mark 8:34-37 - 34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. 36 For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? 37 Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?

- Where have you been gaining the world but losing your spiritual focus?
- What cross have you set down that you need to pick up again?
- What is Jesus asking you to let go of so you can follow Him more closely?

Even when we drift, God's mercy meets us every morning. Lamentations 3:22-23 reminds us, 22 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; 23 they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 24 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in him.' 25 The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. 26 It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

- Where have you been assuming your drift is too far for God to welcome you back?
- How might God's faithfulness be the anchor that turns you back toward Him?
- What would it look like to receive His new mercies today... this very moment?

Drifting is easier alone in fact Hebrews 3:12-13 teach us about remaining faithful and the strength of community. 12 Take care, brothers and sisters, that none of you may have an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today', so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

- How might God be calling you back into daily encouragement and the strength of community?

Even in seasons of drift, Jesus stands at the door of our hearts; patient, gentle, persistent and inviting. Take a moment to reflect on this powerful image from Revelation 3:20 - 20 Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.

- What door in your life has slowly closed to Jesus?
- What would it mean to open that door again, to let Him speak, guide and restore you?

Here's another image from John 15:5 - 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

- Are you currently abiding in God's strength or simply trying to manage life on your own?
- What fruit has diminished as you've drifted? (peace, joy, patience, purpose, intimacy with God)
- Abiding brings life; drifting brings emptiness. What simple step could reconnect you to the Vine today?

Note to self - Which of the statements below speak to you? Why?

- A neglected soul doesn't scream, it simply fades into silence.
- Every boat needs an anchor because even the slightest wind can pull it out to sea.
- A branch cut from a tree, quickly dries up.
- When your soul becomes last on your priority list, it won't take long before life feels empty, even if it's full.

Here's the Truth:

Intimacy with God doesn't vanish overnight, it fades with every missed moment of connection. Spiritual drift may feel harmless, but it leads to disconnection, disillusionment and defeat. No one wakes up spiritually healthy by accident; abiding in Jesus requires intentionality. If you're not being transformed by Christ, you're being conformed by the world. God's mercy is fresh every day and He is always ready to welcome you back, no shame, no delay. Return to God, stay connected and let your life be shaped by His presence.

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Monday, March 2 – Bonus Devotional

Stop Reading God's Word – Starve Your Soul and Wonder Why You Feel Distant.

Luke 10:41-42 - 41 But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; 42 there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'

FROM RUIN...

If you want to drift spiritually, lose your sense of direction and weaken your faith, start here: **Stop Reading God's Word – Starve Your Soul and Wonder Why You Feel Distant.** Let your Bible sit unopened. Tell yourself it's too confusing, too boring or too convicting. Fill your mind with anything except Scripture. Assume you already know enough and treat it like a book you graduated from rather than daily bread meant to sustain you.

Let your emotions dictate your engagement with Scripture. If you're tired, bored or distracted, just skip it. Scroll instead of study. Let notifications, tasks and noise push God's Word to the bottom of your to-do list. Only read when you feel like it and avoid any passages that may challenge or convict you.

Let others do the digging while you get the leftovers. Let yourself become content with secondhand truth, rely on sermons, devotionals and inspirational quotes instead of opening the Bible yourself. Soon, you'll be spiritually malnourished while your life looks busy.

...TO REDEMPTION

What does scripture have to say?

Let's begin by reflecting on the foundational truth given in **Psalm 119:105** - 105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

- If God's Word is meant to be the lamp that guides your steps, what happens when you stop reading it?
- Where do you feel "in the dark" right now (confused, uncertain or directionless) because you haven't let Scripture illuminate that part of your life?
- What might it look like for God to shine His light on those places again?

Scripture is not only referred to as being a light for our lives but it is also referenced in terms of being spiritual food. During His temptation in the wilderness, Jesus responds with these words from **Matthew 4:4** by saying, 4 But he answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Think about that comparison for a moment, God's Word is not optional, it is nourishment, life-sustaining and essential for survival.

