

When Self-Sufficiency is a Bad Thing

Self-sufficiency is a good thing, right?

Every parent knows this. We want our children to learn the skills to take care of themselves. What dad wants to still be tying his daughter's shoes when she is 14? What mother still wants to be cutting her son's food when he is 23?



- We want our children to learn to read and write so they function in society and order for themselves off the Taco Bell menu.
- We want our children to be able to drive so they can transport themselves.
- We want our kids to know how to make a bed because ... well, I don't know why, but I'm sure it's important because we make the bed at our house. Every. Day.

The goal is to cut the apron strings ... watch them stand on their own two feet ... push them out of the nest and watch them fly ... let them fish for themselves ... see them create their own metaphors for becoming self-sufficient.

One area of life, though, does not need self-sufficiency. In fact, self-sufficiency is a liability. I'm referring to our relationship with God. Our walk with God and our role as His representatives in the world call for absolute dependence on Him. Anything less is more than a detriment; it is an outright sin.

The apostle Paul said it this way, "So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in him" (Col. 2:6).

- How did you receive Christ Jesus as Lord? You turned from your sin. You trusted Him for salvation. You surrendered your life to Him as Savior and Lord.
- How are you to live the Christian life? The same way. You are to "continue to walk in Him" by a continual turning from sin, a continual trust in Christ, and a continual surrender to His lordship.

The Christian life is a continual recognition of our need and dependence on Christ. Just as we cannot save ourselves, we cannot live the Christian life ourselves. We must let Him live through us.

Jesus gave a message to the apostle John that he was to deliver to the church in Laodicea. This was a hard letter of rebuke (Rev. 3:14-22). The heart of Jesus' rebuke was the fact

they did not lean on Him but relied on themselves. They were self-sufficient.

They saw themselves as rich, not needing a thing. Nope. They needed Jesus. Because they were leaning on themselves and their own resources, Jesus called them out as "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked" (v. 17).

The church today is in the same danger. For so many American churches...

- ... we have buildings.
- ... we have air conditioning.
- ... we have a sound system so that those who prefer to sit on the back row can still hear.
- ... we have screens, videos, and lots of Bible study resources.
- ... we have a playground for the kids.
- ... we have vehicles to haul the students to this big event and that big event.
- ... we have activities for our senior adults.
- ... we have food. Let's not forget the food!
- ... we even have money "left over" to support mission work.

We're not lacking anything!

Hmm. Let's make sure we're not lacking Jesus.

I'm thankful for the many blessings God has lavished on the church, but I need to remain diligent in relying on God rather than relying on the blessings themselves.



During the Jews' wandering the wilderness, they complained instead of looking to God to provide. Consequently, the Lord sent snakes among them. Ouch. Under God's direction, "Moses made a bronze snake and mounted it on a pole. Whenever someone was bitten, and he looked at the bronze snake, he recovered" (Num. 21:9). What a great visual reminder to look to God! Yet years later, the Israelites had taken this visual reminder and made it an object of worship (2 Kings 18:4). They took a reminder to worship and made it an object of worship in itself!

Go ahead and be self-sufficient when it comes to your laundry, but if you want to live a life that pleases God and honors Him, you're going to have to rely on Him.