

LEANING ON GOD

The following words are found in Proverbs 3:5: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (NIV).

It is one of the most important principles in all the scriptures....and it is repeated over and over. God’s ways are better than man’s ways. God is always available to his people, those who are faithful to him and obey his laws. The history of those who reject God’s ways and follow their own thinking is always the same---they suffer for it.

It began in the Garden of Eden. God gave Adam and Eve very specific instructions. But they liked their own way better and chose to do things their own way. We know how that turned out.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God. And really it is faith---or the lack of it---which determines the extent to which one relies on God to chart the course of his life. The Bible provides many examples of people who rejected human wisdom in order to follow God’s commands.

It is evident that Abraham was a wealthy successful man in his native Ur. He had numerous servants and large flocks and herds. No human reasoning would call for him to uproot his family and make a long difficult journey to a distant land which he probably had never seen. But that is what God wanted him to do. We do not know how many arguments were made to Abraham to stay in Ur, but it made no difference. His faith in God was so great that he had no doubt that only good could come from leaning on God, sure that God would do what was best for him. And that was exactly what happened.

But Abraham is well known for a far more challenging need to rely on God. After many years of waiting Abraham was finally blessed with the birth of Isaac, the son through whom he was to be the father of many nations. But then God told Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. There is no way in which any human reasoning could make sense of this. But Abraham did not hesitate. He even got up early in the morning to make the distant trip to where the sacrifice was to be made.

What was Abraham thinking? Surely his heart was breaking. Interestingly, the Old Testament does not tell us what Abraham was thinking---but the New

Testament does! Hebrews 11:19 tells us that Abraham believed that God could raise the dead---so he expected that God would restore life to Isaac!

Another great man of faith faced far more opposition than Abraham. The story of Moses and his many struggles in leading the Israelites demonstrates that persistence in obeying God, even when it seems totally hopeless, results in blessings from God. This is also the story of what happens when people reject God's plans and instructions. Because of the rebellious actions of the Israelites, the promise of entry into the Promised Land was realized by only two adults who left Egypt, Joshua and Caleb.

It is easy to lean on God when his way seems to be the most logical and reasonable course. It is when his instructions seem *unreasonable* by human standards that the real test comes. There are plenty of examples of people who relied on God when doing so defied human logic.

When the spies sent by Moses to Canaan returned with stories of how powerful the Canaanites were, human reasoning dictated that the Israelites would never be able to defeat them...as ten of the twelve spies reported. But two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, knew that God had promised them victory, regardless of the opposition, and insisted that the people should trust God, and not human reasoning. This was an example of two men who "leaned on" God, and an unruly crowd which did not. We know how that turned out.

We are all familiar with the story of Gideon from Judges, chapters 7 and 8. While it took a little convincing, as illustrated by the fleece and dew episode, Gideon had enough faith to lean on God's plans in ways which defied human reasoning. The Midianites and Amalekites camped, ready to attack the Israelites, were described as being "as thick as locusts". Who, by human reasoning, would ever propose to try to defeat these masses with only 300 men....equipped with torches and trumpets? Obviously---no one! But God told Gideon to do it, and he relied on God to give victory---and that is exactly what he did! More leaning on God.

It is a great blessing when a person develops a deep trust in God early in life. Those are the years when character development takes place. If one learns early in life to depend on God, he is far better equipped to handle the many challenges of the teenage years as well as later life.

We do not know the age of David when he faced Goliath, the Philistine giant warrior who terrorized the Israelite army day after day, but he was probably in his early teenage years. But he had already developed a great faith in God, a faith that had been strengthened by the experiences in which God had been with him. I Samuel 17 records his words to Saul recounting his experiences with the bear and the lion, giving God credit for his deliverance from these dangers. He had no doubt that God would also be with him as he went up against Goliath, regardless of how fearsome he might appear by human standards. We all know how that turned out. Totally relying on God paid off again.

We know that David became a great powerful king, blessed with many great successes. It would be easy to develop a sense of security based on his power rather than upon God. But the scriptures give us a picture of David's attitude toward his relationship with God. The twenty-third Psalm expresses his sense of being like a sheep led by a loving, caring, protective shepherd. He said "my cup overflows", referring to the abundance of his blessings. It is very important to remember that the God of David is the same God whom we serve, and the assurances of God's blessings are just as valid today as they were in David's time.

In Jeremiah 10:23 we find these words, "...it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (KJV). In Isaiah 55:8 we find the following words from the Lord, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways...". Mankind is divided into two categories: those who rely on the ways of man...and those who rely on the ways of God. It is always a challenge to do things God's way when it seems more reasonable to do things differently. Hopefully we will all have the faith that is required to follow the many examples of those who defied human logic, did things God's ways....and reaped abundant blessings.