



*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 Three

Wednesday, March 4 – Tuesday, March 10

What to expect this week:

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

Suggested Week Three Schedule:

Wednesday, March 4

- Attend worship at 6:15 p.m.
- Read Devotional: Use People Instead of Loving Them – Manipulate or Take Instead of Serve

Thursday, March 5

- Read Devotional: Ignore the Word – Base Your Life on Feelings, Vibes or Culture Instead of Scripture

Friday, March 6 – Free Day

Saturday, March 7 – Free Day

Sunday, March 8

- Attend worship at 9:30 a.m. or 10:45 a.m.
- Read Devotional: Chase Comfort Over Calling – Pick What's Easy Instead of What God is Asking of You.
- Optional Bonus Devotional: Avoid Challenges and Play it Safe*

Monday, March 9

- Read a Devotional (choose your own adventure):
 - *Option A: Chase Money Over Mission – Let Your Career Call the Shots Instead of Your Calling*
 - *Option B: Waste Your Talents – Bury What God Gave You*

Tuesday, March 10 – Free Day

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Wednesday, March 4

Use People Instead of Loving Them – Manipulate or Take Instead of Serve.

Philippians 2:3-5 - 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. 5 Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

FROM RUIN...

If you want to sabotage your relationships, harden your heart and live in loneliness, start here: **Use People Instead of Loving Them – Manipulate or Take Instead of Serve.** Measure relationships by what you get, not what you give and treat others as tools to meet your needs rather than as souls to cherish. View relationships as transactions, expecting others to serve you, entertain you or solve your problems without genuine care or giving in return.

When others suffer or struggle, stay distant or indifferent. Use guilt, flattery or control to get others to do what you want. Ignore healthy boundaries and dismiss others' feelings while pursuing your own agenda.

Keep relationships at a surface-level to maintain control and hide your true self to avoid emotional risk. Twist forgiveness into a tool for judgment or manipulation instead of a reflection of God's grace.

...TO REDEMPTION

What does scripture have to say?

When we focus on what others can do for us rather than loving them genuinely, we fall into selfishness and miss God's call to reflect His love in our relationships. Scripture repeatedly calls us to humility and selflessness. **Philippians 2:3-8** reminds us, **3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. 5 Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, 7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, 8 he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.**

- How are you called to live in relationship with others?
- What are some of the things that you may need to “empty yourself of” so that you may live for others more freely? (i.e. pride, control, personal agendas)
- How does Christ's example challenge the way you interact with people in your life?

James 3:14-16 warns us of the danger of selfish ambition, **14 But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. 15 Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. 16 For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind.”**

- What is the warning here about how selfish ambition and envy affect your relationships?
- Where in your relationships might you be tempted to use others for personal gain rather than genuinely love them?
- How can pride or competition create disorder or harm in the way you treat others?

Now read James 3:17-18 - 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace. With that in mind, read Galatians 6:2 - 2 Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. Now don't forget Proverbs 3:29 - 29 Do not plan harm against your neighbor who lives trustingly beside you.

- What is God inviting you to cultivate in your relationships through humility and mercy?
- How can you sow peace instead of selfish ambition in your interactions?
- What steps can you take this week to focus on the good of others before your own?

In John 13:34-35 Jesus shows that true love often requires emptying ourselves and putting others first. 34 I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.' While using people for personal gain reflects selfishness, loving others reflects God's love, intention and purpose. Peace and righteousness grow where love and humility are practiced consistently.

While we may have heard it at weddings more often than we would like to admit, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 shares this wonderful reminder, 4 Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

- What model of love and understanding does this provide?
- What traits do you gravitate towards?
- What traits to you have to work on?
- How are you called to live differently?

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

- Relationships should be deeper than a puddle
- Using people for your gain is like borrowing a ladder and sawing off the rungs.
- Using others is like watering fake plants; it looks like growth, but nothing's really alive.
- Treating people as steppingstones only ensures you walk alone.
- Forgiveness is not a bargaining chip
- Hallow relationships are like cardboard umbrellas, they look fine until real rain shows up.
- Using people is like renting furniture and slowly walking off with the cushions, eventually someone notices something's missing.
- Real relationships are like slow-cooked meals. They take time but they actually nourish.

