

Challengers of Hope 06 Smashing the Stronghold of Self-Reliance STUDY GUIDE

Read Luke 22.42. When we learn how to dream, we often start to realize how much power we have, how much glory we have, we get our identity right, we get everything right, our imagination is good, our declarations are good, our actions are in faith, but it doesn't quite manifest. Often that is because we fail to realize that we are just the channel and He is the source. We cannot be self-reliant; we must be reliant on the Lord. He alone knows the best way to cross the river, to move the mountain, to kill Goliath, to get where you need to be!

After the first and last communion service Jesus ever had, there was a decision that had to be made. Within hours, if He did things the Father's way, He would be nailed to a cross and become sin with your sin. And you know how horrible your sins are, how selfish, how ignorant you have been of other's feelings. He tells his disciples "My soul is overwhelmed to the point of death". He went to the garden, and fell right on his face, and said "I don't want to do this, I don't want to drink this cup, I don't want to do it your way, I don't like your way, I don't like this cup!"

But then He finished "Yet not as I will, but as you will". In the flesh, Jesus, fully human, did not want to ever deal with the cross. The Father asked him to go to the cross. Jesus had big dreams, to change the world, to redeem humanity, and the Father said "let's do it, but the way to do it is the cross."

This is what I call the stronghold of self-reliance. You and God – at a certain level of maturity – want the same thing. You want a great marriage, you want to be out of debt and have money in the bank, you want to be healthy, you want to walk in ministry, you want to be the head and not the tail. All of that is godly, but the way to do it is not the way you think it is! Your way is not the right way. And so, you come to a point where you have to decide: shall I do things my way or God's way?

A great example is money. Let us imagine you want to be out of debt, and someone gives you a sum of money that is going to help considerably. Then the Father speaks to you and says, "Do not just tithe that, give it all away". At this point you want to cry, fall on your face, and tell the Father "I do not want to do this, I do not want to drink this cup, this is not my way of going forward".

Jesus proved you can react like that and still not sin. Now if you are reacting that way over a hundred pounds or a thousand pounds, or even a million pounds, that is not the same level of maturity as Jesus reacting that way over becoming sin will all our sin, but it is the same principle.

But when you get a cup you do not want to drink from the Father, you need to finish your prayer with "not as I will, but as you will". You need to reach this place if you are going to walk in your dreams. You need the will to say "I will walk in my dreams" but you also need the strength to say, "But only your way Father, not my carnal short-cuts, but the way you suggest".

If you do not reach this point – that you will choose the Father's path even when they contradict your instincts and ideas, that you will reject fleshly ways of doing things – that you will trust the Lord and His way of doing things more than your way, and realize He knows more than you – then your dreams will always be out of reach.

I want all of you to live your best life now but you cannot get there your way. You need to follow the Lord's way, trust Him and drink every cup He gives you.

We just had some elections here in the UK. What I saw was what I see every election – the US is worse, but we still have it here – people from every side of the political spectrum panic – as if a left-wing or right-wing government can somehow stop God changing this nation, as if God Himself is a candidate and people can somehow unelect God! No – God's way of changing the nations is not an election. God is not sitting in Heaven watching the BBC biting His nails over the result. You think even if the worst government in all of time and space is elected in – that God has forgotten how to protect and lead and disciple His people? God can do anything!

If you read Andrew Wommack's book on God's Best (which I recommend), his first chapter is something like: If you want God's best, your first step is to want God's best. If you want to know God's will for your life – then the first thing you need to realize is that God's will is that you want to do things His way. God's will is that you are willing to do His will! So many people never find out God's will for their lives because all their plans are their own – they have never prayed about where to live, who to marry, where to go to church, and even if God tells them, they just ignore Him and do what they think best.

Have you ever delivered millions of people out of slavery? Have you ever split a sea to get people where they need to go? Have you ever turned 6 bathtubs full of water into wine to save a wedding? Have you lived under Roman occupation and still walked in victory and life and healed the sick and changed the world? Have you taken a church from a dozen bozos, two of whom had terrible tempers, one of whom is a doubter, one stabbed you in the back for a month's wages, and one only opens his mouth to change feet – and turned that church into millions of locations all over the world, every tribe and tongue, facing persecution, facing death, healing the sick, preaching the gospel, changing the world?

If not, then maybe you should trust the Lord and His goodness, because He knows the way to where you want to be. Stop looking to your wisdom, to society, to the world for wisdom and find out God's way of doing things.

