

Strengthen Yourself In The Lord: Points to Ponder

Week 6

Hi friends, here are some points to meditate on this coming week. Please don't rush through them. Partner with Holy Spirit as you honestly answer each question. Maybe consider only answering 1 or 2 questions a day. This is where non-judgemental self-awareness is crucial. To be honest with yourself and God about what your thoughts, feelings and beliefs really are, is an incredibly empowering step to becoming the strong, courageous, powerful, loving and free person you were designed to be:

1. This week we looked at how controlling our environment and those we connect with, can influence our faith. Jesus said in Mark 4:24, "Consider carefully what you hear. With the measure you use, it will be measured to you – and even more". Whatever we listen to, we allow to gain our attention and focus, which in turn influences our beliefs and values. We need to control our environment, because it will influence our faith.

The reality is, the standard we set for our ears determines our ability to strengthen ourselves, because strengthening ourselves ***begins with our choice to listen to God's voice more than any other...*** Every tool in our arsenal is designed to help us draw from the strength made available by hearing His voice. Listening is what enables us to establish agreement with Him through obeying His voice, and our agreement is what releases heavenly power into our lives and circumstances. Therefore, by purposefully associating with people who share our values, and controlling our interactions with those who don't, helps us strengthen ourselves.

Ask Holy Spirit to speak to you about how well you control your environment. How purposeful are you about associating with people who share your values? How intentional are you about controlling your interactions with those who do not?

2. Consider the covenant relationships you have... Who are the people in your close friendship/family/work circles whose lives consistently display the fruit of the Kingdom? Who are the people of faith in your life who exude hope, promise and joy? Who are the friends that remind you of your purpose and identity, who make you feel connected to a growing source of strength that improves your ability to persevere in difficult times? List them by name. Do you possibly need to consider increasing this circle of friendships?

3. Again, consider the close relationships that you have in your life - family, friends and work colleagues. Think about how these people in your environment speak about our country, other people, the future. Think about which of these people tend often to speak from a place of negativity or unbelief, and can potentially have a seriously negative influence on your spirit? Who are the critical, negative, unbelieving complainers in your life? How much access do you give them to your life? What do you feel Holy Spirit is telling you about how to manage these relationships into the future? Remember, we are the only ones responsible to keep our hearts free from doubt and judgement, and we alone can recognise when we are vulnerable to the influences of people who agree with these negative spirits.

4. Do you regularly find a place of solitude as a means to be restored? If not, what steps can you take to regularly do so? Remember to come apart to rest at times, with friends and family, and connect with those who spread laughter and joy to your spirit.

5. People's needs can exert tremendous pressure on us, and that pressure could make us care more about meeting the expectations of others, than doing only what Jesus wants us to do. Bill Johnson says that those who easily overextend themselves on behalf of ministry, are most often people who

struggle with intimacy – both with God and others. The need to feel connected and loved can set these people up for burnout or compromise. Do you feel like you often overextend yourself to help others? If you did an honest self-evaluation, how much are you led by the needs of people, rather than by what God would call you to do? Do you sometimes feel on the verge of burnout with all the demands needy people place on you? What do you feel Holy Spirit wants to tell you about in this regard?

6. There are 3 distractions we must learn to overcome to stay on track with our destiny. They are 1) Distractions from the devil – he plays on our old fears and addictions to get us to sin. But as our minds are transformed and we learn to hunger and thirst for God, those temptations don't hold much interest anymore. 2) Distractions from ourselves – our old, limited ways of thinking can keep us from perceiving and responding to what God is trying to teach us. 3) Often one of the most difficult distractions to avoid are distractions from God-things, eg the blessings, the favour, the prosperity, the miracles, and all the amazing gifts that He pours into our lives, that become more important to us than the Giver and Friend, God Himself. Give some prayerful thought to whether or not any of the above are distractions that you need to overcome.
