



*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.

We hope you'll join us and take this journey of renewal together. Prayers of blessing as we move from Ruin to Redemption.

*Scan the QR code for online devotional access. New content from Pastor Jon is published every Wednesday during Lent.*



## Week Five

Wednesday, March 18 – Tuesday, March 24

### What to expect this week:

Once again, Monday provides options. A: Put God last, or B: Only pray when you're desperate. Which topic speaks to you this week? If you're running behind or want to go back and read some of the reflections you've missed, take advantage of the "Free Days."

### Suggested Week Five Schedule:

#### Wednesday, March 18

- Attend worship at 6:15 p.m.
- Read Devotional: Gossip Freely – Ruin Trust and Invite Division

#### Thursday, March 19

- Read Devotional: Be Driven by Emotions – Let Your Feelings Dictate Your Decisions Without Checking Them Against Truth

#### Friday, March 20 – Free Day

#### Saturday, March 21 – Free Day

#### Sunday, March 22

- Attend worship at 9:30 a.m. or 10:45 a.m.
- Read Devotional: Treat God Like a Last Resort Instead of a Daily Refuge – Only Call on Him When Everything Else Fails

#### Monday, March 23

- Read a Devotional (choose your own adventure):
  - *Option A:* Put God Last – Fit Him in Your Schedule When It's Convenient, Instead of Putting Him First
  - *Option B:* Only Pray When You're Desperate – Treat God Like a Last Resort Instead of a Daily Refuge

#### Tuesday, March 24 – Free Day

## Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Wednesday, March 18

### Gossip Freely – Ruin Trust and Invite Division.

Proverbs 11:13 - A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret.

#### *FROM RUIN...*

If you want to damage your relationships, destroy your reputation and create chaos, start here: **Gossip Freely – Ruin Trust and Invite Division**. Use gossip to pit people against one another, share what isn't yours to share, spread rumors, forget confidentiality, exaggerate faults, whisper behind backs, stir up conflict, turn private struggles or mistakes into juicy tidbits to share for laughs or sympathy and sit back and watch the drama unfold. Disregarding how gossip wounds reputations, causes pain and destroys trust. Pretend it's harmless or just "telling the truth."

## *...TO REDEMPTION*

### What does scripture have to say?

Gossip can feel harmless or even entertaining, but Scripture warns that words have power, they can heal or destroy, unite or divide. God calls us to use our speech to build up, to protect others and to seek unity and peace. Choosing words that heal rather than harm brings peace and strengthens relationships.

Let's begin by looking at **Proverbs 18:21 - Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.**

- Where have you experienced "death" and "life" when it comes to words?
- What are you choosing to "snack on" and fill yourself with?

Let's face it, words have power and misusing them can cause lasting damage. Take a moment to read **James 3:3-6a** begins, **3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. 4 Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. 5 So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! 6 And the tongue is a fire. and James 8-10 - 8 but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so.**

- What images stuck out to you about the power and destructive nature of gossip? (Even something small)
- What damage have you seen or experienced when someone spread gossip about someone else's character or motives without knowing the full story.
- How does the reminder that we are made in God's likeness influence the way we speak about others?

The reality is that gossip separates and destroys. Take a moment to read **Proverbs 16:28 – A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends.**

- How have you seen relationships or communities affected by careless or malicious words?
- Has there been a time that you have experienced the negative effects of gossip?

While we often focus on the impact of gossip on others, **Proverbs 26:27** shares an additional warning of how the words that are spoken can come back to “bit us” **27 Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on the one who starts it rolling.**

- In what ways have you seen gossip “circle back” and impact the person who started it in an unexpected or painful way? (including yourself)

Now, with that in mind how about we read **Ephesians 4:29 – Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.**

- What is an example of “grace-filled speech”?
- How often do you speak in ways that encourage or uplift others?
- How might you actively work to protect relationships and promote reconciliation?
- How could you intervene with grace when you hear gossip instead of joining in?

