



*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 Four

Wednesday, March 11 – Tuesday, March 17

### What To Expect This Week:

On Monday, we have another “Choose Your Own Adventure.” Will you go with Option A: Worry about what others think of you, or Option B: Minimize your self-worth? Maybe this week you'll choose to do both.

### Suggested Week Four Schedule:

#### Wednesday, March 11

- Attend worship at 6:15 p.m.
- Read Devotional: Hold Grudges Instead of Extending Grace

#### Thursday, March 12

- Read Devotional: Harden Your Heart – Tune Out Conviction and Truth Until Nothing Moves You

#### Friday, March 13 – Free Day

#### Saturday, March 14 – Free Day

#### Sunday, March 15

- Attend worship 9:30 a.m. or 10:45 a.m.
- Read Devotional: Compare Constantly – Let Comparison Steal Your Joy, Direction and Identity

#### Monday, March 16

- Read a Devotional (choose your own adventure):
  - *Option A:* Worry About What Others Think of You
  - *Option B:* Minimize Your Self-Worth - Ignore What God Says About Your Value

#### Tuesday, March 17 – Free Day

## Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Wednesday, March 11

### Hold Grudges Instead of Extending Grace

Ephesians 4:31-32 - 31 Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, 32 and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

#### *FROM RUIN...*

If you want to harden and poison your heart, fracture your relationships and live in constant unrest, start here: **Hold Grudges Instead of Extending Grace.** Stay offended. Isolate yourself emotionally and keep others at a distance. Cling to past hurts and nurse bitterness and resentment. Revisit old offenses in your mind, refuse to forgive and let anger smolder like a fire that never dies. Allow bitterness to influence how you treat others, harboring resentment, gossiping, or acting cold, distant and withdrawn.

See forgiveness as a weakness or undeserved, and let pride, hurt, or a sense of “justice” stop you from offering forgiveness even when God calls you to release it. Keep past wrongs alive and revisit old offenses in your mind again and again. Take every comment or action as a personal attack. Keep your guard up constantly and define people by their failures rather than seeing them as God’s beloved children capable of change and renewal.

Beat yourself up over past sins and failures endlessly. Reject God’s grace by holding yourself to impossible standards and refuse to accept the forgiveness and mercy God freely offers.

## *...TO REDEMPTION*

### What does scripture have to say?

Holding onto anger or grudges can quietly poison our hearts, our relationships and even our spiritual life. Scripture calls us to forgive, pursue peace, and remove bitterness so that God’s grace can flow freely through us.

In fact, **Hebrews 12:14-15** talks about the root of bitterness, - 14 Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and through it many become defiled.

- What would be an example of a “root of bitterness” that can spring up?
- How might holding onto resentment affect your relationships and your own heart in a negative way?
- How could pursuing peace with others change the atmosphere in your life and community?

**Colossians 3:12-13** reminds us that transformation is not only about turning away from sin, but also about intentionally putting on Christlike character. 12 As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

- What does it look like practically to “clothe yourself” with humility and kindness in relationships where you’ve been hurt?
- What is the impact of the second part of verse 13, “just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.?”
- How does remembering that God has forgiven you affect your ability to forgive others?
- Where in your life do you need to actively choose compassion and patience instead of resentment?

Now read **Matthew 6:14-15** - 14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; 15 but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

- What is the challenge that we are invited to wrestle with as we pray The Lord's prayer, "forgive us our trespasses (sins) as we forgive those who trespass (sin) against us?"

In other words, forgiveness is not optional; our relationship with God and others flows from it.

- What relationships or situations require you to release offense and forgive in order to receive God's grace fully?

**Proverbs 19:1** and **Romans 12:8** instruct us on how to respond to offenses.

**Proverbs 19:1 - 11** Those with good sense are slow to anger, and it is their glory to overlook an offence.

**Romans 12:8 - 18** If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

- Where could slowing down your anger and overlooking offenses bring peace into your relationships?
- How might actively choosing peace protect your heart from bitterness?
- Who do you need to forgive?
- How can embracing forgiveness reflect God's mercy in your life?

**Psalms 34:12-14** asks a question where the answer may seem obvious and gives us instructions on how to attain the peace, 12 Which of you desires life, and covets many days to enjoy good? 13 Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. 14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

- What would it mean to seek peace and pursue it?

God calls us to pursue peace, holiness and to actively let go of resentment. Bitterness and grudges create spiritual and relational damage; forgiveness brings freedom. Practicing patience, humility and mercy fosters both personal peace and healthy relationships. In fact, a frequently quoted verse on judging others comes from **Luke 6:37** yet notice that the context is forgiveness, 37 'Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; 38 give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.'

