

Calvary Chapel O'Hare
Men's
Servant Leadership Study

Week 12

DEPENDENCE ON GOD

Memory Verse for the Week: Zechariah 4:6

DAY 1 – Dependence on God

Reading - Matthew 6:25-34

Discussion - All people who lead others or carry organizational responsibility find more than enough reasons to worry – deadlines, financial pressures, market instability and other pressures (you fill in your own blanks here) make stomachs churn and account for many a sleepless night. But Jesus cautions us against worrying about anything – even the food we eat or the clothes we wear. In this passage, Jesus gives His disciples (and us) six reasons for trusting in God rather than worrying.

First, the same God who gives us the greater gift of life will certainly supply the lesser gifts of food and clothing (v.25). Second, the God who cares for birds will care for His people. After all, humans are of much greater value than any bird (v.26). Third, worry expends energy pointlessly – it doesn't change the reality of the situation a single bit (v.27). Fourth, worry ignores God's demonstrated faithfulness in our lives (vv.28-30). The same God who so wonderfully clothes the flowers of the field is responsible to care for them. Every blossoming flower is a reminder of God's faithfulness to us. Fifth, we are God's children (vv.31-33). God will never treat us as orphans who need to fend for themselves. Sixth, when we worry about tomorrow we miss out on today (v.34). Any problem we face can be handled, with God's help, one day at a time.

As leaders who want to influence our generation for Christ, we need to lead in a way that allows others to see our faith in God. One way we can do that is by depending on God in the face of our daily pressures. The next time you're under pressure, pray for the grace you need to depend on God, who is perfectly and eternally worthy of your trust. Remember that those you lead will see how you respond to such pressures and will follow your actions.

Read John 11:1-44 and then answer the following questions:

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1. Why do you think Jesus prayed to God out loud rather than silently to raise Lazarus from the dead? _____

_____.

2. Is your faith in God such that others see Him working through you on routine and nonroutine days? _____

3. What one thing could you do each day to cultivate your dependence on God and demonstrate that dependence so others will see an example they could follow? _____

Day 2 - Dependence on God and Who God Is

We live in a time when all forms of external authority are being challenged in favor of subjective, inner authority. The quest for autonomy rather than accountability has become rampant. Yet Scriptures tell us that an autonomous mindset is a mark of foolishness, since it ignores our fundamental need for dependence on God. Read Lamentations 3:22-26 to consider the importance of an attitude of ongoing dependence on God.

Reading - Lamentations 3:22-26

Discussion - The horror of the complete destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians was still vivid in Jeremiah's mind when he wrote this series of five lamentations. Nevertheless, these verses, placed as they are in the middle of this short book, are words of hope and not of despair. They remind us that our only real hope is the character and promises of God.

The Lord's loving kindness, great compassion and complete faithfulness make Him the supremely worthy object of personal reliance. He is always good to those who seek Him and who put their hope in Him. Everything God asks us to do is for our ultimate good and everything He tells us to avoid is harmful to us, even when we may think otherwise.

We will often be tempted to complain that our way is hidden from the Lord, and our cause is disregarded by God (Isaiah 40:27), but doing so means judging according to appearances and not according to reality. There are only two possible perceptions of God's character in light of our circumstances; each of us will choose one when we encounter trouble. We will either view God's character in light of our circumstances, or our circumstances in light of God's character.

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If we choose the former, we will tend to look away from God and look to ourselves instead. Instead of leaning on the Rock, we will lean on a broken reed (2 Kings 18:21; Isaiah 36:6).

1. Which of the above means of support would you rather seek out and why? _____

_____.

Dependence on God is just a pious platitude unless the leader develops a strong personal relationship with Him. People who blindly trust strangers are the same people who hold title to the Brooklyn Bridge or the deed to Florida swampland. There's nothing nice about it – such people are often misled. The false prophets trusted their own minds because they had not explored God's Word. They were leading Israel to destruction.

Leaders depend on those they trust – that is, those they know, those they spend time with. Leaders find it difficult to trust a stranger – even if it is God. So cultivate your relationships carefully, beginning with your relationship with God. Then, as you evaluate your relationships with advisors and allies, remember a righteous person is cautious in making friendships, but the wicked are led astray by the way they act (Proverbs 12:26).

2. In your own words, rewrite Proverbs 12:26 and how you can apply this advice to your life.

_____.

Day 3 - Dependence on God and Who I Am

Faith is a universal experience – everyone, including the atheist, lives by faith. The issue is not whether we will trust in a belief system or trust in people or things, but whether we are trusting in that which is reliable or untrustworthy. Faith is only as good as the objects in which it is placed. Consider Jeremiah 17:5-8 to look at two conflicting sources of personal dependence.

Reading - Jeremiah 17:5-8

Discussion - A leader who is detached from God is in danger (vv.5-6), but one who trusts Him will flourish (vv.7-9). A wise leader trusts God even when his or her own heart is inclined to do something contrary to God's revealed will. Knowing and following God's Word is essential to receiving God's blessing.