Many people think they can get better results and get to their dreams DOING IT THEIR WAY RATHER THAN GOD'S. That's insane. That's crazy. That's arrogance of the highest order. We have to do things God's way.

If you want to see the power of God, you are going to need to control your mouth, whether you like it or not, God's way of moving mountains is you speaking words. If you want to prosper, you are going to have to be in a local church and tithe. If you are not in a local church, you are so far away from God's will and God's best, there is no other advice I can give you than plug into a local church. You need to fight in faith. We have become so passive in the church when it comes so many things – but especially faith. Somehow, we have mistaken grace as an excuse to do nothing. That is not true, we always need to do something to see the will of God manifest. You have to speak what God says, walk in love and peace, you need to march into your promised land.

You cannot sit on your backside and let God fight your battles, it is not how God works, and there is a whole Bible to prove that.

But you have to fight God's way, not yours. If God says dip seven times in the river, do that. If God says walk around the city and shut your mouth, do that. If God says give ten

thousand pounds to that ministry or that event, or this, then do it and do it immediately. If God says walk this way, walk this way, if God says drink this cup – no matter how bad it tastes – do that.

I remember being ripped apart by another minister and for nearly a year, this one individual made my life hell on earth. We had dozens of people leave the Tree because he lied to them – just made up the most outrageous stories and started telling them. I was with Robert Maasbach (see, I have a pastor!) and said my plans to take this individual down, and Robert brought it back to this – we cannot do things our way to get things done in a godly way and get God's results. It cannot be done. Robert prayed with me and prophesied over me and told me I would have three opportunities to expose him, and I must not take any of them.

That is exactly how it played out. I had three chances. And I took none of them, and then weeks after, he lost his ministry and now has no ministry. I am still here. If I had exposed him, if I had fought my way, I do not think I would be. This is important truths I am sharing here.

Read Deut. 20.1. Chariots are horrific against infantry; they will mow the infantry down and wipe them out. You never face chariots with foot soldiers. But God is with you – so you do not listen to the world's wisdom, you do not use fear when you are dreaming of the future. It's a bitter cup to charge at chariots with nothing but Jesus, but it will always be worth it. Read Psalm 20.7. We need this attitude.

We must all come to the place where you trust God's plan and will for your life more than you trust your plan, your ways of doing things, and your ability to navigate to your direction.

Now when we rack up how wise and how compassionate and how dedicated and how experienced God is compared to you – it really is a simple choice, but people still try and do their godly dreams in ungodly ways. We need to learn some foundational truths, which you all know in your head, but you need to have in your heart. I am not trying to patronize anyone by making it this stark – but I still see so many people not realize these basic truths.

I. GOD IS ALWAYS RIGHT

We had a lady come to us and tell us she was leaving Tree of Life. She seemed active, she was someone I was considering for leadership, and I was incredibly surprised. So, I asked why, and the answer was my son does not like this church, he says the Sunday school is boring, and the church down the road plays computer games all Sunday morning during the sermon and he wants to go there, so I am. I said, "are you really going to let a 13-year-old make that decision". She could not understand why I was surprised; I could not understand her reasoning. But we need to realize that 13-year-olds are not smart. You do not let them decide when to brush their teeth, what to eat, how to behave, how to learn, when to bathe. You train them up in the way they should go.

It amazes me how many parents have an attitude that is "well, I will just let my children do whatever they want, let them learn about all the religions and make a choice" – children are not smart enough to do that. You let a child make their own mind up about anything or lead the family – you will end up with an uneducated, naughty, unhealthy kid!

No, parents make those decisions – not children. You cannot do things like raise your children in a different way to the Bible because that is what society says, that's what other people are doing, that's what feels right. No, you need to come to a point where whatever happens you will be saying that God's way is right. It is that simple, God is right and if you disagree, you are not.

If I asked this woman outright, so the answer I got was head knowledge, "do you believe that God is always right?" and of course she said yes. But she acted totally out of concordance with God's will for her life, and she simply did not care. It is like what Andrew Wommack says, "most people do not let the Bible get in the way of what they believe". Most people do not let the Bible get in the way of what they do! I have seen people marry non-Christians, and they simply do not care what the Bible teaches about marriage. I have seen people walk out the marital home for reasons that are not covered in the Bible, and they just do not care! We must absolutely believe that God's ways are better than our ways.

Read Joshua 1.8. That is what we all must do to enjoy success.