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

- Bitterness spreads like poison ivy and the more you scratch it, the worse it gets.
- Holding onto grudges is like holding on to an old banana peel.
- Grudges are heavier burdens to carry than Grace.
- Grudges take up the room that was intended for other things.
- Washing machines have a spin cycle don't let others trap you in a cycle of anger and hurt.
- Bitterness is like a weed that grows inside you.
- Bitterness is like a pebble in your shoe.
- If your arm is broken you allow it to heal; what about relationships?
- Cement hardens over time – so does bitterness

**Here's the Truth:**

The Bible speaks strongly about the dangers of holding onto bitterness. It's seen as something that can take root in your heart and cause a lot of damage, both to us and our relationships. Bitterness doesn't stay internal, it can spread, corrupt communities and relationships. In fact, bitterness in the Bible is treated like a poison; it corrodes joy and even spiritual health. While forgiveness is the antidote, not because it's easy but because it's freeing. Forgiveness isn't about excusing someone's behavior, but about not letting their actions keep us in emotional or spiritual bondage that hardens our hearts and blocks God's healing grace. Forgiveness releases us from the prison of pain and anger that we were not intended to carry.

## Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Thursday, March 12

### Harden Your Heart

#### – Tune Out Conviction and Truth Until Nothing Moves You

Ezekiel 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.

### *FROM RUIN...*

If you really want to ruin your life, start here: **Harden Your Heart – Tune Out Conviction and Truth Until Nothing Moves You.** Close yourself off, tune out conviction, shut down compassion, resist truth. When God speaks, simply ignore Him. When someone lovingly challenges you, be sure to get defensive. When you feel God nudging your heart, brush it off, justify your behavior, ignore that internal discomfort. When you hear a convicting message, assume it's for someone else and doesn't apply to you.

When confronted with sin, defend yourself at all costs. Call it a struggle, not sin and blame others.

Ignore God's Word or read it without reading you. Keep scripture at arm's length and filter it through your preferences and comfort. When you hear a convicting message, think of who else needs to hear it. When truth is preached, assume it doesn't apply to you.

Hold on to offenses, replay the wrongs done to you, keep your heart closed to healing and let bitterness become a barrier between you and God.

A hardened heart may look strong, but it grows brittle as repeated prideful "No's" to God slowly make you cold, stubborn and untouched by truth. Over time, what once convicted you no longer registers, leaving you unteachable and unable to experience real transformation.

## *...TO REDEMPTION*

### What does scripture have to say?

The Bible warns repeatedly about the danger of a hardened heart. A hardened heart resists God's voice, ignores conviction and gradually becomes numb to His guidance, peace and joy. Scripture calls us to remain tender, humble and receptive to God's Spirit.

Take a moment to listen to a few warnings from **Hebrews 3:7-8 - 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, and Zechariah 7:11-13a - 11 But they refused to listen, and turned a stubborn shoulder, and stopped their ears in order not to hear. 12 They made their hearts adamant in order not to hear the law and the words that the Lord of hosts had sent by his spirit through the former prophets.**

Hard hearts are not only resistant, they actively reject God's instruction. **This is a serious warning: spiritual pride and stubbornness can lead to separation from God.**

- How does pride or self-reliance prevent you from listening to God's guidance?
- In what areas of your life have you noticed your heart becoming resistant to God's voice?

God invites us to respond to Him with open and soft hearts through worship, prayer and obedience. Hardening our hearts often begins with ignoring His voice, even when we've witnessed His faithfulness.

In fact, **Hosea 10:12–13** shares, **12 Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love, break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you. 13 You have ploughed wickedness, you have reaped injustice, you have eaten the fruit of lies.**

- Where is God inviting you to break up the hardened places in your heart?
- How can you respond with openness and worship rather than resistance?

Read **Proverbs 28:14** - 14 Happy is the one who is never without fear, but one who is hard-hearted will fall into calamity. and **Ephesians 4:18** (Full context Ephesians 4:18-24) 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart.

- A hardened heart blocks God's guidance, dulls conscience and leads to spiritual numbness, preventing the life and growth He intends.
- Where might hardness of heart be keeping you from experiencing God's peace or joy?
- How can you pursue renewal and sensitivity to God's Spirit?

**Isaiah 57:15** seems to be speaking to a different type of heart, 15 For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

**Ezekiel 36:26** provides another reminder, -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.

- Where is God seeking to revive your spirit and soften your heart?

