

# SMALL GROUPS

## Key Scripture Passages

- Acts 16:16-18 - Paul and the spirit of divination
- John 10:10 - The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy
- 1 Peter 5:8 - The enemy prowls like a roaring lion
- Ephesians 6:11 - Stand against the devil's schemes
- Isaiah 40:29-31 - Those who wait on the Lord renew their strength

## Key Takeaways from the Sermon

### 1. The Python Spirit: Slow and Strategic

The enemy doesn't always strike fast. Like a python, he slowly wraps around his prey, squeezing tighter with each breath until the victim is suffocated. Spiritually, this happens through gradual compromise, distraction, offense, and exhaustion.

### 2. Three Main Ways the Enemy Works:

#### A. The Enemy Attacks Your Spiritual Breath

- Prayer becomes difficult
- Worship feels forced
- Church attendance becomes routine
- Bible reading feels lifeless
- You feel spiritually numb

## B. The Enemy Thrives in Distraction

- Constant noise and notifications
- Inability to sit in silence
- Lost ability to hear God clearly
- Mind cluttered with worldly concerns

## C. You Must Confront What Is Choking You

- You cannot casually coexist with what is destroying you
- What you tolerate spiritually will eventually tighten around you
- What you refuse to confront will continue to control you

## Discussion Questions

### Understanding the Message

1. How did Pastor Mack describe the difference between how a python kills versus how a cobra or rattlesnake kills? Why is this distinction important spiritually?
2. The sermon mentioned that the spirit of divination in Acts 16 was speaking truth about Paul and his companions. Why was Paul still "greatly annoyed" and commanded it to leave? What does this teach us about spiritual discernment?
3. What does it mean that "the enemy has a counterfeit for everything God has"? Can you think of examples of this in modern culture?

### Personal Reflection

4. Looking at the signs of spiritual suffocation mentioned in the sermon (prayer feels difficult, worship feels forced, church feels routine, Bible reading feels lifeless), which of these resonates most with your current spiritual state?
5. Pastor Mack said, "What you tolerate spiritually will eventually tighten around you." What is something in your life right now that you've been tolerating that might be slowly suffocating your spiritual vitality?
6. How much time do you spend in silence before God compared to time spent consuming media, scrolling on your phone, or watching TV? What does this reveal about your spiritual priorities?

7. The sermon mentioned that "God often speaks in stillness, not in chaos." When was the last time you intentionally created space for silence and stillness with God? What happened?

## Application and Action

8. Pastor Mack challenged us to have moments where we "unplug from the world and get away with God—no phone, no computer, no anything." What would it look like for you to create this kind of space this week?
9. Paul eventually turned and confronted the spirit directly. Is there something in your life (a relationship, habit, sin, offense) that God has been telling you to confront but you've been trying to "manage" instead? What would confronting it look like?
10. Pastor Mack prayed for God to give the church "eyes to see" spiritually. What do you think this means practically? How can we grow in spiritual discernment?

## Practical Applications

### This Week's Challenge

Choose at least one of the following to implement this week:

#### Option 1: Digital Detox and Sacred Space

- Set aside 30-60 minutes this week (or daily if possible) with no phone, no TV, no distractions
- Spend this time in prayer, worship, Bible reading, or simply sitting in God's presence
- Journal about what you experience

#### Option 2: Confront What's Choking You

- Identify one thing that is spiritually suffocating you (a relationship, habit, unforgiveness, secret sin, distraction)
- Pray specifically against it, asking God for strength to confront it
- Take one concrete action to address it (have a difficult conversation, delete an app, confess to someone, set a boundary)

### Option 3: Prayer and Fasting

- Choose one day this week to fast from something (food, social media, entertainment)
- Use the time you would normally spend on that thing to pray specifically for spiritual freedom and renewed passion for God
- Ask God to reveal any areas where the enemy has been slowly wrapping around your life

### Option 4: Accountability Partnership

- Share with one trusted person in your group about a spiritual battle you're facing
- Ask them to pray for you regularly and check in on you
- Commit to being vulnerable about your struggles rather than hiding them

### Group Prayer Focus

#### Pray Together For:

1. Eyes to see - Ask God to give your group spiritual discernment to recognize the enemy's tactics
2. Freedom from suffocation - Pray specifically for anyone who feels spiritually exhausted, heavy, or suffocated
3. Boldness to confront - Ask for courage to address the things God is calling you to deal with
4. Renewed spiritual breath - Pray for fresh passion, joy, peace, and spiritual vitality
5. Protection from distraction - Ask God to help you create healthy rhythms that prioritize His presence

#### Specific Prayer Points:

- Pray for anyone who shared about feeling spiritually exhausted
- Pray against specific spiritual attacks members are experiencing
- Pray for wisdom to recognize what needs to be confronted versus what needs wisdom and rest
- Declare freedom in Jesus' name over every area of bondage

### Memory Verse for the Week

Isaiah 40:31 - "Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary."

## Looking Ahead

Next week's sermon will focus on freedom from the squeeze and dealing with comfort zones that keep us from being free. Come prepared to discuss what areas of comfort in your life might actually be keeping you in bondage.

## Closing Thought

"You cannot casually coexist with what is trying to destroy you spiritually. What you refuse to confront will eventually control you."

The enemy wants to slowly squeeze the spiritual life out of you, but Jesus came to give you life—abundant, full, free life. Don't settle for just surviving spiritually. You have authority in Jesus' name to command the enemy to leave.

## Final Prayer

Close by having group members pray for the person on their right, specifically asking God to break any spiritual pressure or suffocation they're experiencing and to renew their spiritual passion and strength.