

A Light in the Valley

February, 2019
Volume 5
Issue 2

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Lean Not On Your Own Understanding

by: Jacob Brewer

*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own
understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.”
Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV)*

In 1 Kings 3:4-15, we see that God granted the gift of wisdom to King Solomon, from whom we have a multitude of wise sayings and proverbs. Many are directed to young people, and we can gain a great wealth of knowledge from them. Proverbs 3:5-6 is one of those, and it holds a principle which is prevalent throughout scripture. We have manifold examples of people who trusted in their own understanding, as well as people who allowed God to direct their paths. Let's look at some of those examples.

Jonah

Most people know the story of Jonah, who disobeyed God and was swallowed by the great fish. In Jonah 1:1-3, we read about the command God gave Jonah,

and how Jonah chose not to follow it.

“Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.” But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.”

You can continue reading to see Jonah's punishment, as well as his returning to God in the end. To summarize, in chapters two and three he is swallowed by a great fish prepared by God. In the belly of the fish, Jonah prays, and God returns him to dry land. God then commands Jonah to go teach in Nineveh again, and Jonah obeys Him.

There are countless lessons to be learned from Jonah. However, the one we want to focus on is that Jonah determined that it would be better to avoid

teaching in Nineveh. He did acknowledge God, but trusted his own understanding.

The People of Israel

Time and time again, God's people ignored His words and lead themselves rather than allowing God to direct them. Since the very beginning, it was a vicious cycle of rebelling, then repenting, rebelling, then repenting, on and on. In Exodus chapter thirty-two we read the account of the golden calf, in which the people cry out for Aaron to make them gods because Moses has not returned from the mountain. The people had barely escaped Egypt, and they were already rebelling against God's wishes for them. When we read about the prophets such as Jeremiah, we see that the people did what they thought was best for them, instead of what God said was best. This resulted in attacks, captivities, and poverty, just to name a few consequences. You can read numerous accounts of this, such as Isaiah 8, Ezekiel 23, and practically the entire book of Jeremiah.

Now let's look at some examples of those who did listen to God's understanding.

King Josiah

King Josiah is known for being one of the best kings of the Old Testament. He became king at the tender age of eight and reigned for thirty-one years. During his rule, the Book of the Law, which had been lost for many years, was found. When Josiah heard the Book of the Law read, "he tore his clothes" (2 Kings 22:11); he was showing a tremendous amount of sorrow at these words because he realized that he and his people were not following God's commands. Josiah promptly made a covenant with the Lord that he would follow Him and keep His commandments. Then Josiah tore down the idols and high places, removed and burned the bones of the priests of the false gods, and eradicated everything related to idolatry. Reading through 1 Kings 22, there are terms like "pulverized," "defiled," "crushed to powder," "broke down," and "tore down." All of which clearly show the passion he had for heeding God's will and trusting in God's guidance. Josiah then commanded the people to follow God's Law, and led by example for the majority of his life.

Jesus

Jesus is the ultimate example of listening to God's will. During his time on this earth, living as a man, He was tempted in all things as we are (Hebrews 4:15). He gave His life on the cross, more than any of us will ever have to give, to an underserving people. In Matthew 26:36-46, we read about Christ's prayer in the gar-

den. He prayed, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." He prayed these words three times, and God's answer was no. Jesus accepted this, and peacefully went through one of the most merciless deaths the Romans had devised. In Psalm 22, we read a prophecy about Jesus's crucifixion. The first half of this Psalm is devoted to a cry for mercy, that He might not have to endure the cross. In the middle, there is a turning point, "You have answered Me." And the latter half is devoted to praise toward God. Although God answered no, Christ would still praise Him. Although God would require Him to go through one of the most burdensome trials ever conceived, Jesus would continue to praise God. That shows complete devotion to God and complete respect for His will. Through this, He granted no credence to the understanding of man.

We can learn from these accounts that even though leaning on our own understanding may seem better, trusting in God is always the best option. Often our finite minds can't think of all the possibilities. God knows every situation, and he always knows what is best. We can find many more accounts throughout scripture of people who followed and did not follow God, and the theme is all the same. We can read about Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. We can read about Noah in Genesis 7-9. I would encourage you to seek out more accounts like these and note that the common theme will hold throughout.