In **Psalm 141:3** David shares this prayer, **3 Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.** Solomon shares this word of wisdom, from **Proverbs 21:23 - 23 To watch over mouth and tongue is to keep out of trouble.** In **Psalm 19:14** David prays **14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.**

- What would it look like to pray that prayer when we are tempted to gossip?

Here’s the deal, words have power and we can use them to bless, build and promote peace. Gossip is a misuse of speech that damages relationships and spreads division. So, what would it mean to seek unity, truth and grace over judgment or entertainment and to guard your tongue as a reflection of God’s character in you.

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

- Life is not a stew, so stop stirring the pot!
- A reputation takes a lifetime to build but one word to destroy.
- You can dig a tunnel underground but eventually it will collapse on you.
- Words have power, misusing them can cause lasting damage
- Gossiping about others poisons relationships and your own heart.
- Words leave lasting wounds.
- Others’ stories are not entertainment.
- Life is like a game of chess; every careless word has consequences you can’t rewind.
- Gossip is a spark in dry grass; it spreads faster than you expect and burns more than you intended.
- A reputation is like a crystal vase; clear, valuable and easily shattered.
- Words can be seeds or weeds; what you plant determines what grows.

#### **Here’s the Truth:**

When you gossip, you fracture trust, fuel bitterness and build walls where there should be unity. Gossip creates division, and division weakens the body of Christ and leaves wounds that last. Speak with kindness, truth and love and watch your relationships flourish.

Choosing words that heal rather than harm brings peace and strengthens relationships.

## Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Thursday, March 19

### Be Driven by Emotions – Let Your Feelings Dictate Your Decisions Without Checking Them Against Truth.

Isaiah 26:3 - 3 Those of steadfast mind you keep in peace—in peace because they trust in you.

#### *FROM RUIN...*

If you want a life marked by instability, impulsiveness and regret, start here: **Be Driven by Emotions – Let Your Feelings Dictate Your Decisions Without Checking Them Against Truth.** Make your feelings be your compass, your counselor and your god. Let every decision be guided by mood instead of truth and build your identity on emotional highs and lows. Let your sense of worth rise and fall with every mood swing. Confuse anger with insight, sadness with failure or excitement with certainty. React before you reflect, speak in the heat of the moment, lash out when you're hurt. Make comfort your guide and if something feels hard, uncomfortable, or stretching, avoid it. Don't pause, pray or process. Let fear of conflict or rejection dictate your choices, instead of walking boldly in God's guidance.

#### *...TO REDEMPTION*

### What does scripture have to say?

We often underestimate how quickly emotions can take the driver's seat and spiral out of control. They rise fast, shift suddenly and cloud our judgment. Scripture reminds us: feelings are real, but they must not rule us. Pause and reflect for a moment:

- Where am I being led more by my emotions than by the truth of God?
- Where are fear, anger, insecurity, confusion or desire steering me more strongly than faith, wisdom, or obedience?

James 1:5-8 gives us a powerful picture of what happens when we let emotions toss us around, **5 If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. 6 But ask in faith, never doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind; 7, 8 for the doubter, being double-minded and unstable in every way, must not expect to receive anything from the Lord.**

When we're driven by emotions our thoughts can become unstable, **"like a wave of the sea."** James reminds us that God offers wisdom to steady us. While doubt pulls us away from God and leaves us unstable and easily swayed by our circumstances, wisdom anchors us. Faith is choosing to trust God's character over the chaos.

- How does God's promise of wisdom invite you to pause, seek truth and not react impulsively to your emotions?
- How might asking in faith change the way you bring your questions and decisions before God?

Luke 9:23–26 calls us to something deeper than emotional impulse: **23 Then he said to them all, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. 24 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. 25 What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves? 26 Those who are ashamed of me and of my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.'**

Emotions often urge us to protect ourselves, seek comfort or avoid difficulty. But Jesus doesn't hide the cost of discipleship, He shows us that following Him is more than belief, it's a daily surrender. Rather than being driven by what "feels right," we are called to choose obedience, even when it's costly. This is where we see the paradox of the Kingdom: the life we work to protect for ourselves is the one we ultimately lose, while the life surrendered to Jesus is the one truly found and saved.