Take a moment to describe a soft heart vs a hardened heart:

Soft Heart:

Hardened Heart:

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

- Hardened hearts don't deny sin exists; they just deny that it matters.
- Hearts don't freeze suddenly; they chill slowly.
- Pride hears the sermon and elbows someone else.
- Hard hearts don't just block pain, they also block peace, joy, and growth.
- Water turns to ice over time; don't let your heart become cold.
- Numbing your tongue can keep you from tasting bitterness, but it can also keep you from tasting sweetness.
- When you shut out God's Word, you shut out God's wisdom.
- Which is more effective, rain on concrete or rain on grass.
- Hands can become calloused over time, so can hearts.

**Here's the Truth:**

A hardened heart doesn't happen overnight, it forms little by little, every time you say "no" to the voice of God and "yes" to your pride. Over time a hard heart will make you cold, stubborn, indifferent, unteachable and eventually unreachable. It impacts your relationship with God as well as others. What once grieved you won't even register anymore and when we lose sensitivity to sin, or awareness to our own need for grace, we lose our connection to the Spirit's voice.

A tender heart is a transformed heart.

God can work through weakness, pain and failure but He resists pride and hardness of heart. A soft, surrendered heart becomes the fertile soil where real change takes root.

When you open your heart to God, He doesn't just fix your life, He renews your soul.

## Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Sunday, March 15

### Compare Constantly

#### – Let Comparison Steal Your Joy, Direction and Identity

Galatians 6:4 - 4 All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. 5 For all must carry their own loads.

### *FROM RUIN...*

If you want to sabotage your joy, peace, self-worth and sense of purpose, start here: **Compare Constantly – Let Comparison Steal Your Joy, Direction and Identity.** Make comparison a daily habit. Measure yourself against others, whether it's their success, appearance, relationships or spirituality. Let envy and dissatisfaction rule your thoughts. Lose sight of gratitude and let jealousy take root until it poisons your heart. Allow envy to drive your choices and make decisions to "keep up," compete or chase approval. Discount your unique gifts and the calling God has given you. Believe that you're only valuable if you measure up to someone else's standards.

### *...TO REDEMPTION*

#### What does scripture have to say?

When we compare ourselves to others and chase our own desires, it leads to conflict, frustration and spiritual restlessness. But when we trust who God made us to be and embrace our unique part in His body, we find peace, purpose, and unity.

While comparison may seem small, spiritually it is deeply corrosive. It steals joy, distorts identity, fuels insecurity and jealousy, blinds you to your unique God-give purpose and creates restlessness in the soul.

In fact, scripture teaches that comparison begins not outside of us, but within us. **James 4:1-3** highlights the root of much of our conflict, 1 Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? 2 You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. 3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures.

When we measure ourselves against others or covet what God has given them, we lose sight of who He created us to be. Comparison awakens cravings, selfish desires and wrong motives that distract us from our own journey. These inner battles can spill outward and create relational conflict. Even our prayers can become self-focused.

- Where do you see comparison or unmet desires causing tension in your relationships?
- How do these cravings affect the way you pray or approach God?

While comparison can distract us from our God-give purpose, **Psalm 139:13-16** reminds us that God formed us personally, purposefully, and wonderfully. 13 For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.

We are God's handiwork. Comparison denies this truth and whispers you are not enough, but God says, "You are wonderfully made."

- How does knowing you are "fearfully and wonderfully made" free you from comparison?
- Which part of your God-given design are you learning to appreciate?

In **Ephesians 2:10** Paul reminds us that we were created for good works, **10 For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.**

While comparison traps us in wanting someone else's calling, contentment allows us to walk faithfully in the works God prepared for us.

- What good work might God be calling you to that comparison keeps you from seeing?
- What "lane" has God placed before you to walk in?

While your gifts are unique, they serve the same Lord for a common purpose. Paul writes, **1 Corinthians 12:4-6 - 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.** Did you catch that? Varieties of gifts... same Spirit, varieties of services... same Lord, Varieties of activities... same God. In fact in **1 Corinthians 12:14-27** Paul uses the imagery of the body to make a powerful point: No part is useless. No gift is unnecessary. No person is replaceable. No role is inferior

- Where do you feel "less than" or "unnecessary" in the body of Christ?
- What unique gift has God given you that you have underestimated or ignored?
- How does knowing God arranged every part help you embrace your role?
- What step can you take to embrace your calling instead of competing with others?

Comparison leads to envy, pride and drains life. In fact, **Proverbs 14:30** captures a spiritual reality that comparison eats away at peace, it creates inner rot, resentment, bitterness and anxiety but being settled in who God made you to be brings peace and life. **30 A tranquil mind gives life to the flesh, but passion makes the bones rot.**

- What comparison in your life is stealing your peace?
- Where might God be inviting you to embrace a more "tranquil" mind?

