

Lean on Him

A passion for working with young people has kept Pastor Love connected to the ever-shifting focus of popular culture during the past 30 years. As Greater Grace Church's Youth Pastor and volunteer chaplain for the NBA's New York Knicks, Pastor Love calls upon a vast reserve of knowledge, humor, and technique to reach hearts for Christ.

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

This message is really designed for those who prefer crutches while going through life. It's a warning. Now, before you assume that you're not such a person—you think that you do not prefer crutches—you should think about this. I believe that, without exception, all of us prefer crutches. It doesn't matter who you are or what your background is.

I remember when I first got saved. When I came home and told my older sister that I had accepted Christ, that I would be going to Bible studies, and that I wanted to get to know God, she said, "Well, that's all right. That's good. Your Christianity is a crutch." Then she made a statement that really rings with truth. She said, "And it's all right because everybody needs a crutch."

But I got offended because pride says, "I don't need any help walking through life. I don't need any assistance."

This is why so many people reject the Gospel

and reject the offer of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior—they don't want help. "I can do this by myself," a proud person will say. However, this booklet will show just how much each of us needs the Savior and why leaning on Him is the greatest thing in the world.

Chapter One

MAKE GOD YOUR CRUTCH

Humble people are the ones who say, “I can’t make it. I don’t just need help—I need a miracle.” Thank God, a miracle is exactly what was given to us. We didn’t come to God and say, “I need some help.” We needed salvation. We needed saving. We needed total and free deliverance—which is what we got when we embraced Christ by faith. But it’s okay to have a crutch. What’s the purpose of the crutch? It provides us with something to lean on.

Have you ever used a pair of crutches? I have on a number of occasions. And thank God that there are such things. Maybe we’d prefer motorized wheelchairs, or perhaps those carts that the elderly drive. (I would have mine turbo charged.)

But the fact is, crutches are real blessings because you’re able to lean on those crutches, take the pressure off the injury and get around. They

offer you something to lean on, which is very, very important.

But the problem with our lives is that we prefer crutches. It is not natural to lean completely on the Lord, so we look for substitutes. We don't get up in the morning and say, "Look, God, I don't want to lean on You today, I'll find something else." We don't consciously make that kind of a decision, but subconsciously we prefer to have any other kind of crutch so that we don't have to lean completely upon God. But God's entire program is designed to remove all of our crutches so that we will learn how to lean completely and entirely upon Him.

There you are with your artificial crutches, or something other than God to lean on. I just have this image in my mind that when God sees that, He comes along, and He kicks them out from underneath us. Not so that we would be further injured, not so that we would be hurt—just to reveal to us that we're leaning on something other than Him.

Poor Substitutes

Crutches can become substitutes for God, and He really is a jealous God. Maybe that jealousy does not reveal itself initially; but, if you

give God enough time, He will remove all of the substitutes so that we would just lean on Him.

God wants to be our one and only crutch. Don't ever think that there's something wrong with that. It's okay. We all need something to lean on. There is even a song that says, "We all need someone to lean on." Now the point is, we do. That song isn't far from the truth. The problem is that it doesn't say who that somebody is. The Bible does say who we need to lean on—God.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

"Then shall you call upon me, and shall go and pray unto me, and I will hear you, and you shall seek me and find me.

"When you search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

There it is. When you're leaning completely on God, that's when you will find Him.

The Scriptures suggest that maybe we won't find God the way we really wish to find God until we learn to lean completely on Him. Why do you think that God doesn't profit some young people in their relationship to Him? They haven't gotten to the place in their lives where

they're really looking for God.

There are all kinds of reasons for this. They are intimidated because some of their friends are not seeking for God with all their hearts—so they can't do it either. They haven't learned to be an individual, to think for themselves. They are still being directed by the mentality of the herd. They cannot choose independently of the herd. Even though something inside of them says, "You ought to trust God completely," their response is, "I can't yet, because not enough of my friends are. If I make an independent decision, it will be too dangerous. They might expel me from the acceptance of that group."