Here's the Truth:

When you treat people as means to an end, you break trust, create distance and hinder your own growth. Manipulation may feel like control but it only breeds resentment and isolation. While using others keeps your heart guarded, it blocks the deeper connection you were created for. Genuine love builds trust, deepens community and reflects God's heart to the world.

Little Text: Ephesians 4:32 - 32 and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

BIG TEXT: 1 John 4:7-12

7 Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Thursday, March 5

Ignore the Word

– Base Your Life on Feelings, Vibes or Culture Instead of Scripture

2 Timothy 3:14-17 - 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, 15 and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 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.

FROM RUIN...

If you're aiming to drift from truth, lose your spiritual footing and live in confusion, start here: **Ignore the Word – Base Your Life on Feelings, Vibes or Culture Instead of Scripture.** Treat God's Word as outdated, inconvenient or optional. Let culture, feelings or popular opinion carry more weight and shape your beliefs instead of Scripture.

Hear the Word but never apply it or only apply certain parts. Only read what feels comfortable, skip the parts that challenge you and let personal preference dictate theology and allow convenience to decide obedience. Treat the Bible like a collection of nice ideas rather than divine truth.

Let the Word stay in your head without transforming your heart. Listen to sermons and podcasts, read devotionals, maybe even quote a few verses, but never live them out. Let busyness push the Word aside and tell yourself you'll "get to it later." Let distraction steal your devotion and treat time in God's Word as optional rather than the essential life-line it was designed to be.

...TO REDEMPTION

What does scripture have to say?

We live in a world full of voices; our own thoughts, the opinions of others, culture and the constant noise of daily life. In all of this, it becomes dangerously easy to ignore the one voice that gives life, clarity and truth: God's Word. Scripture not only warns us about the danger of neglecting the Word of God but also about the blessing that comes from hearing and obeying it.

- What voice is shaping you the most right now; God or something else?

God's Word is truth. In fact, Jesus prays that His followers be sanctified (set apart) and anchored by the truth. **John 17:17 - 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.** Ignoring Scripture means we allow culture, emotions, pressures, opinions or fear to shape us instead of God.

- What competing "truths" do you need God's Word to silence?

Ignoring the God's Word leaves us walking in the dark; unsure, confused and vulnerable. While Scripture doesn't reveal every step at once, it gives enough light for the next faithful step. **Psalm 119:105** reminds us **105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.**

- Where do you need the light of God's Word right now?

Sadly we are often tempted to ignore God's Word and the call to build our lives upon it. **Hebrews 4:12** teaches us that the Bible isn't passive ink on a page, it is living, active and transforming. **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.** God's Word cuts through our excuses and reveals our hearts. Ignoring it doesn't make its truth any less real, it simply keeps us blind to what God wants to

heal, correct or strengthen. In essence, God's Word exposes what lies beneath the surface (yes there is a dual meaning - what lies beneath the surface in terms of hiding and the lies we tell ourselves).

- How does knowing God's Word sees you fully (your motives, intentions and desires) challenge the tendency to ignore it?

Just as the body cannot live without food, the soul cannot live without Scripture. Jesus reminds us in **Matthew 4:4 - 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.**

- When we ignore God's Word, we starve spiritually; often without even realizing it. What **"empty calories"** do you sometimes try to live on instead of God's Word?

Ignoring God's Word leads to instability, spiritual dryness and vulnerability to influences around us. But Psalm 1:1-3 reminds us that those who meditate on Scripture become rooted, nourished and fruitful. There is even a sense of peace and joy. **1 Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; 2 but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night. 3 They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.**

- How has delighting in Scripture brought stability or nourishment to your life?

Sadly, it is possible (and all too common) to read the Bible yet still ignore what God is saying. **James 1:22-25** warns of the danger of hearing without obeying **22 But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. 23 For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; 24 for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. 25 But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.**

- Is there something God has shown you in His Word that you've been slow to act on?

Ignoring God's Word leaves us unequipped, unprepared and spiritually underdeveloped. Paul reminds Timothy that the Word is not optional, it is essential for growth. **2 Timothy 3:14-17 - 14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, 15 and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 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.**

God doesn't want us to merely glance at Scripture, He invites us to be formed by it.

Pray: Lord, where have I ignored Your Word, and how are You inviting me back into it?

