

Don't Be Disheartened: Lean In

Lean in: Those words in my spirit gave me pause one morning as I was pouring out my frustrations to the Lord about the confusing days in which we live. As I pondered it, a picture formed in my mind of a child leaning in to her father. Instead of fretting or striving, God wants us to lean into Him. From that position, we can hear His heart about all that is going on in the world. We can feel His strength and find peace knowing we are His. We can trust Him with it all.

Lean In for Answers

John the Beloved knew this truth. As the disciples gathered around the Passover meal with Jesus, little did they know it would be their last. The conversation took a strange turn when Jesus said, "One of you is going to betray me" (John 13:21). That statement caused the disciples confusion and distress, much like events in our day make us feel. As the other disciples stared at one another, at a loss, John leaned in and asked, "Lord, who is it?" (John 13:22-25). As John leaned into the Lord, he heard the answer.

When we are dumbfounded or worried by what going is on in the world, we can go to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords for answers. David sought answers from the Lord on many occasions. Before he became king, he spent years on the run from Saul. During that time, he heard the Philistines were attacking the Israelite city of Keilah and robbing them of food. It was a confusing time for David. He was anointed and felt the responsibility of protecting Israel but he was not yet their king. So he inquired of the Lord, asking God what to do. "The Lord said to David, 'Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah'" (I Sam. 23:2b, NKJV). David's men were afraid though, so David asked the Lord again. "And the Lord answered him and

said, 'Arise, go down to Keilah. For I will deliver the Philistines into your hand'" (I Sam. 23:4b). So they went and God gave them a great victory.

Personal Questions are Welcome

Rebekah, Isaac's wife, had concerns too. When she was pregnant, she felt a lot of activity in her womb. Long before sonograms or even maternity check-ups, she was on her own. So she went to God and, in Genesis 25:22, asked, "Why is this happening to me?" Her query was not dismissed as trivial, for God answered her question with some detail! "The Lord said to her, 'Two nations are in your womb and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other and the older will serve the younger'" (Gen. 25:23). Sure enough, Rebekah had twins.

God is not put off by our questions. He created us to have relationship with Him. So when we lean in with our concerns and inquiries, He answers.

Lean In for Perspective

During Jesus' last supper with His disciples, He shared many things. Reading through the book of John, we sense that John continued to lean in to hear all Jesus had to say. As Jesus comforted His friends, promising to send the Holy Spirit, John took note. John also heard Jesus communicate the depth of His love and which we, His disciples, must also have. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's command and remain in his love. ...My command is this: Love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command" (John 15:9-14, NIV).

John must have held onto those words as the evening wore on. When Jesus and the disciples went to the garden to pray, John

stayed near His Lord. While the others fell asleep, John heard the prayer of Jesus that night and wrote it down for future generations (John 17). When Jesus was arrested and events were spinning out of control, John was there. He followed Jesus to the High Priest's house, onto Pilate's court and even the cross (John 18-19). In the midst of the treachery, violence, false witnesses and seeming collapse of everything they believed, John leaned into Jesus, saw Him suffer and willingly lay down His life out of love for us all.

Because John stayed close, he was able to get a grasp of God's perspective on the times.

God's Perspective

Of the four Gospels, John's alone told of Nicodemus' conversation with Jesus. John was the only one to share the stunning revelation of Jesus' purpose. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:16-17).

All the disciples walked with Jesus, talked with Jesus and listened to Jesus. But when Jesus was arrested and their world was falling apart, they ran (Matt. 26:56). But John then followed, leaning in to see what was happening. And he began to understand it from God's perspective.

When things in our lives and world seem to be swirling out of control, we must lean in and ask God for His perspective. When I do, God often reminds me that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be

able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:28-29; 37-39).

When we see things from God’s perspective, we can have peace in the midst of chaos, trusting Him to bring His work to completion—for our good!

It’s Time to Lean In

Over the past several years, we have been inundated with bad news, divisive news and discouraging news. The shock caused by some of what we see, hear and experience has left many disoriented, disheartened, in disbelief and/or dis-engaged. Some have turned to complaining, lashing out or even going away from the Lord. But now is the time to lean in to Jesus. If we stick close to Him, like John did, He will answer our questions. He will give us understanding of His perspective. He will give us specific direction for the days ahead. He may even use us to leave a lasting legacy for future generations to follow as well!

So lean in. Hear His love for you. Abide in His peace. And be a witness for Jesus to those desperate for Good News!

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