- What "spiritual hunger" or emptiness might be showing up in your life when Scripture isn't part of your daily routine?
- How might your inner life change if you fed on God's Word as consistently as you feed your body?

God connects strength, courage and success with a life rooted in Scripture. Take a moment to reflect on this challenge from **Joshua 1:8-9** - 8 This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful. 9 I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.'

- What becomes more difficult when you drift away from Scripture? (i.e. fear, discouragement, uncertainty)
- What is one small way you could begin meditating on God's Word again, even briefly, throughout your day?
- How might God's presence and courage return to places that feel weak?

God's Word is not static, it searches us, shapes us and reveals what's true. Take a moment to reflect on **Hebrews 4:12-13 - 12 Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account."**

- When you stop reading the Word, what parts of your heart go unexamined?
- What thoughts or attitudes might God want to speak into that you've been avoiding?

2 Timothy 3:16-17 reminds us that scripture forms us, corrects us, trains us and equips us. **16 All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.**

- Where do you feel unequipped right now?
- Are there areas of life, relationships, or decisions where you need God's wisdom but haven't sought it in His Word?
- What "good work" might God be preparing you for through Scripture?

In **Acts 17:11** we see a model of eagerness, daily consistency and discernment through Scripture **11 These Jews were more receptive than those in Thessalonica, for they welcomed the message very eagerly and examined the scriptures every day to see whether these things were so.**

- What would it look like for you to approach God's Word with eagerness again?
- What could "every day" look like for you, not as a burden but as a lifeline?
- How might daily Scripture help you discern truth from the noise in your life?

Note to self - Which of the statements below speak to you? Why?

- God is still speaking. Are you listening?
- The Bible doesn't cut to condemn, it cuts to heal. But it can't change you if you never open it.
- Without God's Word, you're walking in the dark, regardless of how "spiritual" you feel.
- Time in the Word isn't just a good idea, it's a lifeline. But you have to choose it over the noise.
- Let others feast while you nibble on leftovers.
- God's Word doesn't need your mood to be powerful, it needs your attention to be transformational.

Here's the Truth:

God's Word is not optional, it is essential! Skipping time in Scripture may feel harmless, but it sets the stage for spiritual drift. The Bible is not merely knowledge, it transforms, realigns your thoughts, strengthens your spirit and reminds you of who you are in Christ. Your heart can slowly harden when you neglect it. God's Word doesn't depend on your mood to be powerful, it depends on your attention to be transformational.

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption

Monday, March 2 – A.1

Live Without Accountability

– Surround Yourself with People Who Won't Challenge or Sharpen You.

Hebrews 12:11-12 - 11 Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

FROM RUIN...

If you want to drift aimlessly, fall into destructive patterns and stunt your spiritual growth, start here: **Live Without Accountability – Surround Yourself with People Who Won't Challenge or Sharpen You.** Avoid anyone who challenges your choices, lovingly confronts your mistakes or holds you responsible. Make decisions in isolation as if your actions only affect you. Reject wise counsel and correction. Ignore advice from trusted friends, mentors or spiritual leaders and believe you know best.

Resist the discomfort of change that accountability often requires.

Live in isolation. Cut yourself off from communities that encourage spiritual and personal growth. Stay comfortable in your current habits and beliefs. Hide your struggles and cover up failures to avoid embarrassment or confrontation. Refuse to take responsibility and blame others or past experiences for your current situation. Deny your role in conflicts, failures or broken relationships and refuse to pursue reconciliation.

...TO REDEMPTION

What does scripture have to say?

The Bible consistently teaches that isolation weakens us, flattery blinds us and lack of accountability leads to spiritual drift. God designed His people to grow through community, correction, encouragement and shared responsibility. Choosing to avoid challenge or correction may feel comfortable, but Scripture shows it is spiritually dangerous. **Proverbs 12:15** reminds us that, **Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to advice.** And likewise, **Proverbs 18:2** shares, **2 A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing personal opinion.** **Ecclesiastes 4:13** shares, **13 Better is a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king, who will no longer take advice.** What about this one from **Proverbs 17:10** **A rebuke strikes deeper into a discerning person than a hundred blows into a fool.**

- Where do you find those statements to be true?
- Which one do you resonate with?
- How can you allow it to provide guidance for your life?