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

- Knowing truth without applying it is self-deception.
- Neglecting Scripture dries up your soul and robs you of spiritual strength.
- Don't prioritize voices over verses
- Avoiding the sharp edges of Scripture leaves you spiritually dull.
- God's word is not simply literature it's life

Here's the Truth:

When you neglect God's Word, your spiritual foundation shifts from solid ground to sinking sand, leaving you vulnerable to confusion, compromise and spiritual drift. Scripture is not merely information, it is God's living truth that transforms, renews and anchors life. Don't settle for a silent faith. Let God speak through His Word, because when He does, everything changes. When you diminish its authority, you disconnect yourself from the source of truth and wisdom. When you engage with it daily, it renews your mind, anchors your soul and aligns your life with God's will.

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Sunday, March 8

...TO REDEMPTION

Chase Comfort Over Calling – Pick What's Easy Instead of What God is Asking of You.

Luke 9:23-25 - 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?

FROM RUIN...

If you want a life that's safe but shallow, start here: **Chase Comfort Over Calling –Pick What's Easy Instead of What God is Asking of You.** Choose the easy path. Avoid challenges. Prioritize security, convenience, pleasure and ease over obedience and growth. Settle for convenience instead of stepping into the purpose God has for you. Ignore God's promptings, tune out the nudges, convictions and the invitations that push you toward your calling. Rationalize why now isn't the right time or why it's easier to wait.

Avoid risk and sacrifice. Tell yourself that following God's calling is too hard, too risky or too uncertain. Let your decisions be guided by temporary satisfaction rather than eternal significance. Choose the path that requires the least resistance, even if it means ignoring your purpose. Expect life to be easy, resist the challenge to grow, serve or impact the world. Believe that if God is with you, everything should be smooth and that any resistance means you're on the wrong path.

When trials come, feel entitled to escape them, not endure them.

What does scripture have to say?

Sometimes we drift toward what feels safe, predictable and comfortable, even when God is calling us to something deeper and more costly. Scripture consistently invites us to trade temporary comfort for purpose, so let's take a moment to explore what God says about choosing His calling over our comfort.

Yep, we're here again, but **Jeremiah 29:11** reminds us that God's plans are rooted in His goodness, not our ease. **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.**

God's calling may stretch us, challenge us or push us into the unknown, but it is rooted in His goodness, not our immediate ease.

- How does knowing God's plans are for your welfare, not your comfort, challenge the way you respond to His call?

Jesus is honest about the cost of discipleship (following Him). In **Matthew 16:24-26** we read, **24 Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?**

Jesus doesn't soften the invitation of what it means to follow Him. It means self-denial, trading earthly security for eternal significance.

- Where might Jesus be asking you to deny yourself to follow Him more fully?

In fact, God's calling often requires a renewed mind. **Romans 12:2** shares this, **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.**

Hearing God's calling clearly requires resisting the pressures, expectations and assumptions of the world around us. God transforms our thinking so we can discern His will, "what is good, acceptable, and perfect."

- What worldly pressures or expectations might you need to stop conforming in order to hear God's calling more clearly?

Let's face it, walking in your calling will always require trust. We often hesitate because we want full clarity, but God invites us to trust Him before we understand the whole plan. But **Proverbs 3:5-6** invites us to trust God before we understand everything, **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.**

- What area of your life needs this kind of trust right now?

In **1 Corinthians 9:24-27** Paul compares our spiritual journey to a race; one that demands focus, self-control and perseverance. **24 Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. 25 Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable garland, but we an imperishable one. 26 So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; 27 but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified.**

In other words, spiritual purpose requires focus. It requires saying "no" to distractions so we can say "yes" to what matters most. We don't run aimlessly; we run with purpose.

- What habits or distractions may be keeping you from running your race with intentionality?

At first glance **Psalm 37:4** may seem like it's about God *giving us* what we want but in reality it's about God *shaping* what we want. **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.**

As we delight in God, our desires shift toward His purpose. Our hearts begin to long for the things He longs for.

- How has God shaped or changed your desires as you have grown in your relationship with Him?

Calling requires pressing forward, not settling into comfort. In fact, take a moment to read **Philippians 3:14 - 14 I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.** The apostle Paul didn't drift toward comfort, he *pressed* toward his calling. Listen, there is effort, movement, pursuit and determination in the life God calls us to.