That's okay. Do you know what? You're going to do something that's going to make them expel you sooner or later anyhow. The peer group is going to be whittled down by God, and there's only going to be a few of them left. Chances are, you're not going to be one of them.

Will you be with them twenty years from now? Probably not. Will you be serving God side by side with one of them? Probably not. Then why is it so important to conform to the peer group? It's because you're still getting your identity from the peer group, and not from God.

So we have to be careful about these crutches, because God wants to bring us to the place where we lean upon Him alone.

“The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them” (Deuteronomy 33:27).

This verse is really a commentary, and essentially it says this: “There is only one place to lean, and that is God.” There is only one place for you to lean. Underneath are the everlasting arms, a place where we can find rest, a place where we can find comfort, a place where we can just let ourselves go.

When you let yourself go, you fall into the rest of the everlasting God and underneath are the everlasting arms.

Not only will He catch you, not only will you learn to lean on Him, but He’ll take care of your enemies as well.

Don’t let crutches become substitutes for God.

Chapter Two

LOOKING UP INSTEAD OF LOOKING AROUND

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isaiah 41:10).

The original Hebrew reads this way: “Do not fear, for I am with you: do not anxiously look about you.” Now, is that something you’ve ever done in your life? Do you anxiously look about you?

It’s a fascinating thing to see how people respond when someone enters a room. In a meeting every time the door opens, every head turns as if to say, “Who is it? Is it an important person?” Apparently not. Then they turn back and give attention once again. There’s a tendency with all of us to anxiously look about.

“Do not fear. I am with you.”

This is God's promise. He says, "I am with you. Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Surely I will help you." Here it is. "Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

What a promise from God! Mix faith with it.

"Don't anxiously look around. I'm your God. I'll strengthen you. I'll help you. Surely, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

Do you know what God is saying?

He is saying, "I will hold you up. Please don't run around and look for substitutes for the very thing that I am in your life to do. I am the One who has the arms that are underneath you, the everlasting arms."

It's not like you're going to say one day, "That's it! I collapse." And God says, "Whoops, sorry, I wasn't there." Then you go through and hit the bottom.

God's arms are the everlasting arms. They're never going to move. They're never going to leave. They're always going to be there. The care is never going to be removed. The love is never going to be taken away. He promises to uphold you and to strengthen you with His righteous right hand.

Get Vertical with God

There are so many substitutes for God in this world. I believe that they line up at the doors of our hearts—each of them waiting for its chance, hoping that it would be called upon as the next substitute. It's nobody's fault. It's in our nature to want to go after substitutes rather than the real thing.

Life's crutches just keep crumbling underneath us. They're not adequate, they're not sufficient, and as much as we would like to continue to lean on them, they don't get the job done. Finally, we just throw the crutches away. We relinquish our hold on them, and we say, "God, please, I want to lean on You."

Crutches keep the focus of our soul on a horizontal level rather than on a vertical level in a relationship with God. In other words, if you're the kind of person who always looks this way and that way when you get into trouble—you don't look vertically—then your problems are only going to increase.

Do you remember Moses when he thought he was ready to deliver the children of Israel? He finally sensed who he was. He came to grips with his identity. He was an Israelite, and it

made no sense trying to deny who he really was. It didn't matter if he grew up in the palace of Egypt. It didn't matter if he was adopted as Pharaoh's daughter's son. None of that mattered. He knew who he was. He was an Israelite.

Moses sensed, as God spoke to him, that he was going to deliver his people. But Moses didn't realize that he wasn't ready. The reason that he wasn't ready is that there was still too much of Moses in Moses. God has to get us out of ourselves and get Himself into us to get the job done through us.

So Moses saw an Egyptian, a taskmaster, whipping one of the children of Israel, and Moses says, "You know what? If I'm going to be a deliverer, I might as well start today."

Moses is ready to intervene, and he's going to take care of this Egyptian. He's going to do more than take care of him—he's going to take him out.