Now take a moment to wrestle with Paul's warning in **2 Timothy 4:3-4** - **3 For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths.**

- What do you think is being shared here about the importance of those who challenge us?

When we avoid correction, challenge or surround ourselves only with people who flatter us or avoid hard truths, we weaken. We grow through honest relationships. In fact, **Proverbs 27:17** shares one of the scriptures clearest pictures of accountability. **17 Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens the wits of another.** Meaning, growth requires honest relationships, not passive ones. People who only affirm you can't sharpen you.

- Where might God be inviting you to let someone “sharpen” you, even if it feels uncomfortable?

Without people who see you, correct you or strengthen you, you are easier to discourage, deceive and defeat. Wise counsel protects you from ruin as good counsel guards you from blind spots, helps prevent foolish decisions and protects you from self-deception. Speaking of decisions, take a look at **Proverbs 11:14 - 14** *Where there is no guidance, a nation falls, but in an abundance of counsellors there is safety.*

- Whose voice of wisdom has God placed in your life and are you listening to them?

Living with accountability is not merely practical, it’s Christlike. It means carrying one another’s struggles, supporting one another’s faith and refusing to let anyone walk alone. Accountability is an expression of Christ’s love lived out in community. In fact, what is **Galatians 6:2** inviting you to? **2 Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.**

God didn’t design you to walk alone, He designed you to walk sharpened, supported and strengthened by His people.

- Whose burdens is God calling you to help carry and who have you allowed to carry yours?

1 Kings 12 captures the story of King Rehoboam who was asked to lighten the burden that Solomon placed on his people. King Rehoboam first consults the elders (the wise, experienced counselors) who advise humility and gentleness. Yet look at his response in **1 Kings 12:8 - 8** *But he disregarded the advice that the older men gave him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and now attended him.*

- Where are you seeking guidance from those who will tell you what you want to hear, rather than what you need to hear?

Note to self - Which of the statements below speak to you? Why?

- There are story tellers and then there are truth tellers. What type of book is being read to you?
- What’s lurking in your blind spot. Have someone help you check.
- Isolation leads to poor decisions and preventable mistakes.
- It’s hard to hear a siren when you have headphones on.
- If you surround yourself with those who think like you, everything will sound brilliant.
- Don’t let your ears be on “Do Not Disturb”

Here’s the Truth:

Accountability is a gift, not a burden. God designed us to grow in community, where support, challenge and encouragement help shape us into who He calls us to be. True accountability isn’t about control, it’s about love, protection and freedom. Without it, life may feel easier for a moment, but isolation slowly dulls discernment, weakens spiritual resilience and leaves you vulnerable to pride, sin and stagnation. While the absence of accountability leads to poor decisions, preventable mistakes and quiet spiritual drift, community keeps you grounded, guarded and growing. You cannot become who God created you to be while refusing the people He gave you to help shape you.

Living Without Accountability Leads To:

Blind spots / Poor decisions / Spiritual drift / Isolation / Vulnerability / Shallow character / Unchallenged sin / Emotional and relational instability

Living With Accountability Leads To:

Sharpening / Strength / Wisdom / Protection / Support in weakness / Growth in holiness / Christlike love / Resilience

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Monday, March 2 – Option A.2

Make Decisions on Your Own - Stop Listening to Advice and Rely Solely on Your Own Insight

Proverbs 3:5-6 - 5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

FROM RUIN...

If you want to limit your growth, make avoidable mistakes and isolate yourself spiritually and relationally, start here: **Make Decisions on Your Own - Stop Listening to Advice and Rely Solely on Your Own Insight.** Trust solely in your own insight and shut out wise counsel. Harden your heart against advice and let pride convince you that asking for help is weakness. Dismiss correction or consider constructive criticism as unnecessary or offensive.

