

LeaderLesson 4: Dependence on God

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A basketball superstar was once asked about his knack for making the winning shot in close games. The reporter asked how he was able to be so calm in such pressure-packed moments. His answer: he tried to simplify the situation. “You only have to make one shot,” he said. Focus on one shot. That is what must be done to simplify a difficult situation.¹ Focus only on what is most important for you today...in the present moment. Don’t complicate the situation with unneeded details – simplify your approach to the challenge facing you.

In leadership, we must not worry about details that are irrelevant, or what could happen tomorrow, or what may someone say when we make a particular decision. When we face any moment, any day, any decision, we must begin with our point of focus, our source of strength. For the Christ-following church leader, that means we focus on God and depend on Him.

Jesus Himself gives us six reasons why we should depend on God and not worry, in Matthew 6:25-34:

²⁵ “This is why I tell you: Don’t worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the sky: They don’t sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth more than they? ²⁷ Can any of you add a single cubit to his height by worrying? ²⁸ And why do you worry about clothes? Learn how the wildflowers of the field grow: they don’t labor or spin thread. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was adorned like one of these! ³⁰ If that’s how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, won’t He do much more for you—you of little faith? ³¹ So don’t worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ ³² For the idolaters eagerly seek all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. ³⁴ Therefore don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”²

First, the same God who gives us the greater gift of life will definitely supply the lesser needs of food and clothing (verse 25). Second, the Lord who cares for birds will care for His people, since human beings are of much greater worth than any bird (verse 26). Third, worry uses up energy pointlessly, and it doesn’t change the reality of a situation one bit (verse 27). Fourth, worry ignores God’s proven faithfulness in our lives. Every blossoming flower is a reminder of God’s faithful care for us (verses 28-30). Fifth, we are God’s children. He will not treat us as orphans – we have a Father who always cares for us (verses 31-33). Sixth, when we worry about tomorrow, we miss out on today, and all God has in store for us in it. Any problem we face can be handled, with our Father’s help, one day at a time (verse 34).

We want to influence our generation for Christ, so we need to lead in a way that allows others to see our faith in God. One way we can do this is by depending on God in the face of daily pressures. The next time you’re under pressure, pause and pray for the grace you need to depend on the Lord, who is perfectly worthy of your trust. Remember that those you lead will see how you respond to pressures, and will follow your example.³

As leaders in the church, we must remember that faith is a universal experience. This means that everyone, including atheists, live by faith. The issue isn’t whether we will trust in a belief system or in people or things, but whether we are trusting in that which is reliable or not reliable. Think about this: “Faith is only as good as the object in which it is placed.”⁴ On what do we depend? What do we really believe in?

Do you ever get overwhelmed? Zerubbabel’s job was so big he needed a prophet to give him perspective. He heard what we need to hear if we find ourselves harried as leaders: “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.”⁵ Zerubbabel had a very difficult job to do. The Babylonians had destroyed the temple and Jerusalem seventy years earlier, and now he was in charge of rebuilding. When Solomon first built the temple, his situation was optimal: unlimited resources and motivated workers. Zerubbabel now faced strong opposition, demoralized workers, and limited resources.⁶ So God told him he would accomplish the task before him if he depended on the Lord, not on himself or on some might he could muster.

Many of us have claimed two particular portions from the Proverbs as life-verses: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”⁷ Since we’re talking about dependence on God, how are we doing in applying these verses to ourselves? Do we trust in the Lord with all our hearts? Are we refusing to depend on our own understanding? Are they really life-verses – do they describe the way we live day by day?

One of the more significant ways God speaks to me is through the words of songs I sing. Since childhood, I have sung these words, but now they mean more than before. They began with a young man in a testimony meeting with D. L. Moody, who said, “I am going to trust, and I am going to obey.” Moody’s music director, Daniel Towner asked John Sammis to write lyrics based on this testimony, and this is what he wrote:

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word, what a glory He sheds on our way!
Let us do His good will; He abides with us still, and with all who will trust and obey.

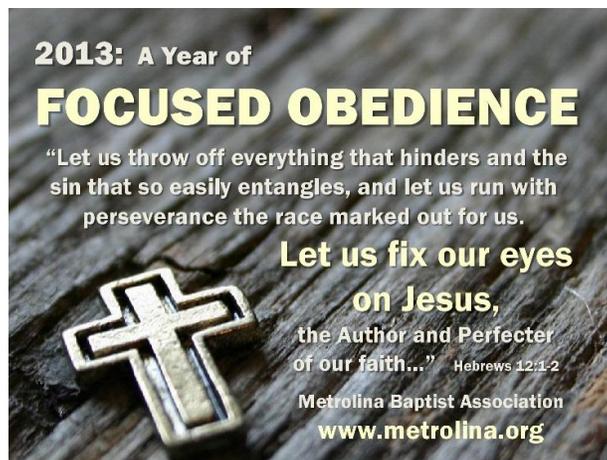
Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share, but our toil He doth richly repay;
Not a grief or a loss, not a frown or a cross but is blest if we trust and obey.

But we never can prove the delights of His love until all on the altar we lay;
For the favor He shows and the joy He bestows are for them who will trust and obey.

Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet, or we’ll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do, where He sends we will go; never fear, only trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.⁸

Focused obedience happens when our trust in the only One who is able to provide all that we need. God is able – depend on Him. Lead by example.



¹ “Simplify” by Bill Crowder in *Our Daily Bread*, May 24, 2011. RBC Ministries.

² Matthew 6:25-34 HCSB.

³ *Handbook to Leadership: Leadership in the Image of God*, Kenneth Boa, Sid Buzzell, Bill Perkins. Page 48. (This yearlong study is using this text as a primary source. Anyone who would like to go deeper on this journey in 2013 is encouraged to get a copy of this excellent resource. It is also available on Kindle.)

⁴ *Handbook to Leadership*, page 50.

⁵ Zechariah 4:6 NASB.

⁶ *Handbook to Leadership*, page 53.

⁷ Proverbs 3:5-6 NASB.

⁸ *Trust and Obey*, lyrics by John H. Sammis, music by Daniel B. Towner, from *Sankey’s Story of the Gospel Hymns*, Ira D. Sankey, Sunday School Times, 1906, page 240.