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

- Comparison distracts you from your own journey.
- Trust God's timing instead of chasing someone else's path.
- Don't try to bowl in someone else's lane.
- Check your own mirror to see how you look
- Every dish has its own cook time
- Faith grows best when comparison goes quiet.

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

You are uniquely created and deeply loved by God. Comparison blinds you to this truth, breeding impatience, envy and dissatisfaction as you measure your life against others. It robs you of joy, blocks gratitude, distorts your priorities and can push you into unhealthy striving or competition.

But your worth isn't found in comparison. Your worth is rooted in God's design, timing and purpose for your life.

When you stop looking sideways and start embracing who God made you to be, peace and contentment flourish and gratitude reshapes your perspective, freeing your heart to live with joy.

The desire to "keep up" can lead to unnecessary debt, overwork, or unhealthy competition.

#### **Comparison Produces...**

Conflict / Envy / Wrong motives / Spiritual dryness / Restlessness / Disunity

#### **Contentment Produces...**

Peace / Gratitude / Purpose / Fruitful service / Unity in the Body / Joy / Fullness

## Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Monday, March 16 – Option A

### Worry About What Others Think of You.

Galatians 1:10 - 10 Am I now seeking human approval, or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

#### *FROM RUIN...*

If you're looking for a powerful way to ruin your peace, paralyze your purpose and sideline your spiritual growth, start here: **Worry About What Others Think of You.** Obsess over what people think, constantly wonder if you're good enough, likable enough, successful enough. Let others define who you are, your worth, your value.

Change your personality to "fit in" and filter every decision through the fear of judgement. Let the opinions of others speak the loudest. Allow anxiety, insecurity and the fear of rejection to shape your identity rather than who God calls you to be.

#### *...TO REDEMPTION*

### What does Scripture have to say?

God calls us to live with courage and integrity, not weighed down by the opinions of others. Scripture reminds us that seeking human approval can trap us, while trusting God brings security and freedom.

By living for the approval of others and fearing their rejection, you'll become anxious, insecure and ultimately disconnected from God's calling on your life.

Reflect on **Proverbs 29:25 - 25 The fear of others lays a snare, but one who trusts in the Lord is secure.**"

- Where do you find yourself giving more weight to what others think than to what God thinks?
- How has fear of judgment or rejection influenced your choices, words or actions?
- What might trusting God over others look like in that area of your life?

Sadly, faith can often be silenced by fear. In fact, we read about one such instance in **John 12:42-43** where people believed in Jesus but kept quiet because they didn't want to lose popularity or respect., **42 Nevertheless many, even of the authorities, believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved human glory more than the glory that comes from God.**

- How do you see this play out today?
- How does the desire for human approval keep people from openly living their faith today?
- Are there areas of your life where you quietly hold back your beliefs, convictions or gifts to avoid disapproval?

If that wasn't enough, **1 Thessalonians 2:4** and **Galatians 1:10** both challenge us to seek God's approval, not human praise.

**1 Thessalonians 2:4 - 4** but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, **even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts.**

Galatians 1:10 - 10 Am I now seeking human approval, or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

- Where might you be allowing the opinions of others to influence your decisions or behavior?
- How would it change your life if your primary aim were to please God rather than people?
- What small step could you take today to act boldly for God, regardless of human approval?

In fact **Galatians 4:17-18** provides some additional insight. **17 They make much of you, but for no good purpose; they want to exclude you, so that you may make much of them. 18 It is good to be made much of for a good purpose at all times, and not only when I am present with you.**

- What does this teach us about the opinions of others and remaining true to who God calls us to be whoever we're around?

Here's the good news, the reality is that you are not alone and God has already equipped you to step out in faith. Read **2 Timothy 1:7 - 7 for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.**

- How might people-pleasing be keeping you from using your voice, gifts, or influence for God?
- Where could you act with courage, love and self-discipline in order to serve God faithfully?
- What would it look like to trust God's purpose above fear of rejection or criticism?

God gave you a voice for a reason; to speak truth, share life and to fulfill your calling. Fear of others is a trap. When you hide your voice just to avoid conflict, you silence God's work through you. True peace doesn't come from people-pleasing; it comes from living boldly into the purpose God's given you.

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

- Don't make a bad trade! When you trade your divine purpose for human approval, you'll end up empty handed.
- When people's opinions sit on the throne of your heart, God's voice gets drowned out.
- When your identity is tied to people's responses, you'll live on an emotional rollercoaster.
- People's opinions change. God's view of you doesn't.
- You don't need the world's approval when you have God's affirmation.
- When you shape your identity around other's expectations, you're an amoeba. You were not created to be an amoeba. You were created in the image of God
- While smoothies are delicious, you were not made to blend in, you were made to stand out and stand firm in God's truth and grace.
- People's opinions are like sand that shifts by the wind and the waves.

