

The One Thing That Shuts Out God

Have you ever watched a small child transition from the infantile state of total dependence to relative independence? As he learns to dress himself, brush his teeth and so on, he develops an attitude that declares, "I can do it myself!" This attitude, encouraged by parents and reinforced by a culture that prides itself on its own resourcefulness, can become a stronghold of self-reliance. And self-reliance shuts out God.

I learned this truth the hard way. I had always been an independent person, and though I was quick to seek God's intervention in circumstances that were beyond my control, I tried to handle the bulk of my life situations on my own. In fact, I thought that was what God wanted me to do.

But as I grew closer to God, I learned I was wrong. I began to pray, "Lord, show me anything that is a hindrance to knowing You." One day when I uttered this prayer the presence of God filled my car.

Rather than revealing some forgotten sin or offense, the Holy Spirit said, "Your independence is a stench to Me." I came to understand that He didn't want me to wait until I had run out of my own resources to put things into His hands; He wanted me to depend on Him for everything.

Proverbs 3:5 spells out the attitude we are to have: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him" (NKJV). Notice that this verse doesn't tell us to acknowledge Him in just some of our ways—but in all our ways. We are to depend not on ourselves but on Him.

To the extent that we rely on our own abilities, gifts or resources to accomplish what God is calling us to, we limit

Him. He is much more powerful than we are—and He wants to do much more than we could do on our own! Because we operate in the natural realm, we will certainly use our gifts and abilities in carrying out His plans, but we have to remember that it is He who not only gave them to us but also empowers us to use them. We couldn't even take our next breath without His grace.

Total dependence on God is not weakness. It is a place of surrender that acknowledges that we can do nothing without Him (see John 15:5). We can take this stance in confidence, knowing that whatever resources we need, He will provide, and whatever tasks He assigns, He will do through us. After all, if He is to receive the glory for everything we do, He has to do the work.

Catherine Marshall () is right: Helplessness “is one of the greatest assets a human being can have”—if it is coupled with knowing God. When we accept the truth of our own inadequacy in light of His limitless power and infinite love for us, we can trust Him to do “exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20).