

Leaning

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.” (Proverbs 3:5–6, NIV84)

1. Everyone leans on something beyond themselves. It is usually the first thing we run or resort to.

- A particular area of **expertise**
- Often it is **financial**. How many people have a sense of security that is based on finances? The keyword is more and the problem with more is it is never enough.
- **Physicality**. I believe it is so good to take care of yourself physically. You should know however that this is no guarantee that you will never face physical difficulties and challenges.
- **Reputation and Identity**. “Your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are.”

These things don't appear to be dependencies. We see them as evidence of our self-sufficiency rather than sufficiency themselves

“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.” (Psalm 20:7, NIV84)

2. Our troubles don't create a deficit situation in our lives ... they reveal a deficit.

Successfully navigating difficulties is not sudden strength that we find when things go wrong. It is strength that we nurture when all is well. It is possible to lean into our faith as a normal life practice rather than something we do when there is no other option.

3. How do we do this? How do we develop this practice?

- **Practice gratitude**. The things that come to us that mean the most are grace gifts.

*“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks **in** all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18, NIV84)*

- **Seek His counterintuitive ways**.

*““For **my thoughts are not your thoughts**, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:8–11, NIV84)*

God is not trying to convince you to follow Him in ways that make perfect sense to you. We have to face the fact that we do not automatically think as God thinks.

4. Identify the difficulties that have already brought you good.

Most of us discover that not everything that we think to be bad, is actually bad in the long run. Be encouraged by these disguised blessings.

A little bird was flying south for the winter. It was so cold the bird froze and fell to the ground into a large field. While he was lying there, a cow came by and dropped some dung on him. As the frozen bird lay there in the pile of cow dung, he began to realize how warm he was. The dung was actually thawing him out! He lay there all warm and happy, and soon began to sing for joy. A passing cat heard the bird singing and came to investigate. Following the sound, the cat discovered the bird under the pile of cow dung, promptly dug him out and ate him.

Moral of the story:

- (1) Not everyone who craps on you is your enemy.
- (2) Not everyone who gets you out of crap is your friend.
- (3) And when you're in deep crap, it's smart to keep your mouth shut!

** I really wanted to leave the original "crap substitute" word in this illustration but decided against it.*

5. Learn the value of your discomfort zone.

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a

crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize." (1 Corinthians 9:24–27, NIV84)

Go there when you have the option. A goal that seeks to eliminate all stress is fatal. A subjects oneself to positive stress is life-giving.

Eustress vs. distress

Eustress is positive stress which we subject ourselves to for some desired end or goal. What is stressful to one is not necessarily so to another.