

Trusting God's Plan Is Good

Ashley Stevens

How can we notice God's hand in our lives? How can we trust the work He's doing in our lives this Advent? My name is Ashley Stephens from Mountains Unmoved. And today I'm going to talk about how we can trust God's plan for our lives before it comes to be. But before I start, let's open in prayer.

Opening Prayer

In the name of Father, Son, Holy Spirit, Amen. God, I thank you for all you've done in our lives. And I just pray for greater trust in the work that you're doing, I pray for greater awareness of your love and your gifts this Advent season, it's your name I pray, Amen. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, amen.

Looking Back to The Good Things

God made you with a unique purpose. Your talents and your gifts and your passions and your purpose, were woven into your DNA before time began. You and your making and your plan where His idea. But I don't know about you, but for me, it's hard to trust that, before it comes to be. It's hard to trust the beautiful plan He's got written for us before it comes to be.

But I've learned in my life, three things that really helped me better trust Him. And the first is looking back on what He's done so far. Holly Hindsight makes it easier to see right? Looking in the rear-view mirror and seeing, oh, that's how God used that hardship for good. Oh, God loved me through that really lonely season. God carried me through that season when I didn't know how I would take the next step. When we look back, it's easier to see how God has fought for us.

For me personally, if you're not familiar with my story, three months, three weeks, sorry. After I was engaged, I got T-boned by a Mack truck. In that morning my fiancé and my family got a call to get to the hospital as soon as they could, and when they arrived, they were told I had a head trauma. My brain pressure was spiking, dangerously high, I was fighting multiple infections and a fever, and it was likely I wouldn't make it. Thanks be to God clearly, I did, but not without incredibly intense hard year of suffering. And during those six months that I was fighting for my life in the ICU and I was working to recover in months and months of therapy. Often daily, even I asked God, why? Why is this the work you've begun in my life Lord? How can you possibly use this for good?

I don't know if you're asking those same questions now with the work, God has begun in your lives. But for us, we decided to get married on the one-year anniversary of the accident, to

Pray More Advent Retreat 2021 - Transcript

redeem our darkest day, that we almost lost it all into our most beautiful and joyful day that now we look back on and celebrate every year. And on that day, as I walk through the countless people that had prayed for us and delivered us meals and visited us. As I walked under the girls, I was in the car with singing over us. As I walked by the driver of the Mack truck that I had collided with, who saved my life. It was a great reminder of how much God had fought for me and fought for us to get us where we are.

A Question to Ponder On

So, I would challenge you to ask yourself the same question. How has God fought for you in the past? How has He provided you? How has He carried you through a hard season? And when we really list those or pray about those, or thank God for those, it gives us greater trust that He is fighting for us now, and that He will in the future.

The second thing I think that helps me really notice God's hand in my life today is asking a question that my Bible study leader asked recently. It's how have you seen God's love this week? And at first, my answers were kind of superficial, the Huskers won, or it was warm. I'm a Tennessee girl living in Nebraska right now, Burr, but as time went on, I learned to really look for it. And I found His love brothers and sisters, I found it in great phone calls, catching up with old friends. I found it in the beauty of a beautiful sunrise. I found it in to really feeling like He was calling me a certain direction in prayer. And I've since found that when I changed my lens to look for His love, not only do I see it more, but I want to see it more.

So, if you're struggling to see His presence or His hand in your lives right now, ask yourself that question at the end of the day, how have you seen God's love today? How have you seen God's love this week, this Advent?

Stop Worrying

The third way to, I think really be aware of His work in our lives, and this is hard, this Advent season in particular, but is this, stop being so anxious about what's next, to stop worrying. And it's hard because the culture challenges us to have our Advent, our Christmas season be the checklist, right? Perfect coast check. Perfect presents, check. Perfect meals, check, check, check, check. But when we, not saying we shouldn't prep, we should definitely prep and not be a chicken with her head cut off on Christmas morning.

But when we fixate on what's next, on creating a perfect Christmas morning, on creating a perfect holiday meal, when we fixate on the anxiety and worry, that only comes with what's next, we miss the gifts of today. I read recently in a book by Jen Hatmaker and of reflection on the line from the, "Our Father" that says, give us today, our daily bread. It doesn't say give us this week's

Pray More Advent Retreat 2021 - Transcript

bread or help us stock our freezer with all the bread, it says, give us today our daily bread. And then dove into that reflection a little more about when the Israelites were walking across Egypt, and I'm sure they were absolutely famished and hungry, and God miraculously rain down bread, manna from heaven. And He instructed Moses to tell the Israelites after manna was on the ground, that they should only gather enough bread for one day. And when they didn't listen to this and they, I don't know if filled up their sackcloth with all the manna, trying to stockpile for the week, the bread went bad, it spoiled and became covered with worms.

And I think in this lesson, God was trying to teach the Israelites and trying to teach us. I will provide for this day, I am enough, I will care for you today, I will provide for you today, I will love you today, and may we all notice that, notice the bread in our life, maybe this time of year is a yummy cinnamon bread or dessert bread, or maybe it's the giggles of your kids, maybe it's great fellowship with a group of friends over a Secret Santa exchange. Maybe it's a beautiful FaceTime call with relatives across the country when you open presents. I don't know what your bread is today, but when we pay attention to that and lay down the anxieties and the worries about what's next, it helps us greater see His presence and provision, but also trust He will provide tomorrow. This work He has begun will be brought to a good completion in His timing. And may we rest in today. May we notice His love today and may remember how much He has fought for us in the past, to trust that He is and that He will.

I want to close with a passage from the book of Matthew 6, starting with the verse 25. Really echoing the sentiment says, "***Therefore, I tell you do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink nor about your body what you shall put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to a span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they neither toil nor spin yet I tell you, even Solomon in all of his glory was not arrayed like one of these.***"

God has got you, friends, He takes care of the lilies, of course, and He takes care of the birds and nature, but He loves you so much more than them. He provides for you, He gives you gifts of daily bread, He loves you, He showers you with His presence and His love each and every day. And He has fought for you and He is fighting for you, and He will fight for you, to bring to completion this beautiful work that He has begun in your lives. Let's close in prayer.

Closing Prayer

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen. God, I thank you for your purpose for our lives, I thank you that its unique purpose, it's not the plan you've written for our spouse or

Pray More Advent Retreat 2021 - Transcript

friends or kids, but you have a beautiful and fulfilling and complete purpose for our lives. And I pray that we would have greater trust and patience in your timing as you bring it to completion. And I pray that we would notice your love and notice your daily bread and you've placed in our lives. To your name we pray, amen. In the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.