But before he touches this Egyptian, do you know what he does? The Bible says that he looks this way, and he looks that way. When he saw that nobody was looking, then he killed the Egyptian and buried his body in the sand.

Instead of looking this way and looking that way, he should have looked up. He should have

simply said, “God, do You want me to kill him? I’ll kill him.” God would have said, “That’s not the way I’m going to deliver My people.” But Moses didn’t do it that way. He looked this way, and he looked that way.

You’re not ready to be delivered from your crutches until you become perfectly indifferent to the praise or the criticism of people. You see, when you get to the place where you don’t care, you know that God is leading you in making your decision because you’ve got a relationship that is vertical.

Get vertical with God. Become perfectly indifferent to praise or to blame. You will never be free to be the man or the woman that God wants you to be until you are free from all people in your vertical relationship.

When you first get on a vertical hold with God, you will begin to hear from God and He will lead you. Frankly, once God leads you, you really won’t care about the response of people.

Chapter Three

FINDING PERMANENT RELIEF

Crutches paralyze the walk of faith. With human crutches, it's inevitable that you'll remain horizontal—whether you keep looking at friends, money, security, career, or family—human crutches keep you from looking up.

What are you leaning on right now? Is it a person? Is it a relationship? Is it a career? Is it money? Is it your car? Is it your music? Is it your friends?

You say, “Well, you know what? It happens to be three out of those five.” Or, it could be all of the above. “What are you going to do about it?”

Me? I can do nothing for you. God? That's another story. He might kick the crutches right out from underneath you. It's not unlike Him to do such a thing.

Temporary Sublimations

Crutches only offer temporary relief, whereas God offers permanent relief. All of us have a tendency to turn to some kind of a remedy that comforts us and dulls our pain. We do this just so that we can get through and endure some of the storms of life.

I spoke to a friend of mine recently and he said, "You know, I'm not sure why I do what I do, but I think I'm sublimating because I can't deal with the pressure." We all do it. We sublimate. We substitute things in the place of looking to God. We turn to things that take our minds off the problems at hand. We check out of reality.

What do you do? Do you go to your computer? I know with some kids, it is video games. They just look into that screen, and there they go. They jump right in. They are one of the combatants in the little game that they're playing.

How do you check out of reality? How do you sublimate? I want to tell you something. That only provides temporary relief, not the permanent relief that can only come through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think about it. You can have temporary re-

lief, or you can get permanent relief through Christ.

When we lean on other things or other people and we keep doing it, guess what happens. The problems only intensify.

You could find a relationship and that relationship meets your needs. But if you haven't gotten vertical with God, that relationship is a crutch. And as much as you think that it helps you, you will discover that it will only complicate your life and intensify your problems.

When God kicks the crutch out from underneath you, you're going to think you're devastated, but that's going to be your only way to find permanent relief as you learn to lean upon Him. All kinds of substitutes are out there. We go looking for them when we don't even know we are looking for them.

God is not into providing temporary relief. You could cry out and say, "God, please, I'm going through it. Will You dull the pain?" Do you know what He would say? "No, go through it. Learn something. Find Me. Even more than that, lean on Me. I'll get you through it."

CONCLUSION

A.W. Tozer once wrote, "Our woes began when God was forced out of His eternal shrine and things were allowed to enter. Within the human heart, things have taken over. Men have now by nature no peace within their hearts, for God is crowned there no longer, but therein is moral dust. Stubborn and aggressive usurpers fight against themselves, or among themselves, for first place on the throne."

Sounds like a description of our hearts. Our hearts covet things intensely. I hear people talk like this all the time in the Body of Christ. They use words such as these all the time:

"My this."

"My that."

"My ministry."

"My school."

Nothing is ours. These words sound innocent enough. But they reveal this natural-born inbred desire to take things and to substitute

them for God.

There is a place God Himself should inhabit. The shrine is in our hearts. It is there that He alone should be crowned King. Let's stop leaning on things, and let's learn to look up and lean only on Jesus.