

## Sermon - Spiritual Warfare (Dependence)

**Greeting:** Name, pastor etc....

### **Introduction:**

Last year, the girls and I were driving to Ciele's first birthday party (pray for parents). And maybe you remember that day—there was a massive thunderstorm in Chula Vista. Lightning flashing across the sky, thunder so loud you could feel it.

As we got out of the car and started walking, the rain began to pour. You could see the lightning... hear the thunder rolling....And every time I experience thunder or lightning like that, I'm filled with awe....

- I'm thinking... "Look at what my God can create."
- The power... the sound... the weight of it.

And my mind goes even further—

*"One day, we're all going to hear a trumpet sound at the return of Jesus... and it will make this roaring thunder sound like nothing."*

So I'm walking through this storm with....wonder... reverence... even trying to share that with my girls....

Which by the way....oh ya, my girls are here.....so I look down at them...at their faces

And I realize— they're not experiencing what I'm experiencing.

- Where I feel awe...they feel fear.
- Where I see beauty...they see danger.

And in that moment, I noticed something else....

- They were holding onto me.
- Not casually...
- They were **clinging** to me.

Lua is on one arm, Lily is on my other, and Selah was clinging to my leg as we walked through the storm....and so I'm comforting them, letting them know it's going to be okay....

But their response is appropriate and makes sense....because as children in the middle of something overwhelming...

- They're not fully comprehending what's happening....
- They're not trying to control it....
- They cling to whoever they trust....

And you know: you and I are similar....(SLIDE)

**Because in the middle of a storm, you don't rise to your strength, you CLING to whatever you trust. (repeat)**

And so here's the question I want us to keep coming back to this morning: (SLIDE)

- **What are you clinging to?**

What are you holding onto, depending on, and trusting in...Because whether you realize it or not...There is a Spiritual War happening...and it's fighting for the content of your soul

### **Series Introduction:**

And church, before we move any further, I want us to remember what's actually at stake in this series.

- Because this is not merely self-help.
- This is not behavior modification.
- This is spiritual warfare.

Listen to what Ephesians 6:12 says TLB (SLIDE):

"For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against persons without bodies—the evil rulers of the unseen world, those mighty satanic beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world; and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world."

Church...that is the world the Bible says we are living in.

- An unseen spiritual reality.
- Not fantasy.
- Not metaphor.
- Not exaggeration.

**According to Scripture**, there are spiritual beings actively opposing the purposes of God...working to distort truth, destroy trust, divide people, and pull our dependence away from God...

We are involved in that battle every single day.

- Not just around us.
- But for us...
- For our hearts.
- For our trust.
- For our dependence.

And that's why this matters so deeply.

Last week, we began a new series called (SLIDE): ***The Unseen Battle: How We Live, Fight, and Stand as the Church***

We're looking at our SIX core values but through the lens of spiritual warfare.

In week one, we focused on the Gospel—and how it transforms our position in the battle.

But today, we're shifting to another core value: Dependence on God

- Because at its core...this battle is about what your heart will cling to.
- Because whatever you trust...you will eventually depend on.

**And the enemy wants nothing more than for you to**

- **cling to...**
- **and depend on...anything or anyone that isn't God....**

So with that being said, let's read our anchoring text from Proverbs 3:5-6... (SLIDE)

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
And lean not on your own understanding;  
6 In all your ways acknowledge Him,  
And He shall direct your paths.

#### **FIRST POINT:**

This leads us to our first point (SLIDE)... **TRUST GOD, NOT YOUR FEELINGS....**

- (SPEAK TO CEREBRAL FOLKS IN THE ROOM)

Verse 5 says: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart..."

For many of us, this is where the battle begins.

Because before anything changes in your life...trust has to be settled in your hearts.

#### **Gods DESIGN:**

Not sure if you know this...but you were designed to trust....

- To anchor your heart in something stable.
- To depend on someone outside of yourself.

Psychologist Jill Suttie (doctor of psychology) writes - (SLIDE)

"Trust is foundational to human life. We are wired to depend on something outside of ourselves in order to thrive. From infancy to old age, trust is essential for our well-being."

That's the kind of life we were made for...

- a life marked by trust...
- by security...
- by depending on something outside of ourselves with confidence....

But that hasn't been everyone's experience.

- Some of us have been harmed by people we trusted.
- Some of us have taken risks on trust—only to be met with disappointment.

- Others have watched trust slowly erode through betrayal, pain, and letdown.

And somewhere along the way...we begin to shift...

- Instead of placing trust outside of ourselves...we turn INWARDLY
- we begin trusting our own hearts and feelings more than God...