2. THE LORD WILL LEAD YOU TO DO THINGS BEYOND YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Read Proverbs 3.5-6. I love hearing testimonies and when you listen to a testimony – whether it's healing, ministry, business, prosperity, a healthy or restored marriage – listen – you should be able to hear the point where the person finally decided "I am going to get this God's way, I am not going to do it my way anymore, I am not going to lean on my understanding, my worries, or my way of doing things".

The whole universe is designed to enable you to walk in your dreams and walk in abundance. But you have to do it His way, not your way.

3. GOD IS GOOD

God is not withholding blessings from anyone – you need to know this. God is good and everything He does is good, and everything He asks you to do is good. Again, if I asked you that, you would out of your head say, "yes, God is good, all the time". But if God told you book the hotel for Heal the Nations right now and get yourself to every session and buy yourself a fancy notebook, and it will change your life. And you think, no – I need those few days holiday for later in the year, and you turn up late on Friday, barely paying attention, leave halfway through Saturday because you must get home, then you simply do not believe God is good, not in your heart. You do not believe that God told you to do what He said for your own good, or you would do it.

The Bible is noticeably clear on how-to walk-in life and how-to walk-in death. We can choose whatever we want. But you cannot choose life and do it your way, the best way to walk in life is to get into your best life.

As a parent, if I make my children eat their vegetables, it is not because I hate them, it is because I love them. It might not feel nice when they want ice-cream, but it is for the best long-term. God is more loving than the most loving parent, and if He tells you to drink a certain cup – it is not to annoy you or take the fun out of life, it is the most loving, most wonderful thing you could do and will take you to the best result you could ever have.

Bible teacher Donald Grey Barnhouse (1895-1960) told the following story: A young son of a missionary couple in Zaire was playing in the yard. Suddenly the voice of the boy's father rang out from the porch, "Philip, obey me instantly! Drop to your stomach!" Immediately the youngster did as his father commanded. "Now crawl toward me as fast as you can!" The boy obeyed. "Stand up and run to me!" Philip responded unquestioningly and ran to his father's arms.

As the young boy turned to look at the tree by which he had been playing, he saw a large deadly snake hanging from one of the branches! At the first command of his father, Philip could have hesitated and asked, "Why do you want me to do that?" Or he could have casually replied, "In a minute." But his instant obedience without questioning saved his life!

If I am away from home, out of the UK, and I need some money, I can put my bank card into an ATM anywhere in the world – and if I use my bank card and type in my PIN then all my money is unlocked, and I can get the cash. If I just choose the numbers I like, or I decide the machine will work better if I scream at it, or whine, or bind the demon of poverty, or anything else – that machine will not work. It only works one way, if I do it the right way.

The whole universe is like a giant ATM, God stuffed it full of blessings and vastness and goodness and healing and miracles and peace and life – it is full, and your Father filled it up for you. All you need to do is believe and receive. But most of us are standing by the machine cursing the machine, whining at the machine, and never just doing what our Father says.

The PIN number to the universe is 1510. Read John 15:10. If you do things Jesus' way, you will remain in His love!

When we are feasting on the goodness of the Lord and walking in His blessings, you know God is good, you can see it. But you need to know that God is still good in the famine times and He can lead you out of famine. He knows the way out!

Read Genesis 26:1-4. During this lockdown, there are two types of churches. Those who have handled the lockdown using their ideas and their wisdom. And those who have listened to their Father and done what God said. That is what we did at Tree of Life, and in a year when over 20% of churches in the UK have closed, we are richer, we have opened two new thriving locations, we have new people in all our venues, some have outgrown their venue, and all our people are deeper than they have ever been.

God is so specific with Isaac – you cannot walk in the inheritance if you move out of God's way of doing things. If you, do it your way, then you will get nowhere. But many people think "God is good when times are good, but when it is tough, it is down to me". I know people who when there is financial pressure, the first thing they do is stop giving, even stop tithing. That makes no sense to me at all.

Isaac and God had the same dream – big family, good life, impacting people with the love of God. But Isaac had to decide to get to that destination by doing it God's way not His way.

Stay there and keep sowing. Some people are running off to other churches, but God is saying stay at the Tree and give big to the Tree. But the house prices are cheaper here, but the grass is greener here, but the Bank of Egypt gives a nice low rate of interest! None of that matters, all that matters is what God is saying to you.

Read Genesis 26.12-13. That is the result of doing it God's way. If you are in famine, you serve a God who can feed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, so ask Him for wisdom, find out His way of doing things. Find out what God says – open your Bible and read it.

God loves you and He loves you the way you need to be loved. He loves you in a way that can be trusted, that can be relied on. His love does not fit around you and what you want – His love does not let you go your own way and still give you the hundred-fold return. You need to learn to do what God says.