- How does this teaching of denying self and taking up your cross shape your understanding of what it means to follow Jesus daily?
- Where might your emotions be pulling you one direction while Jesus calls you another?

Anger is one of the most powerful and destructive emotions we battle. **Proverbs 29:11** shows that wisdom is not the absence of anger, but the ability to restrain it. **11 A fool gives full vent to anger, but the wise quietly holds it back.** **Ephesians 4:26** shares **26 Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger.** Emotional reactions often lead to regret, but wisdom cultivates patience, self-control and quiet strength.

- How is God inviting you to slow down, breathe and respond with wisdom rather than venting your emotions?

Culture often says, “Follow your heart” while scripture warns in **Jeremiah 17:9 - 9 The heart is devious above all else; it is perverse—who can understand it?** Emotions are real, but they are not always reliable. This verse pushes us to examine our motives and measure them against God’s truth, not our feelings.

- When have your emotions led you in a direction that later proved unwise?
- How does this verse encourage you to rely on God more than your feelings?

Feelings change quickly; truth does not. Jesus says stability comes from acting on His words, not responding to fluctuating emotions. Take a moment to read **Psalms 40:2 – 2 He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.**

- Where has God already lifted you out of a “pit” of fear, confusion or instability and how does remembering that rescue help you trust Him now?

- In what current situation are you tempted to let your emotions dictate your choices and how is Jesus inviting you to step back onto the solid rock of His truth instead?
- What truth from God’s Word do you need to speak to your soul today when your emotions feel heavy or discouraging?

Being God’s child means being Spirit-led, not emotion-led. The Spirit offers clarity, conviction, peace and direction while emotions often offer confusion or impulse. The Holy Spirit provides the steady leadership that our feelings cannot. Check out **Romans 8:14 - 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.**

- How can you pause and invite the Holy Spirit to lead you before reacting emotionally in a stressful moment?

Let the God’s Word anchor you, the Spirit of God guide and guard you and the voice of Jesus steady you when emotions rise.

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

- Let your emotions speak but let God’s Word have the final say.
- The storms will come. If your foundation is your feelings, you won’t stand.
- Comfort-driven lives rarely align with the call of Christ.
- Emotions are messengers, not masters. Indicators not dictators.
- When emotions sit in the driver’s seat, peace and wisdom get left behind.

#### **Here’s the Truth:**

Emotions are God-given, but they were never meant to rule your life. When feelings lead, wisdom fades and your heart can easily deceive you, pulling you toward regret and confusion. But when emotions are surrendered to the Holy Spirit, they become helpful indicators, not destructive dictators. Don’t trade God’s unchanging truth for fleeting feelings. Real peace comes not from following whatever feels right, but from trusting a faithful God whose Word leads us into freedom and stability.

## Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Sunday, March 22

### Treat God Like a Last Resort Instead of a Daily Refuge – Only Call on Him When Everything Else Fails

Psalm 16:11 - 11 You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

#### *FROM RUIN...*

If you want to keep your faith weak and your heart restless, start here: **Treat God Like a Last Resort Instead of a Daily Refuge – Only Call on Him When Everything Else Fails.** Make God your plan B, your “go to” only in emergencies or your fallback when life feels overwhelming. Avoid seeking Him daily for strength, guidance or peace. Depend on yourself first. Work hard, plan carefully and try to control outcomes without involving God. Only call on God when you hit a wall you can’t climb. Skip daily prayer, reading or reflection and ignore God’s presence in everyday life. Keep God at arm’s length and fail to invite Him into your routines, decisions or relationships. Delay turning to God until things feel hopeless and only pray when you’re overwhelmed, fearful, or desperate.

#### *...TO REDEMPTION*

### What does scripture have to say?

Rather than the first place to turn, many people turn to God only when everything else has failed; when fear strikes or when circumstances feel overwhelming. But Scripture paints a different picture: God is not our backup plan, He is our daily refuge, our constant source of wisdom, strength, hope and stability. He invites us to walk with Him each day, not just in crisis, but in every moment of life.

