

LIMITATIONS

We are often so very aware of our limitations. Could our limitations be valuable gifts from God?

KEY POINTS

- ❖ We all have limitations – things that get in the way of what we wish we could do. What would you do if you had no limitations? Go ahead, tell someone: “If I had no limitations I would...”
- ❖ Now, do you think this lesson will assure you that really, you have no limitations? Or that the only limitations you have are the ones in your mind?
- ❖ Actually, the truth is that we do have limitations.
- ❖ What are yours – money, health, height, weight, location, connections, education, talent, time?
- ❖ In 2 Corinthians 12, the apostle Paul told of an amazing experience, being “caught up into the third heaven” and seeing things he couldn’t mention. Then he told of something very different: something he described as a “thorn in the flesh” – “a messenger of Satan” sent to beat him up.
- ❖ Paul pleaded three times for God to remove this problem—this infirmity—from his life. And God did not deliver him. God did not answer his prayer – at least not in the way Paul wanted. Not because God couldn’t, but because He chose not to.
- ❖ He told Paul that this was actually a good thing, because the power of God would become more complete in Paul as a result of his suffering and weakness. The evidence of the power of God in Paul’s life would become more and more unlimited as he experienced more and more of this aggravating and painful limitation.
- ❖ If that’s really true, then how should we feel about the limitations in our lives? You have kids. You live in this big expensive city of Toronto. You have to go in for dialysis once a week. Or you’ve been diabetic for ten years. Those seem like definite limitations.
- ❖ Why would God let these things happen to you? If God only gives good gifts to His children, how come you’re having to face the problems and limitations that you’re dealing with?
- ❖ In Paul’s case, once he committed his life to Christ he went from a life of power and privilege to one of problems, setbacks, danger and financial need. (See 2 Corinthians 11:24-28.)
- ❖ But that’s only part of the story. He also had amazing achievements, miracles and success in bringing the gospel to people across the then-known world. And over the centuries since his journey on earth ended, he has influenced millions of people around the world.
- ❖ So don’t be anxious when a limitation you face is putting an end to your life as you know it.

KEY SCRIPTURES: 2 Corinthians 12:1-10;
 1 Peter 4:1-2., 7-8, 12-16, 5:6-11;
 Philippians 2:14-16, 4:4-8

- ❖ It’s not really the end. It’s the labour pains of a new beginning – the “new you” trying to come forth out of the place where you are now. Trying to transcend current attitudes, beliefs, fears and failings. Pushing its way through the passage of sufferings and limitations is the new you, trying to rise to walk in newness of life.
- ❖ Paul ended his account by saying, “Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Cor. 12:9b-10).”
- ❖ So what is the limitation you wish would go away right now and disappear forever? Could it be that this limitation is in fact a gift from God to you?
- ❖ The apostle Peter gave us really good counsel about all of this in 1 Peter 4:1-2, 7-8 and 12-16: “Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God (4:1-2).”
- ❖ There is a way for us to be, for us to feel, for us to act, as we try to deal with the limitations that life brings our way. That God brings our way. Or that God allows into our way. (Read Philippians 2:14-16, 4:4-8.)
- ❖ Let’s thank God for the gifts He has given to us, wrapped up in limitations.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1. What instructions does the Word of God give us for dealing with adversity and limitations? Discuss, beginning with the “Key Scriptures” above and following up with other scriptures that have helped you/others in the past.
2. What is the root cause of anxiety/fear when we face uncomfortable situations? Discuss.
3. Share with the group limitations hindering you (as you feel is appropriate). Thank God and pray for one another, using scriptural and other examples of people who have overcome.

Prayer Time

Lord, help me to embrace my weaknesses and use them to demonstrate Your strength.
 In Jesus’ name, amen.

WEEK OF SUNDAY, MAY 19, 2019

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week’s message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

- ✓ (Reminds me/Confirms) 💡 (New idea) 🧠 (Think about)
- 👉 (Do this) ❤️ (Speaks to my heart) ↺ (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS

Start-up: What task you are required to do at work (or home, church, etc.) do you find the most difficult and/or least enjoyable?

Go deeper with your Life Group family.
CONNECT-REFLECT-DISSECT THE WORD
Your Life Group ~ Your Lifeline