

1 Learned Optimism II: overcoming unbelief

2 Review

- In last week's sermon, we discussed how difficult it is to be optimistic during times of "setbacks."
- Instead of being confident and positive, we often become hopeless, discouraged, and depressed.
- Not looking to our strengths, or the desire of others or even God to help us, we fall into state of "learned pessimism" where we take the roll of a victim instead of a victor.
- So every time a new setback occurs, we quickly become unhappy, start complaining, give into anger, and are hard to live with.
- Thus we often take a problem that is temporal and manageable and make it into a greater problem or real disaster.

3 Example

4 Setbacks

- Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials [setbacks] of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (James 1:2-4 NIV)
- In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials [setbacks]. These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Peter 1:6-7 NIV)

5 Cause

- In order for us to be pessimistic, we have to lose faith in three critical people.
 - Ourselves (Lack of gifts, talents, or abilities)
 - Others (No one cares or wants to help)
 - God (Doesn't care or is not interested because we're not perfect)
- So when we give into hopelessness, it is a faith statement of how we feel about ourselves and others.

6 Questions

- So, when our car breaks down and we get upset and start complaining because our finances are low, what might we be communicating?
- When we hear rumors at work that there might be layoffs and we can't sleep at night because we are very worried, what might that say about our faith.
- Your boss has asked you to give a verbal report at work in front of many people and you call in sick, what does this say about what you believe?

7 Our Faith

- So if pessimism and hopelessness are indications of our faith, then what should we do?
 - We may need to start valuing ourselves for the potential and contribution we have to give.
 - We may also need to see the value of other people around us. They may be honored to help us, if we only ask.
 - We may need to renew our mind with the acts of God and how he has helped people not only in the Bible, but in our day as well.

8 Value Ourselves

- Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26-27 NIV)
- [W]hat is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings [angles] and crowned him with glory and honor. (Psalms 8:4-5 NIV)
- I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalms 139:14 NIV)
- I can do everything through him who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:13 NIV)

9 Value Ourselves

- For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. (Romans 12:3 NIV)
- When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise. (2 Corinthians 10:12 NIV)
- So then how do we measure success and worth?
- Being faithful to the to the graces, abilities, and opportunities God has given us.

10 Value Others

- Who are the others around us?
- Parents, spouse, children, relatives, friends, neighbors, work associates, the body of Christ, and many more.
- They can all help us with the following:
 - Help uncover our gifts, virtues, and talents.
 - Provide help (tangible or intangible) in times of need.

- Provide helpful criticism and feedback – As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another (Proverbs 27:17 NIV)
- Outlet for our own ministry and faith.

11 Value God

- The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. . . . Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (Psalms 23:1, 6 NIV)
- I lift up my eyes to the hills — where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip — he who watches over you will not slumber; (Psalms 121:1–3 NIV)
- God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. (Psalms 46:1 NIV)
- Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. . . . surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18, 20 NIV)

12 Value God

- But you are a shield around me, O LORD; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head. (Psalms 3:3 NIV)
- The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. (Psalms 18:2 NIV)
- The LORD is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life — of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalms 27:1 NIV)
- For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. (Psalms 84:11 NIV)
- For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11 NIV)

13 Value God

- When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. (Isaiah 43:2 NIV)
- You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, (Psalms 10:17 NIV)
- The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights. (Habakkuk 3:19 NIV)

- No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-39 NIV)

14 Setbacks

- Trouble and setbacks are not uncommon.
 - A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all; (Psalms 34:19 NIV)
- While some of these setbacks can be very awful and life changing, God is able to restore everything.
 - Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up. (Psalms 71:20 NIV)

15 David

- When Saul was trying to kill David, David aligned himself with the Philistines.
- But the Philistines didn't trust David when they went to war with Saul, so they sent him back to Ziklag.
- When David and his men came to Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep. (1 Samuel 30:3-4 NIV)

16 David

- David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. (1 Samuel 30:6 NIV)
- But David found strength in the LORD his God. (1 Samuel 30:6 NIV)
- Then he sought the Lord and the Lord said, "Pursue them," . . . "You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue." (1 Samuel 30:8 NIV)

17 David

- David fought them from dusk until the evening of the next day, and none of them got away.
- David recovered everything the Amalekites had taken, including his two wives. Nothing was missing (1 Samuel 30:17-19 NIV)

18 David

- What was David's initial response from the setback at Ziklag.
- What happened with David's men and what did they want to do with David?
- What did David then do?

- What was the result?

19 A Bad Report

- That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, “If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn’t it be better for us to go back to Egypt?” And they said to each other, “We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.” (Numbers 14:1–4 NIV)
- And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them. (Numbers 14:9 NIV)
- But the whole assembly talked about stoning them. (Numbers 14:10 NIV)
- And do not grumble, as some of them did — and were killed by the destroying angel. (1 Corinthians 10:10 NIV)

20 Heros of Faith

- Hebrews 11 – Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and others . . . [see Heb. 11:32–40]
- Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1–3 NIV)
- Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. “Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. (Hebrews 12:12–13 NIV)

21 Summary

- God has created us to “rule” over our earth.
- He has placed a multitude of people around us to help and encourage us.
- The LORD is my shepherd . . .
 - What can mortal man do to me? (Psalms 56:4 NIV)
 - In God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? (Psalms 56:11 NIV)
 - The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? (Psalms 118:6 NIV)
- So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” (Hebrews 13:6 NIV)

