

Ryan Yao--Let's Examine Our Culture

Let's pray:

Lord, we do humble ourselves, and we want to acknowledge that we need Your Spirit to reveal Your Word to us. So I ask that as You use me for the next thirty minutes, You will glorify Thyself, glorify Thy Son. In Jesus name. Amen.

I will be talking about *trust* today, and I have picked out a theme verse. This is a verse that has carried me through this past year. I am not just here talking to you guys about a cool verse I found the other day. This is a verse I have been meditating on, and I have seen it in reality. That is why I want to share it with you.

Proverbs 3:5-6: "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."

First of all, I want to encourage both young and old to go ahead and memorize this verse if you haven't already. Memorize and own it for yourselves.

As you probably know, I am on the younger side in this room, but I am making sure to own this verse for myself because I know that as I live this Christian life, this will continue to help me walk with the Lord. I think some of the older brothers and sisters in this room will tell you younger ones that this Christian life is not easy. So memorize the Word of God, put it in your heart so that when trials and hardships come, you will be able to lean back and fall on the Lord.

Trust With All Your Heart

Once again, I am talking about trust. So what kind of trust am I referring to? "Trust in the Lord with all your heart." Back in the day there

was a game called Trust-Fall. In this game, basically I stand, and I have somebody behind me hopefully. Then I just fall back, and he catches me.

So I think that is the type of trust we need to have in the Lord. That is what it means when we trust in the Lord with all our heart. It ruins the point of the game if I keep looking back, wondering if the person behind me is going to catch me. “Trust-Fall” is the kind of trust that the Lord wants us to have in Him.

Here are some additional facts about this verse. King Solomon wrote this to his very own son. He literally addressed his son, “My Son, I write to you.” Likewise in Galatians 3:26 it says, “We are the sons of God through faith in Jesus.” So take this verse as if God is writing it to you; “Trust in the Lord with all your heart.” So trust in our heavenly Father with all our heart, and lean not on our own understanding.

“Lean not on our own understanding.”

As humans we eventually grow up. When a baby is big enough to be potty trained, you begin to hope that they will soon learn how to use the toilet themselves with no one there. Eventually, you are going to have to potty train Cater, but hopefully one day he can just use the toilet by himself.

So It is our human natural tendency to build up experiences. Then why does it say, “Lean not on your own understanding”? I think it is good that the Lord actually disciplines us and gives us experiences so that we can grow, but even when we are the age of one of our sisters here, (I say that very kindly) we should still rely on the Lord, even though one has been blessed with many years by the Lord. So we should not always lean on all of these experiences, but we are to go back to the Lord because He is the One from whom the experiences have come from.

Acknowledge Him

“In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your path.”

Whether you like go to the gym or you like to cut wood or go fishing, or whatever it is, acknowledge the Lord, and He will direct your path. This may seem kind of strange because when I went on Google the other day and searched for motivational quotes, this popped up, “Believe in yourself; you are enough. If you need something to believe in, start with yourself.” So at face level, this sounds pretty motivational, pretty inspirational; it looks good. But hold on a second. Should I really be believing in myself? Am I really enough? And I think from a couple of head shakes in this room, we as Christians or ones who have been raised with the Bible, would know that we do not think we are enough. If I cannot save myself for eternity, why would I lean and trust in myself? So here is what the Bible says in rebuttal to our current culture.

Jeremiah 17:9-10: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.”

So you are telling me that I cannot trust my own heart? The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Guess what! You and I do not really know our hearts, and so we cannot trust ourselves. So whatever the culture is trying to tell us, “Oh, believe in yourselves; you are enough.” No, guys, we are really not. And a big reason why most of us here are saved now is because we realized we had a big lack. That is what drove us to Jesus. That is the gospel right there. We are not enough to save ourselves, thus we have to run to Jesus.

Once again, I am talking about trusting in the Lord, and why should we trust in the Lord? Here is a verse I also found I think gives us a beautiful imagery of it.

Jeremiah 17:7-8: “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is in the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when

heat comes; but its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit.”

What is a good location for a tree to be planted? It is right next to water, and water gives life. And we know that the Lord is our water; He is the One who gives us that type of life. Think about this verse that says, “The tree will not fear when heat comes.” Let’s consider some types of heat that can be in our lives. How about some trials, tribulations, some persecutions, maybe just tough times; that is heat. And we know that heat will kill a plant if it is not well protected and watered. In the same way, we as Christians have a lot of heat blasting on us that can hurt us. But this type of tree that trusts in the Lord will not fear any heat. And it is the same thing with a year of drought. Plants need water which we all learned in elementary school, or even before. But water gives life, and without water the plant is going to die. So we know from the promise of God that if you trust in the Lord, you will not fear the times of drought, the times when it seems like you are going to fall flat on your face because the life of God is always flowing into you.