A Persian legend runs that a certain king needed a faithful servant, and two men were candidates for the office. He took both at fixed wages, and his first order was to fill a basket with water from a neighbouring well, saying that he would come in the evening and see their work. After putting in one or two bucketfuls, one man said, "What is the good of doing this useless work? As soon as we put the water in one side it runs out the other." The other answered, "But we have our wages, haven't we? The use is the master's business, not ours." "I am not going to do such fool's work," replied the other. Throwing down his bucket, he went away. The other man continued until he had exhausted the well; looking down into it he saw something shining—a diamond ring. "Now I see the use of pouring water into a basket," he cried. "If the bucket had brought up the ring before the well was emptied, it would have been found in the basket. Our work was not useless."

When I started this message, I pointed out that it was Jesus the day before He was nailed to the cross. Jesus had an amazingly simple choice – to do it God's way or His way! That decision was so powerful it overwhelmed Jesus completely. But He still decided to drink the cup the Father gave Him rather than drink whatever cup He wanted. It might not feel super at the time, it might not feel great at the time, but **IT WILL ALWAYS LEAD TO THE BEST RESULT!**

The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak – so you are going to need to pray and get in the Word and stand and having done all stand. You need to get to a place of strength so you can win this temptation. It might be the most important battle ever – the battle to do it His way, not your way.

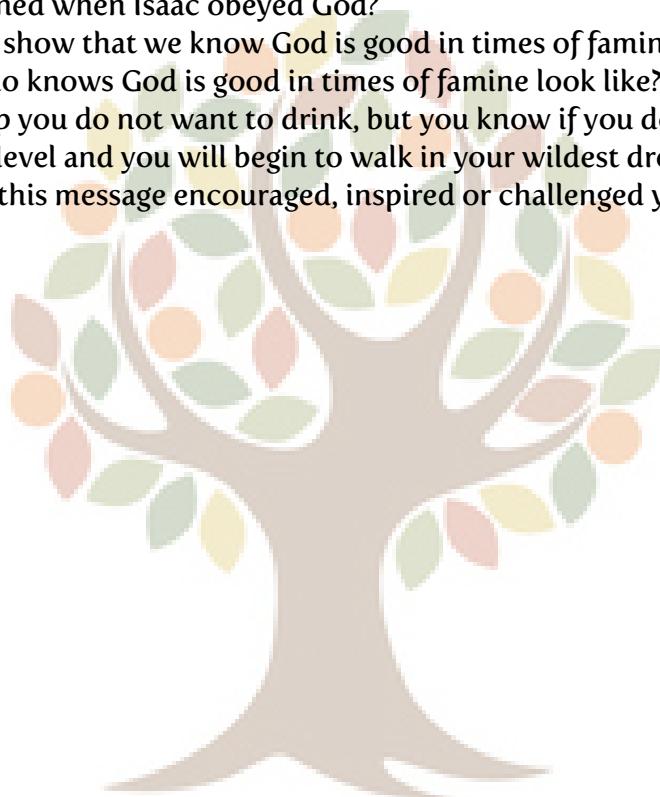
His way might involve some pain, some nails, some difficulties, you might have to sow in famine, give when you are broke, forgive when you are wounded, stay pure when you want to be impure, love when you want to hate, stand when you want to lie down and die. But if you, do it His way, it is better.

You need to make a choice – to trust in the Lord and lean not on your understanding. You learn to sow in famine and do what God says. You need to know how good God is, not just in the good times.

Go to church this week, go to Living Church, join a serving team, set aside twenty minutes a day to read the Word, tithe, sow, do whatever God tells you. His way is best.

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QUESTIONS

1. What, in your words, is the stronghold of self-reliance?
2. What kind of things has God told us to do, either in the Word or to you personally, have been cups that you simply did not want to drink?
3. Did you obey God, or not? What happened?
4. What does our life look like if we believe "God is always right" in our hearts?
5. In what areas in your life do you need to trust in the Lord and lean not on your own understanding? What can we all do to grow in our trust of the Lord?
6. What did God tell Isaac to do in a time of famine?
7. What happened when Isaac obeyed God?
8. How can we show that we know God is good in times of famine? What does someone who knows God is good in times of famine look like?
9. Is there a cup you do not want to drink, but you know if you do it, your life will enter a new level and you will begin to walk in your wildest dreams?
10. What about this message encouraged, inspired or challenged you the most?



Tree of Life Church
where dreams come true