



## AT THE TABLE

A BIBLE STUDY TEACHING SERIES

### SESSION 2

# Unguarded Strength

Luke 22:31–34 • MSG

IN HIS PRESENCE

CROWN CODE • REAL MAN CODE • MOM CODE

#### AT THE TABLE

Session 2: Unguarded Strength

#### OUR TEXT

Luke 22:31–34 (MSG)

*"Simon, stay on your toes. Satan has tried his best to separate all of you from me, like chaff from wheat. Simon, I've prayed for you in particular that you not give in or give out. When you have come through the time of testing, turn to your companions and give them a fresh start." Peter said, "Master, I'm ready for anything with you. I'd go to jail for you. I'd die for you!" Jesus said, "I'm sorry to have to tell you this, Peter, but before the rooster crows you will have three times denied that you know me."*

## 1 WHAT UNGUARDED STRENGTH MEANS

We are usually on guard against our weaknesses. We know which moods, which habits, which corners of our character need watching. But we rarely think of our strengths as places we could fall. An unguarded strength is a gift God gave us — boldness, leadership, generosity, people skills, a sharp mind — that we have stopped protecting. Left without boundaries, without humility, without surrender, that same gift can do more damage than our obvious weaknesses ever could. This is what it means to say a strength, unguarded, becomes a double weakness: it fails us precisely where we felt most confident.

## 2 WHAT IT MEANS IN THE BIBLE / CONTEXT

Peter's story is the clearest picture of this in Scripture. He was bold. He was the one who got out of the boat, who spoke up when the others stayed quiet, who drew a sword in the garden without hesitation. That boldness is exactly why Jesus called him and exactly what Jesus wanted on His team. But Peter never learned to put guardrails on that gift. In Luke 22, Jesus warns him plainly — Satan wants to sift him like wheat — and Peter's answer is pure confidence: "I'd go to jail for you. I'd die for you!" He was not lying. He meant it. But his strength went ahead of his surrender, and hours later, in a courtyard, that same bold mouth denied Christ three times.

Notice what happened in between. Jesus asked Peter to pray with Him in Gethsemane, and Peter fell asleep — not once, but three times. The very thing that could have prepared him for the test, he skipped. It looked insignificant. It wasn't. Because sin so often affects our opportunities to use our strengths well, a perfect situation can become a perfectly wrong one. When we are unwilling to accept that we could fall, we walk unprepared into the moment we most need to stand.

## 3 ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES (ESV)

1 Corinthians 10:12

*"Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall."*

Matthew 26:41

*"Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

2 Corinthians 12:9–10

*"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

## 4 TEACHING

Nothing can get us into more trouble than our strengths. This idea, drawn from Tauren Wells' book *Joy Bomb*, reframes Peter's failure in a way that should make every one of us pause. We are quick to name our weaknesses — impatience, anxiety, a sharp tongue on a bad day — and we build defenses around them almost instinctively. But our strengths feel safe. We assume the gift itself is the protection. It isn't. A gift without guardrails becomes exposure, not safety.

Think about what an unguarded strength can look like in a home. A mother's discernment, unguarded, becomes suspicion that never rests. A father's decisiveness, unguarded, becomes a refusal to be told he's wrong. A leader's charisma, unguarded, becomes manipulation dressed up as vision. None of these people set out to misuse their gift. The strength simply went untended, and it grew into exactly what it was never meant to be — a weapon instead of a blessing.

The mercy in this story is that Peter's failure was not the end of it. Jesus told him in advance: "I've prayed for you... when you have come through the time of testing, turn to your companions and give them a fresh start." Jesus did not pray that Peter would avoid the fall. He prayed that Peter's faith would not fail through it — and that on the other side, Peter's very brokenness would become something that strengthened others.

So the guardrail is not more willpower. It is humility — admitting out loud, before God and before the people who love us, "this gift of mine could hurt someone if I don't stay surrendered." It is prayer instead of sleep in the moments that feel unimportant. When we do this, our strengths stop being liabilities waiting to happen and become, as Paul says, the very place where Christ's power is made perfect.

## 5 PONDER

- What is my greatest strength — the gift people most often notice or rely on me for?
- Where has that strength, left unguarded, ever caused harm to myself or someone I love?
- Am I more alert to my weaknesses than to my strengths? Why might that be?
- Like Peter skipping prayer, is there a small, seemingly insignificant discipline I've been neglecting that is actually my guardrail?

## 6 PUT IT IN ACTION

- Name your strength honestly this week — write it down, along with one way it could go unguarded.
- Choose one guardrail to put in place: a person who can speak into that area, a pause before you act on it, a prayer you say before you lean on it.
- Ask someone close to you: "Where have you seen my strength become a weakness?" Receive the answer without defending yourself.
- In a moment this week when you feel most confident and capable, pause and pray before you act — practicing what Peter skipped in the garden.

## 7 CLOSING PRAYER

Let us pray

*Father, thank You for the gifts and strengths You have placed in us — they are Yours, given on purpose, for good. Forgive us for the times we have trusted our strength instead of guarding it, for the moments we skipped prayer because the danger felt far off. Teach us to hold our gifts with open, humble hands. Surround us with people who will tell us the truth, and give us the wisdom to listen.*

*Where we have fallen through our own confidence, restore us as You restored Peter — not to shame, but to a fresh start that strengthens others.*

*Let our weaknesses and our strengths alike become the place where Your power is made perfect. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Teaching draws on themes from "Joy Bomb" by Tauren Wells, chapter "Happy Are the Unreasonably Forgiving."

IN HIS PRESENCE

At the Table Bible Study