- Where is God inviting you to "press on" rather than stay comfortable?

Choosing God's calling over comfort is not easy, but it is always worth it. Comfort fades. Calling bears fruit that lasts.

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

- Too many pillows can become uncomfortable.
- Comfort is a trap that steals your potential and leaves you restless.
- Waiting for the "perfect" moment often becomes an excuse to avoid opportunities.
- Let fun, rest and ease dull your soul, define your decisions and steal your purpose.
- God's plan often takes you outside your comfort zone.
- Comfortable disobedience is the fastest route to a wasted life.
- Sure, growth is painful, but if you avoid pain, you can also avoid becoming who God created you to be.

Here's the Truth:

True joy often comes through obedience, not ease. A life built on comfort may feel safe for a while, but it eventually leaves your soul restless and your God given potential untapped. God's calling is worth the cost because it leads to purpose, growth and eternal impact. When you follow Him, even through discomfort, you step into the life you were made for.

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Sunday, March 8 – Bonus Devotional

Avoid Challenges and Play it Safe

1 Peter 1:6-7 - 6 In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, 7 so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

FROM RUIN...

If your goal is to stay spiritually shallow and emotionally fragile, start here: **Avoid Challenges and Play it Safe.** Avoid anything uncomfortable, uncertain or difficult. Let fear make your decisions. Choose comfort over calling. Avoid challenges, pain, hard conversations and anything that requires growth or change. Tell yourself that if God is truly with you, everything should be smooth and easy. Assume that any resistance means you're on the wrong path. Run from anything that stretches you and when trials come, feel entitled to escape them, not to endure them.

Ignore what God wants to develop in you.

...TO REDEMPTION

What does scripture have to say?

Life often tempts us to shy away from difficulty, discomfort or risk. Yet Scripture repeatedly calls us to step out in faith, endure trials and grow spiritually; even when the path is hard. God's Word encourages us with both realism and hope, reminding us that challenges are opportunities for growth and reliance on Him.

In fact, Jesus often points to the reality that following Him would not be easy, but also offers a word of encouragement, to not lose heart.

What words of encouragement or comfort do you find in Jesus' words from **John 16:33? 33 I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!**'

- Where can you find peace in Christ even when the world feels uncertain or challenging?

Understanding that we already have victory in Jesus over any hardship we may face. How do these words from **James 1:1-2** encourage you during this time in your life? **2 My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; 4 and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.** After being reminded of the grace and peace we receive in Jesus, **Romans 5:3** goes on to share a process for spiritual growth, **3 And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.**

- How can you shift your perspective to see trials as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles to avoid?
- What trials or challenges might God be using to strengthen your character or faith even now?

Avoiding challenges may feel safe, but Scripture calls us to face trials with courage, rely on God's strength and trust His plan, knowing that endurance builds character and hope.

Take a moment to read and reflection on **Matthew 16:24-26 - 24 Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for**

my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

- How does following Jesus' call to self-denial reframe your willingness to face challenges?
- In what areas are you tempted to avoid difficulty in order to preserve comfort or control?
- What one thing can you "lose" in order to find life?

According to **Jeremiah 29:11** God has plans for your life, **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.** With that in mind, how does **Philippians 1:6** challenge you to step out in faith? **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.**

- How does knowing that God has a plan and will complete His work encourage you to step forward in faith?

Take these passages about strength and security in God to heart.

Philippians 4:13 - 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

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

Galatians 6:4-5 - 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.

- How does relying on God's strength empower you to face challenges rather than avoid them?
- What fears or insecurities might be keeping you from stepping into the opportunities God has placed before you?
- How can you take responsibility for your own growth and actions, trusting God to guide and strengthen you?

Take a moment to identify one challenge you've been avoiding and consider how God might be calling you to live into it. Pray for endurance, courage and a mindset that sees challenges as opportunities for growth and take that step of faith today, relying on God's strength rather than your own.

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

- A harvest requires work, discipline and often discomfort. Avoid those things and you'll miss the fruit God wants to grow in you.
- Under great pressure a lump of coal becomes a diamond. Without pressure, we fail to become what God intended us to be.
- If fear leads, faith doesn't.
- If you let it, fear will drive your choices, shrink your world and keep you stuck.
- Challenges don't destroy you, they develop you.