Make decisions independently without checking in with others who can help keep you grounded. Simply ignore the guidance of mentors, friends or spiritual leaders who care about your well-being and rely solely on your own logic, feelings or past experiences instead of seeking God's perspective.

...TO REDEMPTION

What does scripture have to say?

Ignoring wise counsel can lead to poor decisions, unnecessary struggle and missed opportunities. Scripture repeatedly highlights the importance of seeking guidance, valuing wisdom and surrounding ourselves with those who can provide godly insight.

In fact, King Solomon was known for his wisdom. Take a moment to read **Proverbs 4:5-6** and what Solomon writes. **5 Get wisdom; get insight: do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. 6 Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you. 7 The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever else you get, get insight. 8 Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honour you if you embrace her. 9 She will place on your head a fair garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown.'**

- What are these words inviting you to experience?
- How are you actively pursuing wisdom and insight in your life?
- What might it look like to “love” and “embrace” wisdom in your decisions today?

Read **Proverbs 11:14 - 14 Where there is no guidance, a nation falls, but in an abundance of counsellors there is safety. and Proverbs 15:22 - 22 Without counsel, plans go wrong, but with many advisers they succeed.**

- How does surrounding yourself with wise advisors influence the decisions you make?
- Who are the people in your life whose guidance you trust and seek regularly?

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 teaches us about the importance of relying on others for support. **9 Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help. 11 Again, if two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone? 12 And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken.**

- Who are the key people that you are allowing to speak into your life?

Let's say that God is the third cord of the "threefold cord."

- How does this image invite God into your relationships?
- How does the strength and wisdom of God play into the decisions you make?

Let's face it, correction can be uncomfortable but **Proverbs 12:1** paints a picture that we can't ignore, **Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but those who hate to be rebuked are stupid.**

- How do you respond when someone offers correction or constructive advice?
- In what areas might you need to cultivate humility to accept godly rebuke, teaching or guidance?

Scripture calls us to value wisdom, seek counsel and remain open to guidance. Ignoring godly counsel can lead to unnecessary hardship, while listening faithfully cultivates safety, success and growth.

Here are some helpful steps to move forward and apply this teaching.

- Intentionally seek wisdom from Scripture and godly mentors before making major decisions.
- Build a support system of trustworthy advisors who can help you navigate challenges.
- Invite God into your decision-making as the ultimate counselor and source of guidance.
- Respond to correction with humility and a willingness to learn.

Note to self - Which of the statements below speak to you? Why?

- When you rely on yourself, you only have one set of eyes, ears and one brain.
- Humility opens the door to wisdom and blessing.
- Rejecting correction stunts your growth.
- Like a picnic, enjoy what others bring to the table.
- Relying on your own wisdom is like putting blinders on a horse - your vision becomes limited.
- Relying solely on yourself is like wearing sunglasses at night

Here's the Truth:

God often uses people who love you to encourage your growth. When you refuse advice, you miss the wisdom God provides through others and risk walking down difficult, lonely paths. However, when you welcome wise counsel, you open yourself to God's guidance; gaining the clarity and confidence you need to walk wisely.

Embracing advice and accountability strengthens, protects, supports and makes your path clearer and your steps steadier. Remember, you were never meant to walk the journey alone, so listen, learn and lean into the community God's given you.

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Monday, March 2 – Option B.1

Dismiss the Voice and Prompting of the Holy Spirit

Isaiah 30:21 - 21 And when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left, your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'

FROM RUIN...

If you're serious about spiritual self-destruction, start here: **Dismiss the Voice and Prompting of the Holy Spirit.** Ignore and explain away conviction and call it "guilt." Silence the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit and resist the urge to obey. Dismiss the nudge to forgive, to speak truth, to encourage someone, to step out in faith or to give sacrificially. Push it all aside or delay it long enough that the moment passes.