Trusting God isn’t something reserved for emergencies, it is a posture of daily dependence, acknowledging Him in every decision, every step, every plan. When God becomes your daily guide, He makes your path straight. Take a moment to read **Proverbs 16:9** shares this much needed reminder, **9 The human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps.**

When God becomes your daily guide, He directs your path before challenges arise. Relying solely on your own understanding or waiting until trouble comes keeps you reactive instead of rooted in Him.

- Where do you tend to rely on your own insight instead of His?
- What would it look like to acknowledge God in your ordinary, everyday routines and to seek His guidance daily?

**Psalm 34:17-18** reminds us that God is not distant or disinterested. He is near and attentive to those who call on Him. But that nearness is not meant only for moments of crisis, He is attentive, present and ready to walk with you daily. **17 When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears, and rescues them from all their troubles. 18 The Lord is near to the broken-hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit.”**

- How does knowing God is “near” change the way you approach your day?
- What burdens are you carrying that you haven’t yet brought to Him?

God’s strength is continuous, not occasional. According to **Isaiah 41:10** God promises strength, help and support, not just in emergencies or when feeling overwhelmed, but as a continual daily presence. **10 do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.**

- Where do you need God’s strength today?
- How might leaning on God ahead of time prevent fear from taking root?

In **Matthew 11:28-29** Jesus invites you to daily rest, **28 ‘Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.**

This invitation isn’t seasonal or crisis-based. Jesus offers a gentle, daily rest. Walking in step with Him, learning from Him and trusting Him brings ongoing relief from the burdens we carry.

- What would it look like to come to Jesus daily, not just when you’re exhausted?
- Where do you sense God inviting you into a deeper rhythm of rest with Him?

**Matthew 7:24-25** reminds us that following Jesus daily builds a strong foundation, **“24 ‘Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. 25 The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!’ Psalm 46:1 uses similar imagery of the storms of life to remind us that God is our refuge, not our last resort. 1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; 3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.**

God longs to be your first response, not your last resort. Daily connection with Him strengthens your foundation and makes you secure even in uncertainty.

- In what ways are you building your life on rock or on sand?
- How might regular connection with God strengthen your foundation?

Just because we have tried to rely on other things, we are reminded that every morning is an invitation to start fresh with God, to seek Him, hope in Him and receive His mercy again. **Lamentations 3:22-23 - 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.**

- How can you build a habit of seeking God each morning and allow that to speak into your day?
- What new mercy might God be offering you today?

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

- God’s peace is available before the storm, not just after it hits.
- Daily connection with God is the rock that holds you steady through life’s storms.
- God wants to walk with you every step, not just show up at the end.
- God is not an emergency exit.
- Treating God as a last resort is like calling the fire department after the house has already burned down.
- Walking with God daily is like turning on the lights before entering a dark room, not after you stumble.
- Is God on your VIP guest list or a last-minute invitation?

**Here’s the Truth:**

Living with God as your first choice, not your last resort, transforms the rhythm of your life. It turns ordinary moments into opportunities for dependence, joy and trust. It builds a foundation that stands firm in storms of life and allows daily peace to replace fear and steady guidance to replace reactive decision-making.

Relying on yourself alone often leads to burnout, instability and faith becomes fragile and easily shaken. But when you invite God into your everyday life, He becomes your constant shelter, a daily refuge; providing peace, wisdom and confidence that anchors you in His unchanging love, not just in moments of crisis, but every day.

## Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Monday, March 23 – Option A

### Put God Last – Fit Him in Your Schedule When It's Convenient, Instead of Putting Him First.

Matthew 6:33 - 33 But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

#### *FROM RUIN...*

If your goal is a life filled with confusion, emptiness and missed blessings, start here: **Put God Last – Fit Him in Your Schedule When It's Convenient, Instead of Putting Him First.** Make sure God is the last priority on your list. Put your desires, career, relationships, ambitions, comfort and plans before Him. Treat God as an afterthought, backup plan, option or something you fit in when everything else is done rather than the foundation. Skip prayer, Bible reading, worship and time with other believers because other things “take priority.” Treat His voice as optional rather than foundational and make decisions based on convenience, feelings or the opinions of others rather than seeking His wisdom first.