Discipline is Needed for Growth

Part of trusting in God is knowing that He is our Father, and fathers will discipline those He loves.

Proverbs 3:11-12: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction; for whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.”

Raise your hand if you love discipline. I think you will learn to love discipline if you realize that it is for your own good. In the meantime, it is not fun at all, and when we walk with the Lord and we learn to trust Him with all our heart, He is going to be, “But My son, because I love you so much, I am going to bring some things into your life that will feel kind of uncomfortable at first, things that you will be asking, “Father, why is this happening? I thought You loved me. I thought You cared. What is going

on?” But these are all for our greater good, and they will actually make us more like His Son Jesus.

Let me tell you a quick story of how I got disciplined. This was quite a harsh discipline that I received from the Lord last fall. I had just moved into college at the time, and I was going through orientation. I happened to look at my phone, and I had received an email from my PayPal account (a place where you can hold some money) that said, “Somebody changed your password; if this was not you, do all of this.” Then I got another email saying, “somebody changed your email to your account. If it was not you, do all this.” Wait, I did not do that.

So I opened up the PayPal app, and sure enough I could not log in. I tried everything. I even tried to reset my password, but guess what? Somebody had hacked into my account and reset everything. They reset my email account so I could not recover my password for changing passwords. I was totally helpless. And this whole process of getting my whole account back took a whole month of contacting customer support and praying a ton about it. But after thirty days, I finally got everything back, and I was acting quite thankful. I said to the Lord, “Thank You, for disciplining me because this whole time I did not know I needed it, but I was starting to fall in love with money, just a little bit.” The Lord used this incident with somebody hacking into my PayPal account to show me, “Ryan, my son, money can only bring you temporary joy. It can be taken away just like this with a hacker, and it is gone. You can spend all your life working for money, but what is it going to amount to? It can be taken away just like that. So do not put your hope in it. Do not put your trust in it; trust in Me.”

Once again, I bring up the theme verse. Proverbs 3:5-6: “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.”

I have already shared a little bit of this verse in the beginning, but it has meant so much to me. And the reason I wanted to share it before all

of you, both young and old, is because I believe it is so true. I have seen the reality of it in my own life. It does not do any good for me to just pick out a cool motivational quote from the Bible, and blast it at you without me having actually experienced it.

Now we are going to get into a little bit of a story time. I am going to share some evidence in my life of the Lord answering my prayers.

Godly Friends

As you all may know this past fall I went to college for the first time to attend my freshman year. If you were to see a picture of me that first day, I look very happy, but I had zero friends at that time. I did not know many people at all that went to this college. So I was kind of nervous because it was a whole new world. However, the most important thing for me was that I knew I needed some good friends, not just good friends, but some Godly friends, some friends that would lead me the way of the Lord. So the whole summer, I was a little scared of all these college classes, which can be tough, and how to balance this and that. But one thing I prayed about all the time, one thing I trusted the Lord with was, "God, please, I need some Godly friends when I get to college. If it is Your will, when I get there, surround me with people that will build me up. Surround me with people who will sharpen me as iron sharpens iron.

You guys might be thinking to yourself, "Oh Ryan, you just want some Godly friends, that's cool. Maybe I do not need Godly friends though." But this is what the Bible says about friends.

Proverbs 13:5: "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise; but the companion of fools suffers much."

I Corinthians 15:33: "Do not be deceived: bad company ruins good character."

Proverbs 18:24: "One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

In preparation with these slides I had to cut out a ton of verses, and I could go on and on about the Bible saying that we need to surround ourselves with good people, not just good people but Godly people.

Going into college I knew how easy it would be to make friends there, but I wanted genuine friends, those friends who care, which are a little harder to find. These are friends who not only say they are Christians but actually live out a life that is reflected in the Bible. In college there are a lot of people that will say, “Oh, yeah, I am a Christian. I was raised up in church.” But if you take a look at their lives and at their fruit, you will see very quickly: “Are you really a Christ follower or are you just somebody who uses the name of Christ?”

I went ahead and prayed a ton as you guys know, and praise the Lord, throughout this year He has blessed me with a ton of friends. It was not the first day at college when I first arrived that the Lord blessed me with these great friends. No, it was a process; it was little by little, week by week. I would make one friend, and then another week another friend, and by the end of the year I can look back on my phone and see all these photos that I have taken. The Lord has surrounded me with so many wonderful brothers that we can do so many things together. We can play basketball, we can go out to eat, and one awesome thing is that we read the Bible every single week together. And we are continuing on during the summer to have our own Bible study every Tuesday on line which is so special. But this is a group of guys that the Lord has insured and blessed me with to the point where I do not have to eat any dinners alone. Every single time I go to the dining hall, I send in a text to the group chat, and then we are eating together. That is so joyous, and that is the Lord answering prayer.