Here's the Truth:

The Bible is clear that a fear-driven, comfort-seeking life keeps us from faith, obedience and the fullness of God's purpose. Jesus warned us to expect difficulty, not to discourage us, but to prepare us because growth is often wrapped in discomfort. When we avoid what stretches us, we miss opportunities for God to strengthen our faith, shape our character and reveal His power.

Fear shrinks our world and convinces us to settle for a smaller life than the one we're called to, but courage and obedience open us to be strengthened and used by God. God often uses pressure and challenges to refine us, not to break us and when we resist that refining, we resist the very transformation He intends.

If you want to be formed by God, be willing to step into discomfort. Challenges don't destroy you; they develop you. Avoiding them may feel easier in the moment but it's far more costly in the long run.

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Monday, March 9 – Option A

...TO REDEMPTION

Chase Money Over Mission – Let Your Career Call the Shots Instead of Your Calling.

Hebrews 13:5-6 - 5 Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you.’ 6 So we can say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?’

FROM RUIN...

If you want to derail your purpose, sacrifice your integrity and drain your spirit, start here: **Chase Money Over Mission – Let Your Career Call the Shots Instead of Your Calling.** Define your worth and achievement by your paycheck, bank balance or possessions and let the pursuit of money crowd out family, friends and community. Value transactions over tenderness.

Compromise your values for profit, cut corners, tell half-truths and sacrifice integrity for gain. Let greed blind you to the hurting and ignore how your choices affect others. Prioritize wealth, status or material gain above the calling God has placed on your life.

When money becomes your main goal, your heart grows restless, your values shift and your impact diminishes.

What does scripture have to say?

Focusing on wealth above God’s mission can quietly steal our hearts, misalign our priorities and rob us of the joy and purpose God intends. Scripture repeatedly warns against the “love of money” and calls us to pursue God’s kingdom first. Hebrews 13:5-6 reminds us 5 Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you.’ 6 So we can say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?’

We need to keep in mind that wealth is not evil, but obsession with it can distract us from God’s purposes. True treasure is measured in kingdom impact, not material gain. In fact, Paul links contentment and godliness in 1 Timothy 6:6-8 - 6 Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; 7 for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; 8 but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these.

- What does it mean to combine godliness with contentment?
- In what areas of life do you feel discontent or tempted to chase more than you need?
- How might practicing contentment free your heart to focus on God’s mission rather than accumulation?

Continue reading 1 Timothy 6:9-10 - 9 But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

Once again, notice that money in and of itself is not evil, in fact some wonderful things are done with money that bless countless lives.

- So, what is the warning here?
- What “pains” might come from prioritizing wealth over God’s mission?

- Where have you noticed desires for wealth, comfort or security beginning to distract you from your purpose?

The Parable of the Rich Fool in **Luke 12:15** gives us a lesson perspective, **15 And he said to them, ‘Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.’**

- What do you think Jesus meant by that?

Continue reading **Luke 12:16** and following, **16 Then he told them a parable: ‘The land of a rich man produced abundantly. 17 And he thought to himself, “What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?” 18 Then he said, “I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.” 20 But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” 21 So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.’**

- What was the real issue that the rich man faced?
- What was God’s hope the man would do with what he had?
- In what ways can you become rich toward God?

Jesus shares this in **Matthew 6:19-21** concerning treasures, **19 ‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

- Where is your heart focused? Is it on God or on earthly treasures?
- How might shifting your treasure affect your daily decisions, priorities, and giving?

Pick up again at **Matthew 6:24 - 24 ‘No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.**

- What “masters” are competing for your loyalty today?

Skip to **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.**

- How might seeking God’s kingdom first transform your view of wealth, success, and security?
- How does contentment now play into this?

The reality is that true wealth is measured by faithfulness to God’s mission and generosity, not accumulation. Pursuing money over mission leads to distraction, temptation and spiritual harm. While earthly treasures are temporary; heavenly treasures are eternal and align the heart with God.

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

- If it costs your peace, it’s too expensive.
- Wealth without peace is poverty.
- Chasing money often costs what matters most.
- Peace is the wealth that Heaven gives.
- Chasing money is like running after a piece of paper on a windy day. Just as you think it’s in reach, another gust of wind blows it further away.
- Hungry, Hungry Hippos is a game, not a lifestyle.
- Never pursue transactions over tenderness

Here’s the Truth:

God calls you to seek first His kingdom and righteousness, trusting Him to provide what you need. When mission drives your life, money becomes a tool, not the goal.