#### *...TO REDEMPTION*

#### What does scripture have to say?

In a world overflowing with obligations, noise and constant pressure, it becomes easy (almost natural) to push God to the edges of our lives. We intend to spend time with Him, but our schedules fill. We mean to pray, but exhaustion wins. We want to prioritize Him, but everything else demands our attention.

But Scripture is clear: God is not meant to be an accessory to our lives, but central to our lives. Faithfulness begins with ordering our lives

around Him, not adding Him in “if we get around to it” or into whatever margin is left over. God must be first - not last.

Let's begin with **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.** Trusting God “with all your heart” and “acknowledging Him in all your ways” leaves no room for a part-time, convenient faith. God desires to guide every step of your life, not just the leftover.

- How might daily trust reshape the way you make decisions or plan your schedule?

**Psalm 37:4-5** adds another invitation, **4 Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. 5 Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.** Delighting in God means prioritizing Him, not out of obligation, but out of joy. When God becomes your delight (not just another calendar item) your desires and choices begin to reflect Him.

- What could help cultivate a heart that delights in God?

Putting God first requires an intentional choice. Joshua reminds God's people that serving Him is a choice... and a daily one. **Joshua 24:15 - 15 Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.'**

Joshua's challenge still speaks to us today. Faithfulness is not passive or accidental; it requires intention to reorder life around God. When we don't choose God first, we often end up serving lesser “gods” (busyness, comfort, success, approval, etc.).

- What lesser “gods” tend to take priority in your schedule?
- What intentional choice can you make today to put God first?

Sometimes we drift from God not because we don't love God, but because of the expectations placed on us. We give people our best energy and God our leftovers. But **Romans 12:2** shares this warning, **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.**

- What patterns or pressures from the world are shaping your decisions? (expectations, schedule, demands)
- What does your schedule reveal about what you value most and how does this verse challenge you to realign your priorities?

Putting God first is not about guilt, it's about grace. It's not about adding more tasks, it's about realigning your heart. You were created to walk with God daily, not occasionally and when God becomes your first priority, everything else finds its rightful place.

Take a moment to reflect on **Luke 10:38-42** where Jesus visits Martha and Mary, **38 Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. 39 She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. 40 But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.'** **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.'** Let's face it, life is demanding and there are things that need to get done! Breathe, pause, read **Matthew 6:33 – 33 But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

- In the busyness of life, how often do you intentionally seek God first, before tackling your tasks and responsibilities?
- What practices help you stay focused on God daily, even when life feels overwhelming?

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

- Let God be the first appointment, not the filler between meetings.
- God is not the garnish; He's the main course.
- Life works best when God comes first
- When God is last, spiritual growth stalls and your soul slowly grows dry.
- Schedules tend to reveal our priorities. Just don't fit God in but let him be at the center each day.

### **Here's the Truth:**

God created you to live in deep connection with Him.

When God is first in your life, everything else falls into its proper place. His presence brings peace, purpose and strength that the world can't offer.

When you put God last, you invite stress, anxiety and dissatisfaction: blocking the blessings and guidance meant for those who seek Him first.

Serving the world before God leads only to weariness. Certainly, your life may appear full on the outside, but ignoring God's voice will leave you empty on the inside, your faith weakens, your conscience dulls and you drift from the joy, purpose and peace God longs to give you.

## Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Monday, March 23 – Option B

### Only Pray When You're Desperate – Treat God Like a Last Resort Instead of a Daily Refuge.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-19 - 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit.

#### *FROM RUIN...*

If you want to keep your relationship with God weak and distant, start here: **Only Pray When You're Desperate – Treat God Like a Last Resort Instead of a Daily Refuge.** Wait until things are falling apart, then scream out in panic. Avoid prayer in times of peace, joy or everyday life. Turn prayer into a last resort instead of a constant lifeline. View prayer as a transaction. Demand answers or relief and if they don't come quickly, grow impatient or bitter. Don't thank God, don't seek His guidance in small decisions and only cry out when you are faced with overwhelming challenges that you can't "fix" or when you hit rock bottom. Ignore prayer as a relationship and forget that prayer is a conversation with God, a way to know Him deeper and grow in faith.

