

Finding Freedom - Devotional

Week 3 - #1

Today, you will practice recognizing issues that need to be prayed through using a Bible story. This is similar to the exercise we did in class regarding the story of Samuel's mom, Hannah. Your job is to become a C.S.I. and identify the ways that Saul missed the mark. Only in this case, you aren't a crime scene investigator, but Christ's Special Investigator!

Grab your Bible and turn to 1 Samuel 18:1-13. As you read this story, pay particular attention to the thoughts, feelings, and actions of Saul after he gets offended. Read the passage now.

Back in Week 1, during the first teaching, I shared how for every **event** happening in our lives, we come to **conclusions** based on our beliefs. These conclusions drive our **feelings**, which often in turn dictate our **actions**. The first question to answer is, "What is the event in this story that triggered Saul's reaction?"

Event: _____

Hint: You should have found it in verse 7

I'm going to have you do things a little out of order from here. So, instead of trying to identify the conclusions and beliefs, which got Saul into this relational mess with David, you're going to focus on identifying his feelings and actions. Reread the story, starting in verse 7, and write down the exact words and corresponding verse numbers which describe how Saul was feeling and acting after he was offended.

Feelings: _____

Actions: _____

As I've said, identifying conclusions and beliefs which get us off track can be a little tricky to identify. In this story, I want you to focus on verse 8 and ask yourself, "What are the conclusions Saul came to about himself and David which led to his bad behavior?"

Conclusions: _____

While your words might be a little different, I'll propose that Saul has come to conclude: 1) the people don't respect him and 2) David wants his kingdom. In regards to the first conclusion, Saul has likely associated the value of respect with the fact that David is credited with killing more people than him. The second conclusion is simply a fear based thought which Saul doesn't know to be true.

What do you think might be the belief that is driving Saul, which could generate the first conclusion above? Fill in the blank: People respect _____ men.

Of course at this point we are speculating, but it's good to put yourself in Saul's shoes and get in touch with how he might be thinking. This is just one other way to begin to recognize the ways you think. I'd guess words like manly, strong, or brave might be the words that could fill in blank above!

Look at the second conclusion I suggested above. Why do you think it would be such a big deal for Saul to lose his kingdom? _____

A likely answer is that Saul's identity is tied up in his position as king. The lie could be "I'm significant because I'm the king". Like you and I, Saul was significant because he is a child of The King! Losing a title or position shouldn't lower your perceived worth.

Take a look back at what you have learned today from Saul. Is there anything that you can relate to that you need to pray through? If so, great! Go find a little more freedom today!

Finding Freedom - Devotional

Week 3 - #2

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

Read the above scripture out loud. Take a moment to sit with the Holy Spirit and just reflect upon the words in this passage. What is God saying to you? _____

The great Bible teacher Beth Moore shares that two pillars of our faith are simply “God is who He says He is and God can do what He says He can do”. In case you are wondering, she does have a few more pillars, but these are the ones I want to focus on today. As I talked about in last week’s teaching on fear, often times in life you will find yourself standing in either faith or fear. There is no middle ground. Often times, when we find ourselves gripped by fear, we are not standing firmly on one of these two pillars of faith.

There are two different ways to identify areas in your life where you are not trusting God. One way is to identify an area of your life that you are anxious about. You may not necessarily feel like you are gripped by fear. You might just find yourself concerned and thinking about this area of your life a lot. The other way to identify an area of your life where you are not trusting God, is to look for the area of your life that you are trying the hardest to control. Remember, control is just the coping mechanism for fear. Ask the Holy Spirit right now to help you get in touch with an area of your life where you are not trusting God. _____

If you recall, on Saturday, I shared how fear is always empowered by unbelief, a.k.a. lies! To begin breaking the grip of fear, you simply need the revelation of what lie, or lies, you are believing. In this case, the question to ask is: **Holy Spirit, reveal to me the lie(s) that I have believed about God that empowers this fear.** _____

Before you jump into renouncing these lies, I want you to do one more thing. Ask God to show you if there was a situation or circumstance that occurred in your past which specifically empowered this lie. This situation would be an “entry point” that I talked about towards the end of the teaching. There may or may not be any specific entry points, but it’s always a good question to ask. If God reveals an entry point, capture it here. _____

Now you are ready to pray! However, after you are done **confessing, renouncing, forgiving,** and **rebuking**, I want you to pause and ask God to reveal His Truth to you about Him and this area of your life. Wrap up that prayer time with some hearty **declarations of the truth** of who He is, what He can do, and whatever else He reveals to you about your situation!

Finding Freedom - Devotional

Week 3 - #3

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

Do you find that your mind seems to effortlessly drift towards imagining the worst possible outcomes when challenges arise? When something bad starts to happen, are you convinced it will just go from bad to worse? These are signs that your hope has been stolen by fear!