Now you might say, “Oh Ryan, you went to college and you got connected with a Christian community there, and then you made great friends.” No! That is not the case. Just because I got connected with some campus ministries, this was different; it is definitely the work of the Lord.

Previous small groups like this have all failed. It is really sad, but they would just meet together one day a week, read the Bible, and then they would not see each other until the next week. But this is a group of guys that we hold accountable to each other for reading the Word daily, confessing our sins to one another. This has to be of the Lord; it is nothing else. It is not any work of man or any campus ministry that has been able to do this. This is the work of the Lord.

While I was preparing for the sharing, one thing that popped in my mind is that if we trust God with our eternity, why do we sometimes struggle to trust Him with small life matters? Salvation, eternity is the biggest deal; it is the greatest concern that we should have as humans. I would say that the majority of folks in this room have been saved and are walking with the Lord. Nevertheless, we are still sometimes, myself included, very guilty of becoming anxious and not being able to always trust the Lord.

For example, maybe I have an interview with somebody coming up next week. That interview will then determine this, this, and this. But in the Lord's scope of things, what I think is a very important interview, it is really not that much in eternity because our life right now on earth, believe it or not, is just a speck of our existence, and then the rest of eternity is with the Lord. So right now I see our time on earth as a training ground for what is to come in eternity. I had a conversation with somebody the other week, and surprisingly they thought we were just going to be floating around on clouds in heaven. And I said, "No! That would be so boring! We will not be doing that; it will be so much greater. So we must realize that all the cares, all the worries that we have can be given to the Lord.

I Peter 6-7: "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He might exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

Isaiah 46:4: “Even to your old age, I am He, and even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.”

God promises that we can cast everything on Him, all our worries. Maybe you have a driver’s license test coming up, even one of you older ones, cast that worry on the Lord, and He will take care of it. Once again, we know that even to old age the Lord will sustain us and deliver us from our troubles.

So here is what God wants you to know. None of us are perfect; we are all broken people. We are all people who are here because of the grace of God. I want to let you guys know for me personally, it is pretty easy to go through a hard week and then come here, and put on a smile for a couple of hours and pretend everything is okay. But you do not have to hide anything, especially from the Lord, because He knows our heart deep down. He knows what is going on, and we need to realize that. None of us have to perfect ourselves to actually come to God.

The prodigal son was living where the pigs lived, so he probably was smelly, stinky, disgusting. However, when he went back to the father, the father did not say to him, “Oh son, welcome back. First, go and shower, then we will go ahead and feast.” No, the father saw his son, who had not washed his hair in months and probably was reeking of pigs, and said to the servant, “Bring out the best robe for him.” And that is exactly what Christ did for us. Christ is our robe of righteousness, and the Father saw us in our disgusting state and said, “My son, I love you so much; let me put Christ on you. Now you are robed in my best most beautiful robe.

This is another analogy; you never clean yourself before you hop in the shower. Therefore, why in the world do we think that in order to go to God we have to take care of these sins, take care of all of this stuff that is going on in our lives. No! God just wants you to come to Him just as you are, and then when you come to Him, when you trust in Him, when you walk with Him, He will transform you. He will make you more like

Jesus. We are not able to just tidy up and get rid of this sin, and then come to God. “Okay, God, I am ready to be in Your presence.” No! Do not make that mistake, my friends. The Lord just wants us to come, and He will cleanse us.

There are so more promises of God that I hope we will be able to show you that He really does care for you, and He has taken care of all of your sins.

Isaiah 44:22: “I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to me for I have redeemed you.

Romans 8:38-39: “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

You may not be at the place right now where you are completely trusting in God.” And believe me, I am not either, but the Lord just wants you to know that He has made you clean, therefore you can just come to Him. Do not worry about all these other things. Do not hesitate to come to Him because our culture once again will tell us that we can help ourselves, and we know that to be a lie. We cannot help ourselves, so we have to come to God. God is the only answer. And I would encourage all of us to keep on seeking God in His Word. We need to read His Word, meditate on it, memorize it, because it is God’s promise for you and me.

Psalms 119:105 says, “Thy Word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”

That is such a wonderful promise that His Word shows us the way in which we are to walk. So lastly, to conclude, there is a song, “Trust and Obey.” And I think the lyrics are easy to memorize, and they kind of remind us that when things get tough, we can just sing it to ourselves.

This kind of summarizes everything I just said: “Trust and obey, for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”

Let’s pray:

Lord, I just thank You so much how we are not called to cleanse or perfect ourselves when we come to you, but You call us to You when we are broken and we are in need. So when You tell us to trust in You with all our heart and not lean on our own understanding, help us Lord to have the faith to be able to live it out. Help us to see that in our lives You are the One who cares for us, and we can go ahead and put all of our cares upon You. We can tell You everything because You know us in and out. You know us better than we know ourselves. Renew us and make us more like Your Son. In Jesus’ name. Amen.