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When we are committed to God first, which entails being committed to His revelation, we will keep seeking to better our understanding and our lives. Yet we will recognize that there is indeed what is called "sound doctrine" to which we are to be faithful.

Study Opportunities

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM
Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

Meeting At

Homewood Suites of Bozeman
1023 E Baxter Ln,
Bozeman, MT 59715

Everyone Welcome!

Unintended Consequences

by: Kris Brewer

I was reading a bit from Numbers 35 this morning about God's plan for the children of Israel when they came into the promised land. As their inheritance, God gave the Levites 48 cities interspersed within the land. Six of those cities were designated as "cities of refuge" which were designed to provide a place for those who had accidentally killed another to flee for refuge. If they made it to the city of refuge, and were judged by the congregation to be guilty of manslaughter (an accidental killing) rather than murder (an intentional killing), they could stay in the city of refuge and the Avenger of Blood was not allowed to exercise justice for their dead loved one.

However, if the one guilty of manslaughter left the city of refuge, the Avenger of Blood was permitted to kill him, without retribution.

This account got me thinking about consequences. We currently live in a society that thinks there should be no consequences for actions. Or, perhaps more accurately, it thinks that consequences for actions should be laid off on someone else. "It isn't my fault" is an oft heard cry. People often think they should not bear any consequence for their own actions.

In reality, there are consequences for actions. Even when something is done by accident, there may be dire consequences. Here, a person who accidentally killed another was condemned to live in the city of refuge until the death of the High Priest.

Just because we did not intend to do something does not mean that we are free from the consequences that may come from our actions. Sometimes, we have to learn to live with the consequences that arise because of something we have done. Sometimes, our actions bring consequences for others.

We should remember that our actions are often much like a stone thrown in to the middle of a still pond. The waves go out, and impact others...often much more than we would ever think about before we acted. And once we act, there's no taking it back.

We should think before we act. We should also realize that sometimes we have to live with negative consequences to our actions. Let's take responsibility for our actions, and not try to blame the consequences we suffer on others!

More Like Jesus: Humility

by: Stefan Richardson

While megachurches and televangelists pander to the world with feel-good teaching and theatrics, those that seek to follow the truth should not attempt to emulate these prominent “religious figures,” but to emulate Christ, making Him our role model. As we try to be more like Jesus, there will be traits and characteristics that we must take on to grow in our Christlikeness.

Of all the traits needed as a Christian, humility is possibly the most challenging. Roots for both the Greek and English words indicate the idea of something that is low-lying or close to the ground. It has been said that “humility is not thinking little of oneself, but thinking of oneself little”: the idea that thinking little of oneself is still thinking about oneself, still putting the focus in the wrong place.

For the Christian, humility is not just valuable, it is absolutely necessary — it makes the Christian more like the Master. Humility was one of the most outstanding characteristics of Christ. This is seen so clearly in His life: He came from heaven to die for the sin of all mankind (Hebrews 2:9; Romans 5:7, 8). Paul wrote to the Philippians “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus ... He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death” (Philippians 2:5, 8). For us, humility shows the importance of the Master rather than the servant. Keeping things in perspective and remembering that we are simply servants is crucial.

Humility is a selfless attitude. Our attitude, our mental perspective, is something we develop. Having a good attitude is entirely up to each one of us and is one of the most valuable contributors towards being an effective worker for the Lord. A good attitude must involve work — often hard work — and a meekness of heart. We must seek the yoke of Christ rather than looking for our own liberties. Our priorities must be well-ordered and proper, seeking first the kingdom of God above all else, even our own food and clothing (Matthew 6:33).

To be the Christians the Lord expects us to be, as workers in His kingdom, effort will be required, sometimes requiring us to push aside things we would like to do for ourselves — relaxation or refreshment — to do the things that must be done for the Master. Humility causes regular self-examination, and to examine one’s own self is much harder than examining someone else. Humility keeps us walking the walk, not just talking the talk.

To be like Jesus there are many things that must be done in our lives, but there is something that must be done to our lives: We must be emptied out of it.

