

Lifecraft from God – Exercising Trust

What is proverbs. A set of old sayings inspired by God. Wisdom - making wise choices in life. To help me I call it Pro, as in professional, doing words or verbs, pro verbs - really good things to do.

Proverbs 3 v 5&6

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.*

The particular focus this morning is on Trust and how we actually do this. To help bring this to life, think of it as learning to ride a bike. Let me explain and show you how this compares to trust in God, when you learn to ride a bike there is a learning involved. There is a process for learning, development and progress is required.

Start with a bike like this....(*visual is a child's bike with stabilisers*) I have one to show you, I've borrowed this one from my niece. As you can see it has something on it called stabilisers.

Now something that can and does happen to us all is that in our walk or bike ride with God and learning to trust God we can actually go about our lives with artificial stabilisers on it. It looks like you are on your bike, it looks like you are doing your life, trust in God, going to the right things, being at the right places, and being OK. however, you don't realise that you have on your life and on the bike of your life, and in your relationship with God there are artificial stabilisers, things keeping you upright, balanced, feeling like you are moving forward but in reality the size of your bike and the fact that it is artificially stabilised is holding you back.

In reality (ref small bike with stabilisers) I am not going very far on this bike, I am not going very fast on it, I am not going to get over kerbs, up hills, down hills on that bike because it is too small for me and the stabilisers will only slow me down further. So as we follow Jesus do we want to go struggle to go up and down the pavement for the rest of your life or do you want to ride life's challenges and ride le tour de life with Jesus.

As we follow Jesus there are stages we go through in our relationship with Him. It is a journey to true freedom in life through Christ. This journey requires Trust in Jesus, where we let go and don't lean on our own understanding. On this journey to trust and freedom and riding our lives well, we need to identify our own artificial stabilisers.

Let me give you some examples of artificial stabilisers, I want to try and include everyone including myself, but if you feel left out don't worry the list is not exhaustive. These stabilisers can be; value we place in relationships, dis-functional, negative thinking patterns, also known as stinking thinking, the value we place on the job we have - the fact it feeds our sense of identity, need to people please, our need to be

needed, money - how we find security in money, sense in belonging in the people around us, our eating habits, our virtual identity on-line, a daily routine that has to include coffee or a glass of wine, and it can be more destructive coping mechanisms, eating disorders, self-harm, drinking, gambling.

There are lots of ways in our lives and different extremes and subtleties where we can manage our lives, keep it balanced, maintain a feeling of control, feel like we can do this but all along there are artificial things holding us up and filling our lives, artificial stabilisers going on.

The Good News though is that there is a journey we can go on. A journey that starts with a stop. If we stopped still long enough and ask God about our life, our dependencies, our stabilisers, He would say: 'let me show you, let me teach you', let me teach you to ride your bike, let me teach you to take these things off so that you no longer need to stay in control all the time, no longer need to be liked all the time, no longer need to try and hold yourself up all the time.

Let me illustrate this with a story of when a young man met Jesus.

Matthew 19 v 16 - 22

Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, 'Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?'

'Why do you ask me about what is good?' Jesus replied. 'There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.'

'Which ones?' he enquired.

Jesus replied, "'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honour your father and mother," and "love your neighbour as yourself."

'All these I have kept,' the young man said. 'What do I still lack?'

Now, if we are to take the proverb seriously *'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding'*, we also need to be asking the same question to Jesus that this man does: *'what do I still lack'*, and listen and seek an answer that Jesus will reveal to us.

21 Jesus answered, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'

22 When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

If I tie this to the bike Jesus is saying, 'you have the basics, you can push the pedals, steer and break, that is great, now let's take the stabilisers off, let's go for the things that artificially hold you up in this world and then you can grow, you can ride your life with me.'

Now for that man the stabilisers and the tiny bike of his life came into full view. He was holding onto a lot of things, keeping him upright, keeping him stable, his finances, his position, his influence, maybe even the fact that he was young, there was something about his entire life holding him up, balancing him. Jesus identified these things, he lacked nothing, except a willingness to give that up to follow Jesus. *'He went away sad, because he had great wealth.'*

Now Jesus doesn't have a problem with being wealthy, having money or position or influence, he does have a problem with those things holding us up though. Our worth and value needs to be in Jesus.

What I find interesting is the levels of choice we have about this. Jesus did not go running after this man as he walked away, re-negotiate the terms. However, there is something about our willingness and courage to let go of things and Jesus will not make us, he will not force us and sometimes he won't go chasing after us, but he will always wait for us to come back and welcome us with celebration if we do.

Proverbs 3 v5 and 6

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Let's have a look at a big artificial stabiliser: lean not on your own understanding.

Matthew 14 v 22 - 32

This event comes after Jesus had been teaching a large crowd of 5,000 plus and the miraculously fed them.

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. 'It's a ghost,' they said, and cried out in fear.

But Jesus immediately said to them: 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.' 'Lord, if it's you,' Peter replied, 'tell me to come to you on the water.'

Here we see a great example of what trust in God means and not leaning on your own understanding.

Peter is in a place of comfort, in the boat, although afraid as he thought it was a ghost. It is comfortable for Peter as it is likely to be his boat, he was a fisherman, this was his domain, his business, his financial security, his way of life, his identity. But what happens...

'Lord, if it's you,' Peter replied, 'tell me to come to you on the water.' 'Come,' he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came towards Jesus.

Before he knows it Peter is out of the boat, he leaves behind the things he knows well and steps out, he does something that only Jesus has ever done he defies the laws of nature based solely on a "come". The level of trust that was required from Peter is brilliant and inspiring, but he is no different to you or me. This boat can be a parallel to your life right now, and there is a "come" from Jesus. There is a "come out on the water with me", there is a "do you trust me enough, to step away from the things you know, but are also like the boat, containing you".

Now to encourage you further in Trust, it is important we also read the next few verses:

But when he [Peter] saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. 'You of little faith,' he said, 'why did you doubt?'

And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'

Just like Peter when we are afraid, when we look at our circumstances and we go under, days when we think this is over, days when all we can say is Jesus I need you. On days like that the Bible says "immediately, Jesus reached out his hand and caught him"

Immediately, Instantly Jesus is there if we trust him. It's like riding a bike really, if you take the stabilisers off, you may feel a bit wobbly - but Jesus is there to help, support, teach, cheer on, encourage, catch, ride with you.

Let's reflect on the proverb on trust and how we can begin to live it out, it says;

Proverbs 3 v5 and 6

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What can we see as a good, wise response?

Maybe you know exactly what the stabilisers are on your life - Jesus says "let me teach you, let me take them off, trust me" It could be that you think you are doing ok, that is great, but you don't want to be held back. Ask Jesus the question "what do I lack" and then listen. And / Or you know Jesus wants you to step out, take a risk, he says "come to me, trust me - step out from your boat"

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