Self-Sabotage: From Ruin to Redemption Monday, March 9 – Option B

Waste Your Talents – Bury what God gave you.

1 Peter 4:10 - 10 Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

FROM RUIN...

If you want to sabotage your purpose, stunt your growth and live a life of regret, start here: **Waste Your Talents – Bury What God Gave You**. Fill your days with distractions, entertainment or busyness that don't develop or use your talents. Constantly compare yourself to others and ignore the gifts God has given you. Make excuses for inaction, blame circumstances and convince yourself that you're not good enough, that your talents don't matter or won't make a difference. Be sure to stay safe instead of stretching your skills and avoid challenges. Let fear, insecurity or the pursuit of your own personal comfort keep your abilities dormant.

...TO REDEMPTION

What does scripture have to say?

God has blessed each of us with gifts, skills and opportunities to use them. Scripture calls us not to bury our gifts in fear or inaction but to use them to glorify Him and bless others.

Read Colossians 3:23-24 - 23 Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, 24 since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ.

- What gifts or talents has God given you?
- How would your perspective change if you approached every task as an act of service to God?
- How can your talents bring glory to Him in your everyday life?

Ephesians 5:15-16 challenges us to make the most of our time, 15 Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, 16 making the most of the time, because the days are evil.

- Are you using your time wisely to cultivate and use your gifts?
- How does the urgency of the world around you influence your decisions to act or stay passive?
- What small change could help you use your time and talents more faithfully?

The saying, “Comparison is the thief of joy” is often attributed to Theodore Roosevelt. When we compare ourselves to others, we lose gratitude, peace and contentment. The Bible echoes this principle even if it doesn't use those exact words. In fact, **2 Corinthians 10:12-13** warns us about comparison that can often rob us of what God is offering, “12 We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they do not show good sense. 13 We, however, will not boast beyond limits, but will keep within the field that God has assigned to us, to reach out even as far as you.

When we compare ourselves to others (in terms of gifts and talents) it can often leave us stuck as we focus on limitations rather than God's provision and call on our lives.

- How has comparing yourself to others caused you to overlook, undervalue or bury the specific gifts and opportunities God has entrusted to you?

Don't bury what you have!

In fact, take a look at **Matthew 25:24-27** (Matthew 25:14-30 for the whole context) **24** Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; **25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.**" **26** But his master replied, "You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? **27** Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest.

- What does this parable teach about God's expectations for the gifts and opportunities He gives us?
- What "talents" might you have been burying/ hiding (gifts, skills, opportunities or passions)
- What are some of the "fears" that might be keeping you from stepping out in faith? (fear, doubt or comparison)?
- What small, practical step could you take this week to "invest" that talent for God's purposes instead of hiding it?

God has intentionally placed gifts within each of us, not to be ignored or hidden, but to be developed and used for His purposes. In **1 Timothy 4:14** Paul reminds Timothy that spiritual gifts require intentional practice and devotion so God's work may be becomes visible. **14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. 15 Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress.**

- What gift has God placed in me that I may be neglecting or underusing?
- What practical step can I take to develop and use this gift instead of burying it?

All your talents, abilities and opportunities are gifts from God and are meant to be invested, not hidden. Even small steps of faithful action with your gifts can multiply into significant impact. Don't let fear, doubt or comparison keep you from stepping into what God has called you to do.

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

- Wasting time wastes your God-given potential.
- There's no point in signing up for a talent show if you refuse to use/show your talent.
- Inaction can also pollute the environment.
- Turning your back on opportunities to grow, stunts your growth.

Here's the Truth:

God has uniquely gifted you for a purpose; to glorify Him and to bless others. While neglecting your gifts limits your impact and joy, when you develop and use the talents God has given you, you reflect His creativity and goodness to the world and multiply what God has given.

Using your gifts isn't about seeking recognition; it's about serving God with excellence and joy. When you offer your abilities back to God, He uses them to impact others in meaningful ways and fills your heart with joy in the process.

When you neglect your God-given talents, you just don't miss out on personal growth, you also miss the chance to bless others and fulfill the unique calling God designed for you.