Keep your life loud, crowded and busy. Fill every spare moment with noise, scrolling, multitasking and hustling. Allow your sensitivity to the Spirit to fade into numbness. Pick and choose what to obey and reject anything that may require sacrifice, humility, surrender or impact your comfort. Pray only when in need and don't listen long enough to hear what God has to say.

What does scripture have to say?

Scripture repeatedly emphasizes the importance of listening to, responding to, and walking in step with the Holy Spirit. Ignoring or resisting the Spirit can hinder our spiritual growth, block guidance and limit the fullness of life God intends for us.

In **John 14:16**, Jesus promises the gift of the Holy Spirit, **16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. 17 This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.** Jesus continues in **John 14:26 - 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.** Later in **Acts 2** we see the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

- What are some things that you are allowing to guide, lead, inform and direct your life?
- How might your life look different if you intentionally allowed the Holy Spirit to lead in all decisions?

Take a moment to read **Romans 8:14 - 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.**" and **Galatians 5:25 - 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.**

- What does it mean/look like to be guided and led by the Spirit?
- How can you apply those principles in your daily life?
- What might be blocking you from following the Holy Spirit's guidance? (Pride, fear, personal comfort, self-reliance)

1 Thessalonians 5:19 is a short verse that simply says, **19 Do not quench the Spirit.** Likewise, **Ephesians 4:30** shares a similar warning, **30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption.**

- How might your attitudes, choices, or habits be quenching or grieving the Spirit? (For some ideas, reread the “From Ruin...” section of this devotional and circle what sticks out to you).
- What practices or mindsets could you cultivate to remain receptive and sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit? (Prayer, silent reflection, listening to sacred music, responding in faith when and where something is placed on your heart)

God speaks these words through the Prophet Ezekiel in **Ezekial 36:26 - 26 A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.** Later in **Hebrews 3:7-8** we read a reference to when God’s people had hardened their hearts in the wilderness, **7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, as on the day of testing in the wilderness, 9 where your ancestors put me to the test, though they had seen my works**

- How does that passage challenge you?
- In what areas of your life has your heart become hardened or resistant to God’s voice by following other influences or voices?
- What evidence of God’s work in your life can you recall that points to the movement and power of the Holy Spirit.

Dismissing the Holy Spirit limits your growth and joy. Scripture calls us to listen, obey and cultivate a tender heart, allowing God’s Spirit to guide, correct and empower us each day.

Take a moment to pray that God would give you a new heart in those places that have become hardened over time.

John 20: 21 Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ **22** When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’

Note to self - Which of the statements below speak to you? Why?

- Partial obedience is like stopping at a green light halfway through the intersection.
- A distracted and divided heart can’t be a discerning one.
- Ignoring the Spirit is losing our way while convincing ourselves we’re still on the path.
- Walking with the Spirit is less like driving a racecar and more like dancing.
- Don’t dump water on the flame of the spirit.
- Following the Spirit in little things is like training a muscle. If you skip the warm-ups, chances are you won’t be ready when the heavy lifting comes.
- Like learning a language, fluency only comes from daily practice.
- Boats need a navigation system, so do we.

Here’s the Truth:

The Holy Spirit is our comforter, helper, counselor, advocate, guide and God’s very presence dwelling in us. **1 Corinthians 3:16** reminds us, **Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?** That’s right, the Holy Spirit resides in you and is not some passive presence but a life-line who leads us to truth, empowers and anchors us in grace. Walking in step with God’s Holy Spirit requires attentiveness which often lead us in way that will stretch us.

One of the Spirit’s key roles is to lovingly convict us when we veer off course, not to shame us, but to call us back to life. When we repeatedly dismiss the conviction and nudges of the Holy Spirit and brush them off as simply “guilt” or our “conscience” we block the Spirit’s guidance and our hearts will become dull, our discernment will weaken and we’ll never experience the fullness of God’s direction. In essence, we cut ourselves off from the very power that sustains our spiritual lives.

John 3:8 The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.’ – Watch out... the Spirit is on the move!

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption
Monday, March 2 – Option B.2

Think You Know Better Than God
– Trust Your Way Over His Wisdom.