#### *...TO REDEMPTION*

#### What does scripture have to say?

Many people treat prayer as a last resort, something to turn to only when life becomes overwhelming. But Scripture teaches that prayer is meant to be a constant, relational, daily rhythm, not an emergency-only option.

God desires connection, conversation and communion with His children at all times. Take a moment to read 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and let it sink in 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give

thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit.

According to **verse 17** Prayer is meant to be a constant continuous part of life

- What would it look like for you to weave prayer into your daily routine instead of saving it for emergencies?
- How might continual prayer change your stress, impact your decisions or perspective?

God delights in hearing from His children. Treating prayer as a last resort misses the opportunity to experience His generosity daily. In fact, in **Matthew 7:7-8-11** Jesus invites us to ask, seek and knock, **7 'Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. 9 Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? 10 Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!**

- What keeps you from going to God regularly?
- How does this verse reshape your view of God's willingness to hear and respond?

The reality is that prayer flows out of abiding or living in Christ's love, staying close to His Word and aligning our desires with His. As you reflect on **John 15:7-11 - 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. 9 As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.**

- Where do you sense God calling you to abide more deeply?
- How does abiding in Christ transform what you pray for?

In **Philippians 4:6-7** Paul instructs us to bring everything (big, small, mundane, urgent) to God in prayer. **6 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.** When we do, His peace guards our hearts, making prayer a place of rest, not only rescue.

- What worries or small daily concerns do you hold onto instead of bringing to God?
- How might consistent prayer increase your peace?

Yet did you notice in **verse 6** the spirit in which we are to bring our prayer and supplication, **“with thanksgiving let your request we made known to God.”** Even our main verse from **1 Thessalonians** begins by saying, **16 Rejoice always, and 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.** In other words, thanksgiving trains our hearts to see God’s goodness even before we see His answer. You see prayer is not simply about making requests of God it’s also about gratitude, thanksgiving, worship and praise **Psalm 100:4** speaks to the heart in which we approach God. **4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name.**

- What might it look like to begin your prayers with gratitude?
- How does thanksgiving keep your heart soft and hopeful?

Yet did you notice **verse 19** of **1 Thessalonians 5** - **Do not quench the Spirit.** When we reserve our prayers for only a portion of our lives, we fail to experience the fullness of God who draws close whenever His people call, whether in crisis, joy, routine or in quiet moments of faithfulness. **Psalm 145:18** echoes, **18 The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.**

- When do you tend to pray the most (only in crisis or throughout your day)?
- How might God be inviting you to call on Him more regularly?
- What would it look like to approach God in a spirit of thankfulness, gratitude, praise or worship as you bring your petitions before Him?
- What is something that you can bring before God today?

Prayer is meant to be a daily conversation, not an emergency lifeline. In **Luke 18:1** and following we read, **18 Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart.** By seeking God consistently, you cultivate peace, wisdom and closeness with Him. Each small, ordinary moment becomes an opportunity to experience His presence, trust His guidance and rest in His faithful love.

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

- Gratitude keeps your heart soft; desperation hardens it.
- Don’t treat prayer like a fire alarm - used only in emergencies
- God’s answers don’t always come on your timeline, but He’s always listening.
- Pray before you get to the end of your rope.
- Pray is not a life preserver to only be used in emergencies, it’s meant to preserve life.

**Here’s the Truth:**

When you only pray in crises, you miss daily communion with God and carry burdens alone, letting anxiety and fear grow unchecked.

God desires your constant conversation, and prayer is the lifeline that keeps you connected, grounded and transformed. Prayer becomes powerful when it’s a daily rhythm, not a reactive emergency.

Regular, consistent prayer nurtures intimacy with God and invites His peace into your life, while emergency-only prayer keeps your heart disconnected and limits the fullness of His presence.