And this is where it gets tricky:

Because our hearts be feeling a lot of things.

Now, hear me clearly—

- feelings are not the problem...
- BUT, they were never meant to lead you...

Also, it doesn't help that we live in a world that LOUDLY reinforces this every single day.

We've been shaped by phrases like:

- "Follow your heart."
- "Do what feels right."
- "Be true to yourself."
- "DO YOU"

And at first glance, that sounds freeing...

- but if you follow it all the way through...
- your feelings become your authority.

And when feelings become your authority...**God's Word becomes optional.**

And guess what? The enemy loves that...Because the moment you and I begin to depend on our own hearts to lead us...we've already shifted away from depending on God.

Look at what Jeremiah 17:9 says about our hearts (SLIDE):

"The heart is deceitful above all things,  
And desperately wicked;  
Who can know it?"

Scripture does not say your heart is always right.

- It says your heart is deceptive.
- Unreliable.
- Unable to lead you where you actually need to go.

*And here's what's sobering... SATAN and HIS DEMONS knows this.....they know the BIBLE like the back of their hand...and they REJOICE when they SEE US placing more TRUST in our own hearts and feelings...than in GOD.....*

And this is not theoretical....This is happening in real life.

## **Examples**

Some of us let our feelings determine whether we spend time with God...only praying or reading when we feel spiritually motivated...instead of remaining faithful in dry seasons too.

Some of us let the feeling of loneliness lead us into unhealthy relationships one after another...settling for temporary comfort instead of waiting for what is good and life-giving.

Some of us are still clinging to bitterness and unforgiveness...because of real wounds that happened to you....but the more you cling to that feeling of bitterness...the more it ravages you....and that's a foothold the devil wants to exploit (SLIDE)...Ephesians 4:26-27 says: "Don't let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity."

Some of us let our feelings determine our identity...believing we are abandoned, unloved, or unseen simply because that's what the moment emotionally feels like.

**.....Friends, your feelings are shaping your reality....**

**BUT CHURCH look at how GOD SEES YOU IN CHRIST ACCORDING TO EPHESIANS 1...**

- Look at what it says...Because of JESUS: (SLIDE)
  - You are **blessed with every spiritual blessing** in Christ (v. 3)
  - You are **chosen** before the foundation of the world (v. 4)
  - You are **holy and blameless** in His sight (v. 4)
  - You are **loved** by God (v. 4–5)
  - You are **predestined for adoption** (v. 5)
  - You are **adopted as God's child** through Jesus (v. 5)
  - You are **accepted** in the Beloved (v. 6)
  - You are **redeemed** through Jesus' blood (v. 7)
  - You are **forgiven** of all your sins (v. 7)
  - You are a **recipient** of God's grace, **lavished** on you (v. 7–8)

**That is who you are.**

**Not what you feel.**

So let me ask you again (SLIDE): **What are you clinging to?**

- When anger is pounding at your front door....what are you clinging to?
- When stress begins to overwhelm you....what are you clinging to?
- When grief and loss surprises you....what are you clinging to?
- When you are grasping for peace, calmness, or security....what are you clinging to?

**Because in those moments...you don't rise to what you know—you cling to what you trust.**

- And whatever you cling to...will begin to shape you.

So when Scripture says: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart...”

It is NOT telling you to trust your heart.

It is telling you: Bring your whole heart to God.

- Every feeling.
- Every fear.
- Every emotion.
- And place your trust in Him.

**Transition:**

And here’s what I’ve found...if the enemy can’t get you to trust your feelings...he’ll try something else....

Because the goal is the same: to get you to depend on anything other than God.

So if he can’t lead you through your emotions...he’ll try to lead you through your own understanding....(my fellow cerebral brothers and sisters, lock in)

**POINT 2: (SLIDE)**

This leads us to **POINT 2: TRUST GOD, NOT YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING**

There is something in all of us...that naturally wants to figure life out on our own..

- To rely on what we can see.
- To trust what makes sense to us.
- To move according to what feels logical, practical, reasonable.

And honestly, that’s how many of us were trained to live.

**From a young age:**

- think for yourself
- solve your problems
- make your own way
- be independent

And none of those things are inherently bad.

But here’s the danger...

- when independence becomes your default,
- dependence on God becomes unnecessary.

Slowly... subtly...we begin to live as if:

- God is optional...
- but our understanding is essential.

And leaning on your own understanding rarely feels sinful — it feels responsible.

- That's what makes it so dangerous.
- Because what feels wise to you...is still limited.

The rest of (SLIDE) Proverbs 3:5 says "And lean not on your own understanding..."

