

REDLINED • Week 4: Control

Daily Briefing • Day 4 of 5 • Your Section of the Wall

WEEKLY MEMORY VERSE

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Proverbs 3:5–6

This is the fourth briefing of the week. You can watch or listen to the sermon at 1mso.church or on the One Missoula app.

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, help me to stop making excuses for the difference between my situation and someone else's. Help me to stop looking left and right to measure what other people have that I lack, and instead get to work being faithful with the time, money, abilities, relationships, and resources You have made available to me today. Make it clear to me if there is a situation You want me to change, but until then, work through me right where I am. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

TODAY'S TEACHING

Sunday asked four questions, and the last one was about scope. Are you trying to manage things God never handed you? Today takes that question one step further. Once you stop looking sideways at everybody else's assignment, you are left standing in front of your own, and the point of today is simple. God put you where you are on purpose, and He expects faithfulness there instead of somewhere else.

Here is what this looks like in ordinary life. You look left and right at people with more money, better schooling, a healthier family of origin, and a better job, and then you say a sentence that sounds almost humble. "If I had what they have, I could really do something for God." So you wait. You postpone obedience until the conditions improve, but the conditions never improve enough, because the sentence was never about conditions. It was about comparison.

Think about how God actually spreads His people out. He has them in expensive neighborhoods and cheap ones, in trade schools and graduate programs, in restaurants and hospitals and cubicles and on job sites. That is not an accident of history; that is strategy. People generally listen to people who live the way they live. Wealthy people do not take much instruction from poor people, and poor people do not take much instruction from wealthy people. The man fighting a drinking problem is rarely reached by someone who has never once wanted a drink. So God does not stack all of His people at the top of the ladder. He puts them everywhere, which means the position you see as a barrier is the exact position that gives you a hearing nobody else has.

The first passage is a short scene at the end of John's Gospel. Jesus has been crucified and raised, and He is eating breakfast on a beach with His disciples. He pulls Peter aside, restores him after Peter had denied knowing Him three times, and then tells him plainly that following Him will eventually cost him his life. What Peter does next is the part to watch.

READ & MEDITATE

John 21:21–22

When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" ²² Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!"

REFLECT

Reminder: honest introspection and Scripture-informed self-assessment are far more beneficial than self-delusion and wishful thinking.

Peter has just been told what obedience is going to cost him, and the first thing he does is look over at another disciple.

Jesus does not answer Peter's question. What does He do with it instead?

He refuses the comparison and sends Peter back to his own assignment. John's future was real, and it mattered, but it was never Peter's to carry.

Fill in the blank from John 21:22:

"If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You _____ me!"*

**These fill-in-the-blank questions use the ESV text. Your Bible may use different words for the same idea.*

The last three words carry the whole correction. Peter was told to stop looking sideways and start looking forward.

Today's second passage needs a little background. Nehemiah is an Old Testament book about rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem. The city had been destroyed, the wall had been rubble for about a hundred and forty years, and the people living there had no protection at all. Nehemiah organizes the whole city to rebuild it. Chapter three is the work log, and it reads like a list of names, which is why most people skim it. Watch the division of labor that repeats.

Nehemiah 3:28–30

Above the Horse Gate the priests repaired, each one opposite his own house. ²⁹ After them Zadok the son of Immer repaired opposite his own house. After him Shemaiah the son of Shecaniah, the keeper of the East Gate, repaired. ³⁰ After him Hananiah the son of Shelemiah and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph repaired another section. After him Meshullam the son of Berechiah repaired opposite his chamber.

Nobody in that chapter built the whole wall.

What does the repeated division of labor tell you about how this wall actually got finished?

Each family worked the stretch in front of their own house. By the next chapter the report reads, "So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work." It went up fast because nobody was standing in the street grading somebody else's stretch.

Now do the same thing with your life.

What is the "section in front of your house"? Name the people and the responsibilities that are actually yours rather than the ones you are only watching from the outside.

Here is the harder question.

What faithfulness have you been putting off until you get the money, the schooling, the job, the move, or the family that you do not have?

One thing has to be clear here, because people hear a message like this and draw the wrong line. None of this forbids you from improving your situation. Paul says so directly to people who held the worst position in the Roman world.

1 Corinthians 7:20–21

Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. ²¹ Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.)

Paul tells a slave that his status is no reason to stop serving Christ, but then he tells him that if a door to freedom opens he should walk through it. If you believe God is calling you to advance, go get the degree or take the better job and build the skill while you're at it. The instruction is not to stay put; the instruction is to stop waiting. Be faithful where you are standing while you work toward where you are going.

Sunday also put the parable of the talents in front of us, where a master hands out different amounts to different servants. Both faithful servants receive the identical commendation even though they were handed different sums, which tells you that God measures faithfulness and not size.

This week's memory verse tells you to acknowledge Him in all your ways, and your ways are the ones you actually have.

What would it look like this week to be faithful in the circumstances you already have, without waiting for the circumstances to change?

Do some honest introspective self-assessment before moving on.

PRAYER

Write your prayer or pray out loud. Thank God for the section He assigned you, and name the comparison you need to put down.

MEMORY VERSE

Write or recite Proverbs 3:5–6 from memory:
