

In our readings this week, we have focused on the idea that all of us stand in need of direction, strength and grace. Psalm 103 reminds us that we are each blessed by the fact that God stands ready to share these gifts. Verse 14 also calls to our attention that God is aware of our need because “he knows how we are formed, he remembers we are dust.”

God knows our imperfections and flaws. Romans 3:23 says, “. . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Have you accepted the notion that you have “fallen short” and stand in need of God’s grace? If so, how has that acceptance changed your life and your relationship with God?

Take a moment to read verse 11 again and reflect on this simple truth today. “God knows everything about me and loves me completely.”

GPS for Families

GrowPrayStudy.org/family

Guardrails are in place to keep us on the road, out of danger and ultimately to guide us to the place we want to go. Setting boundaries for our kids also fits this description. We want to keep them from harm, give them room to make decisions and self-corrections, but ultimately we have a place we want them to go. As Christian parents, that place is a life where they will love God, love others and serve like Jesus. To get there, we have to be clear about the end destination and willing to make adjustments in the boundaries along the way.

In Child Development this is called self-regulation. The idea is that from infancy to adulthood, we expect children to learn to self-regulate their actions, thoughts and words. When they are newborns, we do most of the regulating for them. We decide, based on their cries, our schedule, our mood, etc. when we will change them and feed them. Over time, we slowly lessen our regulation of them, they begin to partner with us and then eventually take over.

This seems somewhat instinctive, but when we keep this concept in mind and set boundaries based on this idea, it helps us widen the “road” for them when they are ready and tighten it back up when the boundaries are too large. And when it seems hard to put those guardrails in place, remember your goal is to lead them on the road to follow Christ.



MESSAGE “Proceed with Caution”

SCRIPTURE Ephesians 5:15-18

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Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon:

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PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Holy and loving God, we confess that we sometimes live with more faith in ourselves than we place in you. The assumptions that we make about our own strength sometimes lead us to take risks that we should not take and live in ways that we should not live. Forgive us for our prideful and rebellious ways, and teach us that healthy boundaries not only protect us from destruction but direct us in the way that leads to life. AMEN.

Being a prophet can be a thankless job because it often requires you to say what no one wants to hear. Isaiah certainly understood this as he worked to call Israel to repent of their wicked ways and unrighteous thoughts. Love of God and love of neighbor had dwindled. The prophets came to expose this unfortunate reality.

In verse 8, what does Isaiah say about the reason why we must “turn to the Lord” for mercy and pardon? How have you found this to be true in your own life? What practices and disciplines help you align yourself with God’s thoughts and God’s ways?

In verse 11, Isaiah offers a particular “prescription” to bring healing from the sickness of our sin. What is it? How would you describe the impact that your current focus on God’s word is having on your daily living?

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John the Baptist plays a key role in each of the four gospels. The Gospel of Mark describes him by saying that John was “. . . a voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’” When John first caught a glimpse of Jesus, he exclaimed, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” After baptizing Jesus, John understood that his work was drawing to a close. John’s disciples were slow to understand that “the one John testified about” was the long-awaited Messiah.

John says to his disciples, “He must become greater; I must become less.” If you were to apply this truth to your own life, what would that look like?

In what areas does Christ need to become greater? In what ways do you need to become less?

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Paul’s thorn in II Corinthians 12 is one of the great mysteries of the Bible. Paul never specifies the condition that he refers to here as “his thorn.” Scholars have long speculated as to what that might have been, but the true answer remains unknown. Whatever it was, Paul says that in the course of time, he learned that God was perfectly fine to leave Paul weak so that God’s strength might be revealed.

In his book “Sacred Marriage,” Gary Thomas writes that often what leads to discontent within marriage is when individuals find themselves “running from their revealed weaknesses.” Have you ever found yourself “running from your revealed weakness”? What would it look like to instead embrace your weakness so that “Christ’s power may rest” on you?

What do you think Paul means when he says we should “delight in weakness”?

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Yesterday we looked at Paul’s words in II Corinthians where he talks about his “thorn.” Paul said that he prayed for God to remove his weakness, but that God allowed it to remain so that Paul could understand that “God’s power is made perfect in weakness.” It is sometimes hard to admit that we are imperfect and flawed people. Even more difficult at times is to show the same grace that we receive from God with the other imperfect and flawed people who surround us every single day.

In verse 12, how does Paul address the recipients of these instructions? How does an appropriate understanding of our identity help us live according to the instructions that follow in verse 13 and 14?

Grace assumes imperfection. In our relationships with others, we should as well. How does compassion, kindness, gentleness and patience help us in setting realistic expectations of others?

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