That word "lean" means

- To rest your weight on.
- To rely on.
- To depend on.

So Scripture is not saying: "Don't think."

In fact, Proverbs actually tells us to pursue understanding.

Look at some verses here (SLIDE)

- "[Incline] your heart to understanding" (Proverbs 2:2).
- "Raise your voice for understanding" (Proverbs 2:3).
- "Understanding will guard you" (Proverbs 2:11).
- "Blessed is the one who . . . gets understanding" (Proverbs 3:13).

So if understanding is so valuable... why are we warned not to lean on it?

Because there's a difference between: having understanding...and depending on it.

Jon Bloom (co-founder of desiring God) writes: *What we're told not to lean on is our "own understanding," meaning conclusions based primarily on our own perceptions. Because our own understanding simply will not bear the full weight of reality. It was never intended to.*

Your understanding can guide you....but it cannot save you

Because your understanding:

- is limited
- is shaped by your experiences
- is influenced by your fears
- is often blind to what God is doing comprehensively and wholistically

And the enemy knows how deeply we crave control.

So he often comes with what seems like reasonable arguments.

He whispers things like:

- "You need to take control of this."
- "If you don't handle this, things will fall apart."
- "If you trust God here, you might get hurt again."
- "If you don't think this through, you'll make the wrong decision."

- “You can’t afford to be passive—you need to act.”

And underneath all of it is fear:

- Fear of pain
- Fear of uncertainty
- Fear of worst-case scenarios

So what do we do? we take control.

And the moment we do...we stop depending on God.

(SLIDE) The enemy doesn’t just want you to think—he wants your thinking to replace your trusting.

**Satan doesn’t need you to reject God outright —he just needs you to function without God.**

**Personal story: Tati**

Last month, Liana was at a conference in LA...and so I was home with our three daughters from Tuesday through Saturday night...

And I’ll be honest...by THURSDAY....I was counting down the days...Because in my mind, i’m like....Saturday is coming...and I’m finally going to get some me time....cause I had planned to drop the girls off at my mother in laws place....tati’s house which means grandma in armenian....

So I drop the girls off with Tati...and I ask her, “Is it okay if I pick them up at 3pm?” She says yes of course go enjoy your time....and internally I replied...**indeed I SHALL...MEXICAN FOOD....my favorite rolled tacos....WORLD OF WARCRAFT....ME ME ME...**

And as I’m driving on the freeway back home...i’m kind of beside myself...feeling giddy...i’m like what should i do first?...and a thought came to my mind out of nowhere....and I knew it was from the Lord...because it said...*“What if instead of using this time to serve yourself....you used it to serve me instead?”*

And my first internal reaction? Was honestly...aww man...but then I sat with it for about 30 secs and said...youre right lord, i’ll surrender this time to you...and so I prayed out loud in the car.....**“God, what would it look like for me to serve you with this time - I am willing?”**

**And as soon as I said amen...my phone rings...and it’s my mother in law, tati...and she says:**

- “Hey Ereeeeek....go ahead and take two more hours...i’ll keep the girls...yes yes, come at 5 o clock....get more time....”
- I said thank you tati...with tears in my eyes...because in that moment...i realized something....God already had my best interest in mind....

You see, going into that Saturday....I had every intention to lean on my own understanding of:

- "I worked hard this week...i deserve this"
- "I've earned this"
- "This is my time"

*But God, in his gentle and patient kindness...interrupted me...and showed me that...when I offered myself Him...He always has something better for me.....*

Leaning on my understanding said: Take control of this moment....But God was saying....TRUST ME WITH IT....

Friends, God doesnt take from you - he leads you into what's better for you....

So let me ask you (SLIDE): What are you clinging to?

- When you're going through a big life transition in life...what are you clinging to for stability?
- When you're carrying more than you can bear...what are you clinging to for relief?
- When your finances are not financing like you want them to...what are you clinging to for security?
- When life does not go according to your plan...what are you clinging to for control?

Because in those moments...

- you don't rise to what you know—
- you cling to what you trust.

*And whatever you cling to...  
reveals what you actually depend on.*

### **God's Invitation**

And this is where God meets you.

Not with condemnation...

but with an invitation.

- to trust Him with your decisions...
- to trust Him with your responsibilities...
- to trust Him with your finances...
- to trust Him with what feels out of control...

Because He is not asking you to figure everything out...

He's inviting you to trust Him with everything....

### **Transition to third point:**

So far we have spoke about two ways the enemy will try and erode our dependence on God...