When I'm talking with a person who I believe may be dealing with fear, a key question I will almost always ask is: What's the bad picture in your mind? The reality is that fear paints bad, negative, hopeless, pessimistic pictures of the future on the canvas of your mind. Without a "check up from the neck up", the fear based picture will become your reality and the lies which feed the fear become your truth.

Have you ever put your hope in God and then felt that He let you down? It could be someone or something you prayed for that didn't come to pass. Ask the Holy Spirit if there is a place in your heart where you believe God let you down. If He doesn't show you anything, try this question: Holy Spirit, show me an area of my life where I have lost hope. _____

Re-read Hebrew 11:1 at the top of the page. When fear has stolen your hope, you likely have a fear based conviction of things not seen. This is why identifying and renouncing the lies which are eroding your hope and faith is so critical, especially lies that directly undermine the Truth of who God says He is or what He says in His word that He can do. What are the lies that are empowering your hopeless perspective of God or the situation you identified above?

One of the challenging aspects of contending with fear based thoughts of God or the future is that, often times, there is enough evidence to support the conclusion that your fears might come true. You are in a faith fight! You and I need to contend to believe His Truth over our understanding. Romans 4:17b in the New King James version reads, "**God, who gives life to the dead and call those things which do not exist as though they did**". Meditate for a few moments on this verse. Write down what you feel God is saying to you regarding this verse.

To have the "assurance of things hoped for", we need to hear the Truth. This is why Romans 10:17 says, "**So faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ**". Sometimes it's difficult to hear and really receive God's Truth until we begin to contend against the lies which are holding our thoughts captive. Right now, begin to confess and renounce the lies you have been believing regarding God or your hopeless situation. Once you are done, ask the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart the Truth(s) you need to declare. When you are done declaring, write down the Truths God spoke to your heart so you will have a written record of that word from God to you! _____

I encourage you to meditate on and declare these words God spoke to you until you feel you really "own" them. Remember, fear has a voice. The voice of your faith must be stronger!

Finding Freedom - Devotional

Week 3 - #4

At the start of last Saturdays teaching I gave you an acronym for fear. Write it down here.

F _____ E _____ A _____ R _____

The future is truly unknown to us, but fear will consistently cast negative images and a truckload of anxiety into our lives. Sometimes, you can start to beat fear by merely calling it's bluff. What I mean is, often times, we haven't taken the time to rationally think through the situation we are in by asking the questions: **Why? And then what?**

Let's say I've been working on an important project at work and I have a presentation the next morning to all the managers on the outcome of the project. In the afternoon, I email out to all the managers a copy of the presentation to review before the meeting. After leaving work, I realize I emailed an early draft of my presentation, not the final version. What the managers have received is full of mistakes. Before I can do anything, my blood pressure has spiked into the clouds and, I'm so freaked out, I can hardly think. How could I make such a huge mistake? In this moment, fear is having a hay-day with me!

Calling fear's bluff can help clarify the potentially bad things that you believe could happen as a result of the situation. Along the way, you may discover a few things. Let's play this one out.

My pulse quickens as I think about walking into the office the next morning. I ask myself: **Why?** "The managers are all going to think I don't have my act together." **And then what?** "They'll lose confidence in and respect for me." **And then what?** "I'll get a bad performance review." **And then what?** "I'll get fired." **And then what?** "I won't be able to pay my rent." **And then what?** "I'll have to move in with my Mom & Dad." **And then what?** "I'll have to look for another job." **And then what?** "God will provide me a job, because He's my provider!"

First off, by answering these questions you may realize that your fear based line of logic is totally false. For example, I might get to the third **And then what?** and come to my senses. "Wait.. I'm not going to get fired over this mistake. That's ridiculous thinking! I'll send the managers the final version of the presentation first thing in the morning and everything will be fine!" Sometimes, by countering the false evidence with a factual perspective you can start to break fear's grip. I'm not saying you shouldn't pray through the situation at this point, but you should find the anxiety levels quickly dropping as fear faces facts.

The other great thing to discover is what happens when fear meets faith. It all comes to an end! When the false evidence runs head long into the Truth of who God is and what He can do, fear quickly begins to lose all grip on your soul. This is why it's so important to consistently be drawing near to God and hiding His word in your heart. It's only when you know the Truth that the Truth can set you free from fear! Peace will quickly begin to invade your soul when fear faces faith!

That's what calling fear's bluff is all about. Just two simple questions, **Why? And then what?** So, where in your life has there been some anxious thoughts? Ask the Holy Spirit right now to help you call fear's bluff. Jot down the answers to the two simple questions and then take the time to pray it through! **Why?** _____

AND then what? _____