

New Vision

God Is Strength • God is strength • Isaiah 40:27-31 • 6.17.18

Main Point

God renews our strength.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

When was the last time that you were completely exhausted? What made you so tired?

Would you rather sleep more or do more? What does this preference teach you about your personality?

Becoming tired is evidence that we are limited. Our work exhausts us, and life stresses us out because we live in a fallen and broken world. In a sense, it is good for us to realize our limits. Coming to grips with our limits should push us to see the God who loves to give us rest and empower us. When we are tired and weary, we can lean on God, who is inexhaustible. He renews our strength.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have a volunteer read Isaiah 40:27-31.

In context, these verses are about a people who have no strength and are wondering where God is in their struggles. When have you wondered where God is? What situations in life bring these questions up in your heart and mind?

Why do we so often forget who God is? Practically, what is going on in our hearts that leads us to forget?

If the Old Testament teaches us anything, it is that we are a forgetful people. We are not fundamentally different from the idol worshipers that were taken into exile in Isaiah's time. We, too, forget God and chase after other gods that cannot satisfy or save us. Being so consumed with our own lives, we forget about God and walk into disbelief. When that happens, it seems like our troubles are bigger than God, which is never the case. Isaiah called a forgetful and anxious people to stop and remember their God who is their strength.

The word “weary” (v. 28) means to be overcome by circumstances. Which of your circumstances in life produce that “weary” feeling in you?

Where do you turn when you are weary? Read 2 Corinthians 12:9. What are our limits designed to teach us? Has this lesson been a difficult one for you to learn? Why or why not?

How does the grace that we receive change in measure to the difficulties that we face? Share experiences of when God’s grace has been enough for you despite any circumstance pressing in on you.

Why is it good to be open about these struggles? How might being open about these experiences give you a chance to share about the hope you have placed in God?

Weakness is good for us because it teaches us that we are not God. Weakness shows us the depth of our need. Admitting that we are weak and need help places us in a position to get and receive strength from Jesus Christ, whose power is made perfect in our weakness. As we struggle, His grace to us is stronger. When we are open about these struggles both with believers and non-believers, it gives us the ability to show the internal work of Christ bearing fruit in our lives.

Our tendency when we are weary is to figure everything out on our own, yet Isaiah said the key to overcoming our weariness is waiting on the Lord. What does it look like for you to wait on the Lord?

Read John 15:5, focusing on the last phrase. What in your life causes you to think that you do not need God? What can you do to partner with God so that you remain aware of your need for Him?

Most of us do not like waiting. In a completely automated society, we rarely have to wait on anything. We have all the information we could ever need. We can contact people at any time and have them respond immediately. The Lord wants to meet our needs, but often we are expecting Him to compete with our devices and our ingenuity. God has no desire to enter that competition—nor is He required to. Instead, He wants us to remember that we can do nothing without Him. When we feel this deep need for Him, we are building our faith and renewing our strength.

The irony of strengthening ourselves in the Lord is that we don’t have to do anything at all. What did he mean by this? Why do we so often make our faith about something we do instead of something we are becoming?

How does a faith that is focused primarily on doing actually lead to weariness?

The word “renew” (v. 31) is about a change, or an exchange of our strength for the Lord’s. Why is the cross the ultimate cure for our weariness?

Americans are doers. We are taught that with enough hard work, we can overcome anything. We make the mistake of applying this logic to our faith, but it doesn't work there. The way to receive strength from the Lord is to rest in Him and trust in His Word, not do so much that God will have to take notice. Christian faith is about what has been done for us on the cross, not what we can do to overcome our own problems. The truth is, our problems are simply too great to overcome. We need to daily turn our attention to the cross and be renewed by the work that Jesus has already done for us.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What makes it hard for you to turn to God and receive His strength?

What role do we play in one another's lives to help each other remember who Jesus is and what He has done to give us His strength?

Who do you know that is just burned out and weary? What can you do to come beside them and support them?

Pray

Praise God for being our source of strength when we have none. Pray that we would look to Him for renewal because He is the only source. Ask that He would give you rest for your soul, and that you would find strength and provision in His amazing and sufficient grace.

Commentary

| Isaiah 40:27-31

The prophet addressed Judah with a series of questions that showed them the weakness of their faith and the ridiculous nature of their complaints—complaints which he himself had shared (v. 6). The Creator who knew the names of all the stars certainly knew the problems of his own chosen people. He would certainly give strength to his people even in a time so trying that the youngest and strongest warriors were totally exhausted. Winning international conflicts by political and military means led to total exhaustion and the need to fight again. Escape from exhaustion comes only from God.

Those who place their hope in the Lord find new strength they did not know they had. They will be able to soar like eagles to new heights of achievement. They will be able to run the race and have energy left to run again. They can walk through the toughest situations without giving up or fainting. This was the comfort the

Creator conceived for his confused and concerned creatures. The way was opening for Israel to run home to her fatherland and to her Father. God would build the highway, lead the way, and give strength to endure on the way.

Colossians 1:15-20

1:15-23 These verses are a poem or possibly a hymn expressing Christ's supremacy as Creator and Redeemer. Paul's high Christology countered the false teaching that had infiltrated the Colossian church.

1:15 The word image refers to an exact visible representation of something or someone. Thus, Jesus the Son represented the invisible God of the OT (Jn 1:18). Jesus also represented sinless humanity (Gen 1:26-27). The title firstborn does not mean that Jesus was created (v. 16), but indicates His priority of rank as supreme over all the created order.

1:16 Christ is supreme over creation because He is the Creator. He is the one who created everything. Paul's mention of thrones... dominions... rulers, and authorities may refer to four classes of angelic beings (possibly directing human affairs). This may be a corrective against the false teaching promoting the worship of angels (2:18). Thus Paul asserted the supremacy of Christ over all creation because all things were created through Him and for Him.

1:17 All things refers to everything created (v. 16). The preposition before most likely is a temporal reference to the preexistence of Christ before creation. The phrase by Him all things hold together presents Christ as the one who sustains all creation.

1:18 Paul used the word head in both a literal and metaphorical sense (2:10,19). Literally, "head" implies authority, rule, and supreme rank. Metaphorically, it plays on the imagery of Christ's relationship to the church as head of the body (1Co 12:12-27; Eph 1:22; 4:15; 5:23). He is the head because He is the beginning and the firstborn from the dead. The parallel language to the creation (v. 15) identifies the church as part of the new creation that was inaugurated with the resurrection of Christ. His resurrection resulted in the fulfillment of God's purpose for Christ that He might come to have first place in everything.

1:19-20 God was pleased that His fullness, the entirety of God's being, would dwell in the Son. Thus Jesus was fully divine as well as fully human. God took pleasure in this because, through Christ, God would reconcile (reestablish a right relationship) all things to Himself on the cross (cp. Rm 5:11; 2Co 5:19).