- By getting you to trust your feelings more than God
- By getting you to rely on your own understanding more than God

**But if he can't do either of those...he'll try one more thing...**

He'll try to keep you from turning to God at all....Not by removing God from your life...but by keeping you distracted from Him

### **POINT 3:**

This leads us to our final point **(SLIDE): Trust GOD, without Distraction**

Proverbs 3:6:

In all your ways acknowledge Him,  
And He shall direct your paths.

**This is the heart of dependence.**

Because following God is not just about avoiding the wrong things.

It's about actively turning toward the Alpha and Omega....to ACKNOWLEDGE HIM

### **What This Means**

To acknowledge God means:

- to recognize Him
- to remain aware of Him
- to bring Him into every part of your life

Not just on Sundays.

Not just when things go wrong.

**But in all your ways.**

- your decisions
- your schedule
- your relationships
- your thoughts
- your struggles
- your workplace or retirement

.....every part of your life.

### **The Tension**

And if we're honest...most of us want this.

- We want to live aware of God.
- We want to depend on Him.
- We want to walk closely with Him.

But what often happens is not outright rejection...it's gradual drift.

We don't wake up and decide,  
"I'm not going to acknowledge God today."

**We just get moving.**

- Life fills up.
- Schedules get full.
- Responsibilities pile on.

And before we realize it...

- we've gone through large parts of our day
- **without bringing God into it.**

Not because we don't love Him...  
but because we've become distracted.

**Drift** doesn't feel dramatic—it feels normal.

**Warfare Insight: Distraction**

And the enemy knows this.

- If he can't get you to trust your feelings...
- If he can't get you to lean on your own understanding...
- **he'll keep you distracted.**

Because distraction leads to disconnection.

**He whispers things like:**

- "You don't have time to pray."
- "You'll do it later."
- "You're too busy."
- "You've got too much going on....something has to give"

And slowly...your awareness of God fades.  
Not because He left you...but because you stopped acknowledging Him.

Distraction doesn't remove God from your life—  
it removes your awareness of Him.

**Prayer: Where Dependence Becomes Real**

So how do you actually acknowledge God in all your ways?

***You pray.***

Ephesians 6:18 says (SLIDE)

“Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.”

- This is how you stay connected.
- This is how you stay dependent.
- This is how you fight.

Because prayer is not just something we do occasionally...it is the **lifeline of dependence.**

And the enemy hates that.

- He hates when God’s people become dependent on prayer.
- He hates when a church stops relying on its own strength...and starts relying on God.

He hates when a people begin to seek God together...

- to cry out together...
- to depend on Him together.

Because that’s when things begin to shift.

- That’s when **strongholds** begin to break.
- That’s when **hearts** begin to change.
- That’s when **heaven** begins to move.

And that’s why distraction is one of his greatest strategies.

- Because if he can keep us busy...
- he can keep us from becoming who God has called us to be.

.....Which is to become A house of prayer for all nations.....

Prayer has always transformed the world and people in it....we see this throughout scripture...

Over and over, when God’s people faced impossible situations...

- It was prayer that changed everything.....

In 2 Chronicles 20 when enemies surrounded God’s people...we see king JEHOSHAPHAT ALARMED....LEAD HIS PEOPLE....with all the wives and children and little ones...begin to FAST AND PRAY TOGETHER....

- they didn’t begin with strategy on how to engage, or attack them...
- they began with prayer...

And God fought for them. (SLIDE)

- ***Prayer didn’t prepare them for the battle—prayer was the battle.*** (REPEAT)

And the same is true for you...

every time you pray...you are saying, "God, I trust You more than myself."

**Question:**

So let me ask the question one final time (SLIDE): Who are you clinging to?

Romans 12:9 says  
"...hate what is evil;  
cling to what is good."

Church...God is the only definition of good.

- So cling to HIM
- When your feelings rise...cling to Him.
- When your understanding wants control...cling to Him.
- When distraction pulls your attention away...cling to Him.
- Because whatever you cling to...is what you're depending on.

**[BAND YOU CAN JOIN ME ON STAGE]**

Before we close...I need you to hear this

Because maybe throughout this message...you've realized:

- "Man... I don't do these things very well."
- **Neither do I...**

Because on our own...we will NEVER perfectly:

- trust God above our feelings
- stop leaning on our own understanding
- acknowledge Him in all our ways

And that's why gospel of Jesus Christ is good news...because it is not about your perfect dependence on God.

- It's about Jesus Christ's perfect dependence on the Father on your behalf.

Because where:

- Where Adam failed.
- Where Israel failed.
- Where we fail every single day.
- **Jesus has already succeeded.**

**We see that Jesus Trusted the Father Over His Feelings**

When Jesus approached the cross...He did not feel like going.

