

Leave the Scoffers!

Becoming a “Can Do” Person:

Psalm 1:1-3, Numbers 16:22-26

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One day while I was in college, a philosophy student-skeptic confronted me with this question: “Is God almighty? Can he do anything?” I answered, “Yes.” He continued, “Can he make a rock too big for him to lift?” I needed time to think through what he said; and he enjoyed catching me unprepared. I have had plenty of time to think. God can do anything consistent with his rational, moral nature. He cannot lie. He cannot sin. He cannot perform nonsense since he is truth, love and reasonable. However, God can do all things that are truthful and consistent with genuine love. God is a “Can Do” God. God made human beings in his image to be “Can Do” people. Through Jesus Christ we are reconnected with God as his children and then raised as “Can Do” children. That is why the Apostle Paul writes:

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13, NIV)

If you cooperate with your heavenly father, you will become a “Can Do” person. However, you are not living in a vacuum. You will need to act, to actively cooperate; for from infancy you’ve been attacked as a child of God, demeaned, devalued and told what you can’t do. You’ve learned to believe many things that rob you of your standing as one made in the image of God, given the responsibility to rule the earth as child of the almighty.

You’ve been given a paper called a Vision (Belief) Grid. It has a checkerboard pattern. In fact, I have here a glass checkerboard. Imagine looking at everything in life through a glass

checkerboard. Through the clear squares we see accurately and respond appropriately.

However, the darkened squares obstruct our view. The clear squares represent godly beliefs that are truthful and bring about health attitudes and actions. The dark squares are ungodly beliefs where you have been deceived. Consequently, you (and the world about you) suffer from harmful thoughts and actions. Each row is an area of focus, and area of your life. For example, the first row I have labeled “God”. The second row I’ve labeled “self” and so on. Notice that there are godly and ungodly beliefs in each row. Now, our belief system is not confined to a small checkerboard, nor is there an even distribution of godly and ungodly beliefs in each area of focus. I used the checkerboard to help us understand that in each area of life, we are helped by some godly beliefs and hindered by some ungodly beliefs.

I remember learning early in my life that God is love! That is a godly belief proclaimed in 1 John 4:8 and 1 John 4:16. That truth was and is a clear square for me. I recall memorizing John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” I accepted that whoever believes in Jesus has eternal life – a clear square for me in the area of God. I believed Romans 3:23: “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” A clear square in the area of self! I knew I sinned and fell short of God’s creation. I believed Romans 6:23: “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.” I believed the wages of my sin were death – a clear square in self, Jesus’ gift was eternal life – a clear square in the God row. However, I had obstructed squares. After believing in Jesus, I still feared judgment for my sins. I thought my sins nullified the promise of eternal life. Yet the Bible is clear: no one is rejected because of sins. Jesus paid for them. We reject salvation with our unbelief. When in faith I called on Jesus to save me, I was transferred immediately from death to life. Through baptism,

we are named and claimed as his children; any *judgment for sins is loving discipline*, not condemnation, loving discipline for a child learning to live as a saint. I didn't understand that truth about self. I was and am a *saint with awesome potential*. I didn't have the clear square that *God is for me!* I had a darkened square and belief about humanity. I forgot that ineptness and sinfulness are corruptions of a beautiful humanity made by God. The statement "I'm only human" is an insult to God, for God made us human. To be human is something wonderful! I hadn't realized that **many of our beliefs are the result of disappointments, insults and faulty opinions of others.**

Last Wednesday evening, while in the workshop *Parenting Your Teenager*, I was reminded that many of us live with guilt and dark opinions of ourselves. If someone is mad at us, we think we are the problem, that we made the person mad. If people make fun of us, we think we deserve it. If they insult us, we agree. If we struggle in a sport and someone says we are not athletic, we let that opinion define us. If we are called a klutz, we take on that identity. Consequently, our opinion of ourselves is full of limitations and frailties, dark squares obstructing our God-given identity and potential.

In Psalm 1 we read:

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. (Psalm 1:1-3, NIV)

These words of Scripture tell us that we must separate ourselves from negative influences. This passage does not justify your separation from a spouse because he or she is negative. Instead, it challenges you and me about the people we hang with. How are we affected by the words and actions coming from their checkerboard, their Vision (Belief) Grid? Are we walking in the

counsel of the wicked? Are we standing in the way of sinners? Are we sitting in the seat of mockers? We might quickly say “no,” but let me challenge you. Since all sin and fall short of the glory of God, including mothers and fathers, I suppose we are exposed to bad counsel at some level even while we are carried in the womb. However, I’ve noticed that when children experience biological changes, insecurities rocket, especially in the middle school, preteen and young teen years. I’ve witnessed my children struggle at those times and remember sitting in the seat of mockers as a youth. Instead of growing a “Can Do” attitude, I became more self-conscious and aware of my frailties.

Consider what happens, however, when a person takes on God’s vision. When we mull over God’s law day and night, we stand like a tree that is well-watered, that produces and prospers. “*Whatever he does prospers,*” the Scriptures say. That sounds like a “Can Do” person!

In the Bible, Moses had a first cousin named Korah. Korah was a Levite who was given special leadership in worship. As a close relative of Moses and knowing Moses’ imperfections, Korah challenged Moses. He developed a following to overthrow Moses. God told Moses to have the people move their tents and themselves away from Korah and his followers. If they did not, they’d be swept away as the earth opened and swallowed them up in judgment. Their contempt for Moses was contempt for God who gave them Moses. Similarly, **if you have contempt for yourself or others, you show contempt for the God who made you and them,** and then went to the cross for you and them. It is important to pull away from those who degrade and diminish all that God has made.

When we deal with imperfections of one another, we must be careful not to discourage or condemn. If we see people and things as they really are, as they are according to God, then we will experience a reverence even as we confront what must be challenged. If we harshly criticize

one another or the church as a whole, we assault the very people God claims as his children, the very bride God has purchased with blood. Are you supposed to help the bride get cleaned up and dressed for the wedding, or are you to give her a black eye? Are you giving yourself a black eye, or are you thrilled to be chosen as the bride of Christ and looking for constructive feedback?

Jesus called twelve men to come apart with him so that as apprentice-disciples they would see, think and do things differently. **You are his church, the “ekklesia,” the people who are called out from life as people know it and assembled together to live a completely different life.** God takes his children and calls them out or apart from the unbelieving vision and actions of their culture. He assembles them together to learn, live and bring salvation to the very culture he calls them out of. God loves all people.

I have some questions.

1. *How are you cooperating with God to make you his “Can Do” child?*
2. *How are God’s word and vision replacing the areas of deception and obstruction in your thinking?*
3. *Do you have a plan to read God’s word?*
4. *Who are you hanging with that is encouraging your growth as a “Can Do” child of God?*
5. *Are you meeting with a small group of believers that help you grasp God’s wisdom for you?*
6. *Do you need to make some changes in who you hang with and what you do?*

I challenge you: read God’s word – the Bible, share your life with growing believers in a small group, and pray with others about your challenges. Cooperate with Jesus and you’ll see and live the difference.