

A Check-Up From the Neck Up: Three Questions Every Believer Must Ask During Times of Trial

Introduction

There are times in every believer's life when it seems as though nothing is happening. We pray, we study, we apply doctrine, we remain faithful, and yet circumstances appear unchanged. We may feel stuck, forgotten, or even abandoned by God.

During those moments, it is important to stop and give ourselves what I often call a "check-up from the neck up."

Instead of focusing on what we see, we must focus on what we know.

There are three foundational questions every believer should ask themselves.

Question #1:

Do I Believe God Has a Plan for My Life?

The answer must be an emphatic yes.

God is not making up His plan as He goes. He is not reacting to events. Before the foundation of the world, God designed a perfect plan for every believer.

Ephesians 2:10 (NASB)

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

The word “workmanship” is the Greek word *poiēma*, from which we derive our English word “poem.” It refers to something skillfully crafted or designed.

Paul is teaching that every believer is God’s masterpiece. The plan for your life was not created after you were saved. It was prepared beforehand.

Notice also the phrase “prepared beforehand.”

This comes from the Greek verb *proetoimazō*, meaning “to prepare in advance.”

Before you faced your current trial, God already knew it was coming.

Before you encountered your current obstacle, God had already made provision for it.

Before you ever existed, God had already designed a path for you to walk.

Jeremiah 29:11 (NASB)

For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for prosperity and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.

While this promise was originally given to Israel in the Babylonian captivity, it reveals an unchanging principle regarding God's character. God is a God of purpose, direction, and hope.

God has a plan.

Question #2:

Do I Believe God Wants Me to Know His Plan?

Many believers unconsciously live as though God is trying to hide His will from them.

They approach the Christian life as though God has hidden His plan somewhere and expects them to find it through guesswork.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

God desires to reveal His will.

Ephesians 5:17 (NASB)

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

The word "understand" is the Greek verb *sunīēmi*, meaning "to put together," "to comprehend," or "to gain insight."

Paul would never command believers to understand God's will if it were impossible to know.

God is not trying to confuse you.

God is not attempting to mislead you.

God is not hiding His plan from sincere believers.

His will is revealed progressively through Bible doctrine.

Psalm 32:8 (NASB)

¶I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will advise you with My eye upon you.

Notice the three promises:

- I will instruct you.
- I will teach you.
- I will counsel you.

God is not silent toward positive volition.

The issue is often not God's willingness to reveal His plan but our willingness to continue growing until we have the capacity to understand it.

Just as a parent does not explain advanced mathematics to a five-year-old, God often reveals His plan according to our spiritual growth and capacity.

Question #3:

Do I Believe God Has the Power to Bring His Plan to Pass?

Many believers acknowledge that God has a plan and that God wants them to know it, but they struggle to believe that God can actually accomplish it.

This is where faith must become operational.

Romans 4:20-21 (NASB)

yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.

The context concerns Abraham waiting for God's promise.

Humanly speaking, the promise was impossible.

Yet Abraham ultimately reached the point where he became convinced that God's ability was greater than his circumstances.

The phrase "fully assured" comes from the Greek word plērophoreō, meaning complete confidence or full persuasion.

Abraham learned that if God promises it, God can perform it.

Likewise, if God has designed a plan for your life, He possesses the omnipotence necessary to bring it to pass.

Philippians 1:6 (NASB)

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work among you will complete it by the day of Christ Jesus.

The word "perfect" is epiteleō, meaning to complete, finish, or bring to fulfillment.

God never starts what He cannot finish.

Why Then Do We Feel Stuck?

Because growth requires capacity.

Many times what we perceive as inactivity is actually preparation.

What appears to be delay is often divine training.

James 1:2-4 (NASB)

Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

The word “testing” is dokimion, referring to something proven genuine through examination.

God is not trying to destroy your faith.

He is strengthening it.

Every momentum test serves a purpose.

People testing.

Thought testing.

System testing.

Disaster testing.

Providential preventative suffering.

Each one is designed to increase spiritual capacity.

God is preparing you for what He has prepared for you.

Isaiah 40:31 (NASB)

Yet those who wait for the Lord Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.

The Hebrew word translated “wait” (qavah) means more than simply waiting around. It carries the idea of confident expectation and trust.

Biblical waiting is not inactivity.

It is faith resting while God works behind the scenes.

Application

The next time discouragement comes, stop and ask yourself these three questions:

Do I believe God has a plan for my life?

Yes.

Do I believe God wants me to know that plan?

Yes.

Do I believe God has the power to bring that plan to pass?

Yes.

If the answer is yes to all three questions, then there is no reason to quit.

There is no reason to become discouraged.

There is no reason to abandon the spiritual life.

Keep learning doctrine.

Keep applying doctrine.

Keep advancing through the momentum tests.

Keep trusting the Lord.

The same God who designed the plan is revealing the plan, and the same God who reveals the plan possesses the omnipotence to bring that plan to completion.

And that, believer, is why we continue to move forward by faith and not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:7 (NASB)
for we walk by faith, not by sight—