

Week 1: Simple Everyday Choices

Monday: “You or God?”

“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)



“First Love” Focus

Today, the center of my life is the priority, power, or person I choose to be with and depend on the most.

Daily Question

Am I beginning my day choosing Jesus as my center?



Good morning! Let’s start this journey of with a few really simple questions:

- Who understands you best today? You or God?
- Who already has seen who you will meet today and how important that person may be to the rest of your life?
- Who loves you the most?

The answer to all of these questions is God, not you.

Now, if you want to protest because certain things you have prayed for haven’t worked out in your life, give me a chance to share some news with you.

The good news is that God has wonderful plans for your life that you cannot possibly understand or imagine. The “bad” news is ... you can’t possibly understand or imagine them! Only God does.

That leaves you with a simple, but bold choice today and every day: who will you trust to be the center of today—you or God?

Will you make choices based on what you understand and feel is right or will you make choices based on what God says is right?

If you choose God, you have to realize that not everything you do today will make sense to you. Some things may even hurt as God gives you grace to get through it. There are some things that won’t even seem important today, but God knows will change your future for the good.

You see, there’s a certain tension in the Christian life that I have heard several pastors teach about. We want to understand and then obey God, but God wants us to obey so then we will understand (Proverbs 3:5-6).

God wants us to trust in Him with all of our heart instead of trusting our own limited understanding. As much as we want to control and understand everything about this day, the truth is only God can truly control and understand it.

One day in Heaven you may look back and understand how all of it works, but while you are here on earth you are going to spend most of your days not understanding how God is getting you ready for His impossible promises. Believe me. I definitely “don’t understand” what I’m talking about!



“How in the world did I get here?” That’s really all I could think as I stood in the middle of an Ethiopian desert village, surrounded by

some of the 10,000 Muslims who lived in this church-less, water-less, and hopeless place.

As a 40-year old white guy from the American suburbs, I was standing in the middle of something I had only dreamed about. I felt like I was back in the days of Jesus—walking a dusty dirt road surrounded by mud made houses and kids with tattered clothing playing with rocks and chasing each other in between their small one-room homes. I had just visited one of the many lepers in this village and now I was face-to-face with Muslim leaders talking about starting a Christian medical clinic.

Did I mention I felt like I was totally out of place? It wasn't because I was one of only five white people I had seen in the sea of thousands over the past few days (well, maybe a little). It wasn't because here I was talking about a clinic when I had no medical background whatsoever. It really wasn't even because I was a Christian pastor in a village that had no known Christians. It wasn't any of those things.

I felt out of place because I thought the moment I was in didn't happen to simple Christian guys who have four kids, drive a mini-van, and like to go play basketball at the YMCA every Friday morning. I was reaching into the Muslim world in an unreached village. I felt that some "Super Christian" or sacred martyr of the faith should have been given this privileged Kingdom opportunity of bringing Christ where He had never been known.

Had I dreamed of this opportunity? Yes.

Did I worship in my nice suburb church every Sunday and sing songs about reaching the nations and the hurting for Christ? Yes.

Had I given to missions and gone on mission trips for a week or two to serve alongside some seasoned missionaries? Yes.

But had I ever thought I would be given the chance to join some pioneering Ethiopian pastors to bring the Good News of Jesus to a people who had never accepted it? No.

Had I ever thought I'd be the first white person, and more importantly, first Christian, the people of this village had ever met? Not in a million years!

Yet, here I was, still trying to process my first encounter with a person with leprosy, when some of the village leaders approached me. I had to admit that I had experienced some real fears as we drove off the paved roads and into this unreached and neglected village. As a guy from the suburbs, I was used to very safe and controlled missions adventures. For me, this village with 10,000 Muslims was a whole new experience that was "off road" in more ways than one.

As the group of Muslim leaders, and more than three dozen kids who were tagging along, encircled me, I was hoping they would be smiling. The spokesperson of the group asked in basic English, "Are you the Christians who want to bring a clinic to our village?"

"Yes," I replied, waiting to see their response and whether I should try to outrun them to the car as fast as I could (like I was going to outrun some Ethiopian young men).

He paused and then began to speak very slowly and deliberately, "We know you are Christians and we are Muslim, but we respect you and welcome you to our village. Come and help us!"

Like the Apostle Paul who had a vision of the Macedonian man saying, "Come and help us," I had been given a vision, or better yet, the face-to-face invitation to share the love and healing of Jesus in a place that needed a change in their Kingdom history and eternity ... and I still only drove a minivan.

There is much more to the story and, hopefully, I will share it later on (feel free to go to www.projecthope.ag to learn more), but I still haven't answered the first question of this story: "How in the world did I get here?"

That answer is the reason for this devotional. It's a Kingdom truth I think the American Church has lost in a sea of busyness and in a clutter of religious events. Most of us "average" Christians have actually forgotten it. It's the key to truly hearing God's voice and the guaranteed antidote to America's self-serving and self-centered Christianity.

How in the world did I, a person with no qualifications, connections, or super spiritual gifts, get to this extraordinary and honored place to serve Christ? Simple.

By making Jesus the center of my ordinary everyday life.

I chose God and His ways when I didn't understand what they would lead me to. What will you choose to trust in today: you or God?

I'd tell you to just think of where choosing God might take you some day, but the truth is God's plan for your life is so much greater than you can imagine (Ephesians 3:20). So you'll just have to do like Proverbs 3:5 says and "lean not on your own understanding." Choose God today.

Making Jesus the Center of Monday

God's Promise to Remember: *"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).

God's Power to Pray For: Dear Jesus, I choose You today. Strengthen my faith today. I understand that I won't understand all of what You are doing in my life this day. I choose to trust You with all of my heart and lean not on my own understanding. Help me to trust Your way in dealing with people in my life today. Holy Spirit, guide my path and cause Jesus to be the center of all I do! Today, I especially give You the following places of control with which I often struggle:

God's Person to Share With: What stood out to you about today's devotion? What did God seem to highlight in your heart? Share that with your prayer partner today in some way.