In the Garden of Gethsemane...

- He was in anguish.
- In sorrow.
- In agony.

And yet He prayed

Luke 22:42: "Not my will, but Yours, be done."

Even when His feelings screamed otherwise...Jesus trusted the Father completely.

### **We also see, JESUS LEANED ON HIS FATHER's UNDERSTANDING**

Jesus was perfectly aligned with the Father.

- He never deviated.
- Never rebelled.
- Never acted independently.

John 5:19: "The Son is not able to do anything on His own..."

Everything He did...He did in dependence upon the Father.

### **Jesus Constantly Acknowledge the FATHER**

And lastly, Jesus was never distracted.

Throughout the Gospels...we see Him withdrawing to pray CONSTANTLY

- Before decisions.
- Before ministry.
- Before miracles.
- Before the cross.

And even while hanging on the cross... Jesus was still praying.

Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them..."

Even in suffering...His dependence never broke.

### **Good NEWS OF JESUS DEPENDENCE:**

Church...Christianity is not:

"Try harder to depend on God."

Christianity is:

*Jesus perfectly depended on the Father for you...  
and now through His Spirit, He empowers you to do the same.*

**So when you fail...when you drift...when you cling to other things...  
your hope aint in your perfect performance.**

**Your hope...is Christ.**

- The perfectly dependent One.
- The perfectly obedient One.
- The perfectly surrendered One.

And its through your faith in Him...that

- He forgives you...
- He transforms you.
- He teaches your heart to trust again.
- He loosens your grip on control.
- He draws your attention back to the Father.

And that's why today...this invitation is not about shame....It's about surrender.

Jesus is not standing over you condemning you...He's inviting you to cling to Him...  
.....like a child in a storm...clinging to their father who is trustworthy....

### **FINAL INVITATION TO RESPONSE & PRAYER**

And so as we close, maybe right now...the Holy Spirit is already bringing something to mind.

Something you've been clinging to more than God.

- Fear.
- Control.
- Bitterness.
- Shame.
- Self-reliance.
- Distraction.

And instead of simply talking about surrender today...we want to practice it.

#### **Step 1: Invite SILENCE:**

So right now...I just want to invite you to sit quietly before the Lord for a moment.

And ask Him: *"God...what is one thing I've been clinging to more than You?"* (PAUSE - let people listen)

#### **Step 2: Write the Word:**

And when that comes to mind....

- I want you to take the red pen you were handed earlier and write that word on your hand....not in shame....but in honesty....
- Because today we are bringing hidden things into the light before GOD (PAUSE - let people write)

#### **Step 3: Invite them Forward:**

And when you're ready....

- I want to invite you to come forward. As a physical act of repentance...
- Declaring "I am turning away from this thing...and turning toward God instead."
- And as you come, I want you to REST IN HIS LOVE...RECIEVE HIS LOVE...
- Speak into those FEELING uncomfortable, or self conscious at the idea....

- Speak into those THINKING it's not that necessary to go to the front...
- The enemy doesn't want you to turn...doesn't want you to feel uncomfortable...or think this is necessary....and I want to exhort you church...that this invitation isn't about erick davis...or this front stage...this moment is about accepting the invitation your heavenly father has for you...which is ALWAYS FOR YOUR BENEFIT...every invitation he gives us should be treasured by us...and so come....

#### **Step 4: Explain Prayer Counselors**

As you come forward...I want you to stand, sit, or kneel in a posture of surrender here at the front....and **In a little while our prayer ministers are going and offer to:**

- Gently wipe the word off your hand...
- And pray a blessing over you...
  - Not shame...
  - Not condemnation...
  - Blessing...because the heart of God toward you is freedom.....

#### **Step 5: The Ink may remain**

And I also want to say something important.

When they wipe the word away...the ink may not fully disappear.  
You may still see traces of it on your hand.

And honestly?...that's okay.

Because for many of us...freedom will be a journey.

- Healing takes time.
- Trust takes time.

Learning to stop clinging to certain things takes time.

So don't let the enemy lie to you and say:

"Well...if this was real, it would instantly disappear."

No.

This moment is not pretending the process is over.

It's taking a real step toward Jesus.

And over time...

- through prayer...
  - through community...
  - through dependence on the Holy Spirit...
  - God transforms us.
- 
- Little by little.
  - Day by day.

- Glory to glory.

So if traces of the ink remain...don't be discouraged.

Let it remind you:

**God is still working...**

**But as our friend, the Apostle Paul tells us...."He who has begun a good work in you will complete it"**

**:::IMPART:::**

***The Blessing of Hope (Romans 15:13): "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (NIV).***