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Jeremiah draws a sharp contrast between those who depend on human strength and those who depend on the living God. He makes it clear that we cannot look to both as our supreme basis of trust; we will either put our hope in the promises and power of people, or we will look beyond human capability to the person and promises of God. When we make people the basis of our confidence we experience rejection and disappointment again and again. But when God becomes the ultimate source of our confidence, we are never let down.

Habakkuk learned that the righteous will live by their faith (Habakkuk 2:4), and he was not talking about faith in men. Fearing men is a snare, but trusting the Lord is safe (Proverbs 29:25). Those who put more confidence in themselves or in other people than in God will find bitterness and disappointment in the end. They may appear to prosper for a season, but the journey will not get them to their desired goals. But those who transfer their trust from themselves or the promises of others to the Lord discover that their lives are deeply rooted in well-watered soil. The Lord declares that those who will honor Him will be honored by Him, and He will scorn those who despise Him (1 Samuel 2:30).

1. In what areas of your life (e.g. business, finances, health, family) are you depending more on yourself and others than on God? _____

2. What is holding you back from turning these areas over to the Lord? _____

Day 4 - Dependence on God and How I Think

DO you ever feel overwhelmed? Zerubbabel's task was so huge he needed a prophet of God to give him perspective. And man, did he receive a helpful truth for harried leaders! Thankfully, Zerubbabel's encouragement is as true today as ever before. Read Zechariah 4:6 and the note below.

Reading - Zechariah 4:6

Discussion - Zerubbabel had an overwhelming job to do. The Babylonians had destroyed Jerusalem and its temple seventy years before, and now Zerubbabel was in charge of the group that had come back to rebuild it. When Solomon first built the temple, he had the optimal situation – nearly unlimited resources and a motivated workforce. Zerubbabel now faced strong opposition, a demoralized workforce and limited resources.

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God’s word to him is everlastingly and universally true: work hard and smart. But if God doesn’t look favorably on your work, it will result in nothing significant. Zerubbabel had to make tough decisions, wrestle with personal problems, sit in long meetings, listen to grievances – everything other leaders do. But the prophet Zechariah’s message to him was that the job ultimately depended on God’s Spirit, not on his or anyone else’s might and power.

Leaders are responsible to manage their resources well and to lead their people effectively. But prayer to God and dependence on Him for the outcome is the wise leader’s constant strategy for success.

1. Rewrite Zechariah 4:6 in your own word and apply it to any area(s) of your life that you are living by your own might and strength. (*Example*: “Father, keep reminding me that it is not by my ability or by my will or effort that I am able to _____, but it is by your Spirit that I can accomplish anything.”) Be specific. In general prayers/requests in get in general responses.

Day 5 - Personal Development and What I Do

Every leader will discover there are times when it’s hard to trust in God. In an effort to help us do that, R. C. Sproul reminds us of the absolute dependence of God as demonstrated in His promise to Abraham. Read this amazing story in Genesis 15:9-21.

Reading - Genesis 15:9-21

Discussion - Legal counselors are some of the highest paid executives in business because they protect us from each other. We find it so hard to depend on anyone’s word that we have to close all the loopholes in any transaction. In business, doing so is more than smart – it’s essential.

But R. C. Sproul reminds his reader that there is One whom we can always depend on. Commenting on Genesis 15, the passage selected for this reading, Sproul wrote: “The meaning of the drama is clear: As God passed between the pieces His message was, ‘Abraham, if I fail to keep My promise to you, may I be cut asunder just as those animals have been torn apart.’ God put His eternal being on the line. It was as if He were saying, ‘May My immutable deity suffer mutation if I break My promise. May My infinite character become finite, My immortal essence suffer mortality. May the impossible become possible if I lie.’”

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The author of Hebrews reflected on this event when he wrote that God swore by Himself, since there was no one greater by whom to swear (Hebrews 6:13).

“The surety of God’s promise is God Himself. All that He is stands behind His promise. It would not do for God to swear by the temple or by His mother’s grave. He has no mother. The temple is not sacred enough to confirm the oath of God. He must swear by His own integrity, using His divine nature as an everlasting guarantee.”*

God tells us to trust Him with all our heart. Jesus came to assure us that His Father and what He said about trusting Him. Jesus gave His life to make us a part of God’s family and solidify that trust relationship. God’s Word and God’s actions both affirm the same conclusions: We can depend completely upon Him.

Read Proverbs 3:5-6. There is nothing like a good, clear, crisp statement to clarify things. God gives us just that kind of statement about depending on Him. Proverbs 3:5-6 deserves the leader’s closest examination. You owe it to yourself, and to those who depend on your leadership, to decide upon whom you depend.

1. Spend some time today, alone in prayer with our Lord. Discuss what you have learned about His dependability. Ask Him to reveal to you any and all areas of your life where you have taken the reigns of control from Him and, then, in faith, trusting that He is who He says He is and does what He says He will do, turn those reigns back over to His control. If you wish, you can discuss any of these areas of self-reliance with the study group.

*Sproul, R. C. *One Holy Passion*. Nashville; Thomas Nelson, 1987.

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