Proverbs 3:5-6 -

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

FROM RUIN...

If you want to undermine your faith, increase frustration and miss God's best, start here: **Think You Know Better Than God**. Doubt God's wisdom, ignore His Word, reject His guidance and believe that God's plans are unfair, too hard or don't make sense. Rely on your own understanding, insist on your own way, let doubt overshadow trust and refuse to acknowledge your need for God's help and direction. Treat the Bible as outdated or irrelevant and make decisions based solely on your logic, experience or emotions without seeking God's perspective. When you think you know better, you set yourself up for confusion, disappointment and distance from God.

...TO REDEMPTION

What does scripture have to say?

Let's go on a journey... Start with **Isaiah 55:8-9 - 8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.** and **Proverbs 3:5-6 - 5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.** We are reminded time and time again that God has a much larger view in mind. In fact another well-known verse comes from **Jeremiah 29:11** where we are once again reminded of God's wisdom. **11 For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. 12 Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you.**

- What does this teach us about the wisdom of God compared to our understanding?

If you think about it, life is a sacred game of "Follow the Leader." God goes before us. He knows the path, the purpose and the destination. Our calling is simple, to follow; to trust, to listen for His voice and to let our steps fall in rhythm with His.

But how easily we reach for the lead. We map our own routes, rush ahead or question the turns that don't make sense to us. And when we do, the game falters because we cannot lead and follow at the same time.

True peace is found in letting God be God and rediscovering the joy of simply following The One who always knows the way.

- What areas of your life do you feel tempted to plan or solve on your own?
- How does it feel to know that God has a plan specifically for your welfare and future hope?

Check back on the role of prayer in Jeremiah 29:12 - 12 **Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you.**

- How might prayer and calling on God help align your desires with His purpose?

Here's the deal, life can sometimes feel like walking through a maze. The walls rise high around us, blocking our view. We turn corners unsure of what lies ahead. While some paths seem to lead nowhere others twist in directions we didn't expect. It's easy to feel lost, uncertain, or weary of the journey.

But God sees the whole maze from above. He knows every path, every dead end and every hidden turn. While we see only the next few steps, He holds the full design. In fact, **Psalm 32:8** shares this reminder, **8 I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.** We like that part, don't we? Keep reading... **9 Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you.**

- Where in your life are you resisting God's guidance?
- What practical steps could help you remain close to God and receptive to His counsel?

In fact, if you want to put life in perspective, read **Isaiah 29:16 – 16 You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay? Shall the thing made say of its maker, 'He did not make me'; or the thing formed say of the one who formed it, 'He has no understanding'?** Similarly in **Romans 9:20-21 - 20 But who indeed are you, a human being, to argue with God? Will what is molded say to the one who molds it, 'Why have you made me like this?'** **21 Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one object for special use and another for ordinary use?**

- Where did you need that reminder today that your life and future are in God's hands?
- What are you trying to control that you need to let go of?

Take a moment to pray over **Psalm 37:5** and **Romans 8:28**

Psalm 37:5 - 5 Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.

Romans 8:28 - 28 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.

- What areas of your life do you need to commit fully to God's guidance today?
- How might believing that "all things work together for good" bring freedom from anxiety and impatience or change your perspective on the challenges you're facing?

Note to self - Which of the statements below speak to you? Why?

- Trying to sprint in your own direction and then asking God to catch up is like starting a race with your shoes on the wrong feet.
- Ask for directions before you get lost.
- Ignoring God's Word leads you down uncertain and unstable paths.
- Relying only on yourself is like trying to paddle a boat with one oar, you might move a little, but you'll spin in circles.
- Ignoring wise advice is like building IKEA furniture without instructions, you'll probably end up with extra screws and a wobbly table.

Here's the Truth:

Our limited understanding cannot match God's perfect wisdom. God sees the big picture. When you trust God and allow Him to direct your steps, you find peace and clarity. Choose to trust God's perfect wisdom over your own and walk in His peace. By rejecting God's guidance, we isolate ourselves and breed stubbornness.