Why Be Concerned With Sound Doctrine?

by: Doy Moyer

Paul wrote to Timothy, “Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 1:13). He warned Timothy that a time was coming when people would not endure “sound teaching” (2 Tim 4:3).

To Titus, Paul wrote that elders need to be able to “give instruction in sound doctrine and to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9). Then, “as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine” (2:1).

God enjoins sound doctrine (teaching) upon us. What this essentially means is that our teaching is to be faithful to God and His word. “Sound” means “healthy” or “uncorrupted.”

I want to make two observations:

1. Doctrinal purity often hangs on a thin thread. The teaching and holding fast of sound doctrine is what God wants. Again, read 1-2 Timothy and Titus if there is any doubt about that. I don’t see how that’s debatable for those who believe Scripture is God’s word. We ought to avoid the arrogance of thinking we are perfect, and we should always be amenable to further study, understanding, and changing when we see we must. Honesty demands this. At the same time, we should never downplay the importance of what Scripture says about sound teaching.

2. However, it is possible that what we believe is sound doctrine can be, in our minds, best maintained by adding rules and hedges that Scripture does not provide. In other words, we can bend over so far backwards that we end up outside of the sound doctrine that we were trying to guard. A creedal mentality can put us in this position.

With those two thoughts, the next will follow: the more that we seek unity and fellowship on grounds other than the authority of Scripture and sound doctrine, the more sound doctrine will be sacrificed. I am talking here about the doctrinal purity of observation #1 above, not the kind that #2 warns about.

While we might want to emotionally accept any and all who claim to be Christians, the fact is that there is a wide array of doctrines and practices, and they cannot all

be correct. There appears an air of uncertainty about sound doctrine, as if it is “out there” somewhere, but never fully attainable in a way that anyone can be confident about. By failing to stand firm for much of anything, and by acting as if no one is wrong about anything, the door is opened for sacrificing the pure teaching of Scripture on the altar of open fellowship.

For example, either baptism for the remission of sins is necessary or it isn't. If it is, then those who reject it are in serious error, for “remission of sins” is on the line. To accept them anyway necessitates sacrificing and severely diminishing the biblical teaching of baptism. If, on the other hand, baptism is not necessary, then those who teach it as unnecessary will have to either accept or reject those who do, and those who do are in error for binding what God has not.

Someone has to compromise what he believes to be the truth on the matter. While we all accept as brethren those with whom we have some disagreements (this is inevitable), this does not, and cannot practically, expand into the idea that we ought to accept any and all with whom we disagree on everything. Such would be an absurdity, and no one does this either. Everyone has doctrinal lines they will not tolerate being crossed. Telling the difference between what we can and cannot accept will take much discernment, wisdom, and deeply imbibing the Word.

There are dangers, among which include 1) a failure to listen when we might be wrong, and 2) trying to be so restrictive that we err in the opposite direction, and thereby also sacrifice doctrinal purity.

Yet commitment to the truth of Scripture needs to be built into the fabric of God's people as a starting point. If we are not willing to do this, then on what grounds may we even call ourselves the children of God—terminology that itself is based upon what Scripture says? On what grounds will we be able to believe anything about Jesus and what He reveals Himself to be? This is fundamental.

Here, then, is the attitude that serves as a beginning point: “And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers” (1 Thess 2:13).

Couple that with the attitude of the Bereans: “Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

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Daily Bible Reading

March 2019

March 1	Genesis 1-3	March 18	Genesis 29-30
March 4	Genesis 4-5	March 19	Genesis 31
March 5	Genesis 6:1-8:19	March 20	Genesis 32-34
March 6	Genesis 8:20-10:32	March 21	Genesis 35-36
March 7	Genesis 11-14	March 22	Genesis 37-38
March 8	Genesis 15:1-17:14	March 25	Genesis 39:1-41:36
March 11	Genesis 17:15-19:38	March 26	Genesis 41:37-42:38
March 12	Genesis 20-22	March 27	Genesis 43-44
March 13	Genesis 23-24	March 28	Genesis 45-47
March 14	Genesis 25-26	March 29	Genesis 48-50
March 15	Genesis 27-28		

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