### Here's the Truth:

Caring too much about what others think is something nearly everyone struggles with at some point; it's deeply human and very relevant. The Bible doesn't say "don't care what people think" in those exact words, but it does offer clear wisdom about not being controlled by the opinions of others. Instead, Scripture calls us to focus on what God thinks and to find our identity in Him.

You were made to live for an Audience of One.

God never called you to chase approval; He called you to live from your identity in Christ. When your worth is rooted in Him, the weight of other people's opinions begins to fade. Worrying about what others think keeps you living in bondage. True freedom comes from knowing who you are and whose you are.

## Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Monday, March 16 – Option B

### Minimize Your Self Worth – Ignore What God Says About Your Value

1 John 3:1-3 - 3 1 See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. 3 And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

#### *FROM RUIN...*

If you want to sabotage your life spiritually, emotionally and relationally, start here: **Minimize Your Self Worth - Ignore What God Says About Your Value.** Forget that you are made in God's image. Don't acknowledge your gifts and focus solely on your flaws. Compare yourself constantly to others and let compromise kill contentment. Downplay any wins and highlight your weaknesses.

Ignore what Jesus has done for you, that you are redeemed, loved, chosen and sealed by God. Act like your failures define you more than your Savior does and try to earn your worth through external validation, performance, approval or appearance.

Place your value in what others say about you or worse, in what you think they say. Rely on social media likes, compliments, approval or applause to tell you who you are.

## *...TO REDEMPTION*

### What does scripture have to say?

Sometimes we can be hard on ourselves because of the expectations that we place on ourselves or that others place on us. Even as we look at the world around us, it's easy to feel small, insignificant or unworthy; especially when we compare ourselves to others or fall short of expectations. Scripture, however, reminds us that our value comes from God, not from performance or approval.

Let's go back to the beginning and read **Genesis 1:27 - 27 So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.** Now let's fast-forward a bit to **Psalm 139:14 - 14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.** Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

- What does knowing that you are created in God's image remind you about how God sees you?
- How does that affect the way you see yourself?
- In what ways might you have minimized your self-worth by ignoring this truth?

Now understanding that we were created in the image of God, let's take this one step further, read **Ephesians 1:3-4-5 - 4 just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. 5 He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.**

- How does it make you feel that God chose you?
- How might embracing your identity as a child of God change the way you treat yourself and others?

Even though we were created in the image of God and we are children of God, sometimes we can feel so small and insignificant. How does **Matthew 10:29-31** take the God of the universe to a more personal level? **29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. 30 And even the hairs of your head are all counted. 31 So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.**

- How does this passage help you see your worth in God's eyes, even when you feel small or overlooked?
- What fears or feelings of insignificance might God be asking you to release?

**John 15:16** affirms that we are chosen by God, but what else do we learn about our purpose?

**16 You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.\**

- What "fruit" might God be calling you to bear in your life today?

**Romans 8:14** not only declares your identity in Christ but affirms the work of the Holy Spirit **14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.**

Now pair that with **Philippians 1:6** where Paul reminds us, **6 I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.**

Minimizing your self-worth ignores the truth of who God says you are. Scripture calls you to recognize your identity as God's creation, child and chosen instrument, freeing you to walk confidently in your value and purpose.

- How can following the Spirit help you live confidently in your God-given worth?

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

- Minimizing self will keep you stuck in a cycle of self-criticism and defeat.
- When you fixate on what others have accomplished, you'll always come up short.
- You're not a washing machine, don't get stuck on the spin cycle.
- Trying to please people never pleases people
- You'll waste your energy trying to walk in someone else's calling.
- Others will keep you bound to their opinions
- Your worth is God-Given, not man-made
- Like bleach kills mold, comparison kills contentment.
- Comparison is like pole vaulting with a short pole.

### Here's the Truth:

Your worth comes from God not from human approval or achievements. Because we are made in the image of God, we have an intrinsic value and dignity; not because of what we do, but because of who God is. Recognizing your worth brings freedom, confidence and purpose, while minimizing it dishonors the One who made and redeemed you. When we seek approval from others, chase perfection or harshly criticize ourselves, we open the door to envy, discouragement and shame. Comparing ourselves to others often deepens these struggles and can lead us to spiritual paralysis. But when we embrace our identity in Christ, we are freed to live with purpose, confidence and joy, ***breaking the cycle of self-criticism and people pleasing.***