

Relying and Dependence

*I am the vine; you are the branches.
The one who remains in me—and I in him—
bears much fruit, because apart from me you
can accomplish nothing.*

—John 15:5

To be a disciple is to be a student of another. For the Christian, discipleship, in its essence, is Christ-likeness; responding to life like Jesus, thinking like Jesus, etc. is what we should aspire to every day. It ought to be the devotion of our lives. The only way to accomplish this is absolute, complete, thorough reliance on The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God must live through us if we are to look like the Son. The fruit of the Spirit is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22b-23a). Whose fruit is it? God’s. It is *God’s character* that expresses itself through our words, thoughts, and actions.

Often, Christians believe that they need to act like God. They say, “I need to be a better Christian.” That is an impossibility. We only look like God because of God. The Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are always working in our lives. They are accomplishing 100% of their work. They can do no more; there is no more potential in the work that they do in and through us. Everything they do is perfect. So, to say, “We must rely on God,” is really an understatement; we

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must *entirely* rely on God to accomplish *anything* of eternal value. Paul also saw this clearly and taught, “For in him [God] we live and move about and exist” (Acts 17:28a). We live *in* God. We move *in* God. We exist *in* God.

The more in love with God we are, the more we live by His power. At times, it seems like we are “passing on the religion without the relationship.”⁵⁰ Full dependence is necessary to reach our potential. In other words, a “self-sufficient child of God” is an oxymoron; our potential is possessed as we fall in love with Him more deeply.

Service May Dilute Our Reliance

Luke 10:38-42 recorded Jesus’ encounter with two sisters, Martha and Mary:

“³⁸ Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him as a guest. ³⁹ She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with all the preparations she had to make, so she came up to him and said, ‘Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do all the work alone? Tell her to help me.’ ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things, ⁴² but one thing is needed. Mary has chosen the best part; it will not be taken away from her.’”

Martha made a choice, and Mary made a choice. You, too, will make choices today, tomorrow, and next Monday. If you are going to prioritize God properly in your life, it will start with conscious decisions of humbleness. Mary was at the feet of Christ, listening, a perfect picture of humbleness, weakness, and submission.

Our service to God may keep us from reliance. In the 21st Century, there is a real tendency to be busy with our service to God. Worship is relegated to something we do for 15-30 minutes *once a week* at best. We choose to be

⁵⁰ Peter Tanchi, GACX Compelled Conference Session (Denton, Texas), Sept. 26, 2019.

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Martha instead of Mary, with the more significant acts of worship consistently idle. Our real power flows out of our devotion to God. Worship cultivates reliance and dependence.

*The greatest competitor to our devotion
to Jesus is our service to Jesus.*

— Rick Franklin

Distractions

Technology keeps us distracted. It would be difficult to think of how humankind could be more distracted. Technology seems to keep us in a constant state of “busy.” In our phone, we find our calendars and to-do-lists of things that are important enough to keep track of. But in those phone apps, we don’t see life’s most important thing to do: Worship God. We must make time for God to stay in touch with Him. Reliance dies without time. The Scriptures, prayer, being quiet before the Lord all help to cultivate reliance. We must do it daily.

We do many things that will not matter. We have filled our lives’ minutes up with both the most eternally important and the most temporally mundane. These “busy” things in our lives keep us from a lifestyle of reliance. We overuse the sentence, “I’m too busy.” Often we are busy being busy. When we stand before the Lord, do we think that the excuse, “Lord, I was too busy to spend 15 minutes a day with you,” will hold up? Let’s get our priorities straight.

*Our greatest fear should not be of failure
but of succeeding at things in
life that don’t really matter.*

— Francis Chan

Strength from Weakness

Paul understood where his strength came from. He wrote, “Therefore I am content with weaknesses, with insults, with troubles, with persecutions and difficulties for the sake of Christ, for whenever I am weak, *then I am strong*” (2 Corinthians 12:10; emphasis mine). Christian weakness is an attribute of strength potential. We tap into the fullest power of The Almighty when we are *totally dependent and in need*. Our daily need for God is the strength and foundation of reliant power. But being weak and humble strikes at core values of our flesh. Therefore, humbleness and weakness take a daily commitment.

Look to organize your life toward weakness. That is, organize it in ways where you must become more and more dependent on the Almighty to act in your life.

Circumstances Seem Impossible

When we rely on Jesus, nothing He wants from us is impossible. Relying on Jesus for the impossible again is a key Christian principle. Below, Oswald Chambers used Peter’s steps on the Sea of Galilee to expound on the concept of reliance on Christ for the impossible:

Don’t Think Now, Take the Road

“...Peter...walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid... —Matthew 14:29–30

The wind really was boisterous and the waves really were high, but Peter didn’t see them at first. He didn’t consider them at all; he simply recognized his Lord, stepped out in recognition of Him, and ‘walked on the water.’ Then he began to take those things around him into account, and instantly, down he went. Why couldn’t our Lord have enabled him to walk at the bottom of the waves, as well as on top of them? He could have, yet neither could be done without Peter’s continuing recognition of the Lord Jesus.

We step right out with recognition of God in some things, then self-

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consideration enters our lives and down we go. If you are truly recognizing your Lord, you have no business being concerned about how and where He engineers your circumstances. The things surrounding you are real, but when you look at them you are immediately overwhelmed [...]. Let your actual circumstances be what they may, but keep recognizing Jesus, maintaining complete reliance upon Him. You do not know when His voice will come to you, but whenever the realization of God comes, even in the faintest way imaginable, be determined to recklessly abandon yourself, surrendering everything to Him.”⁵¹

Peter defied the laws of physics for a time. The impossible became the reality when he was focused on the Lord. Although he only took a few steps on water, only Peter got out of the boat! The potential one has in a fully committed reliance on the Lord is incalculable.

Scripture Passage

John 15:1-17

Questions

- 1) How often do you pray?
- 2) How often do you worship God?
- 3) What are you trusting God for right now *that cannot be accomplished in your power*?
- 4) If you do not have a kingdom work that relies upon God, what could you begin to pray about?

⁵¹ Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, “Don’t Think Now, Take the Road” (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Barbour Publishing, 1963), June 18.

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Aim Point

- 1) Take time (15-20 minutes) over the next week to worship God every day. Listen to worship music, read a passage of Scripture, and pray.
- 2) Begin to ask God to make you totally dependent on Him.
- 3) If you have trouble focusing when you pray, begin to write your prayers in a notebook first. Then read them to God.