

The Sin of Self-Reliance



Madalyn Allen

Foreword by John Allen

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To My Children:
Proverbs 3:5-6 says it all.

Foreword

The story of King Asa in 2 Chronicles is a striking reminder of the dangers of self-reliance. Asa began his reign by seeking the Lord wholeheartedly. In his early years, Asa trusted God in the face of overwhelming odds, and God delivered him and the nation of Judah. However, as he grew in strength and power, Asa shifted his reliance from God to himself and human alliances, leading to his downfall. His story is a cautionary tale about the subtle yet devastating consequences of forsaking God's guidance.

As I reflect on this story, I am reminded of my wife, Madalyn, and her powerful testimony. Madalyn's life mirrors the early faithfulness of Asa in many ways. She has always been a woman of strength,

determination, and compassion, pouring herself into her work as an educator and her ministry to others. Yet, like all of us, she has also wrestled with the temptation to lean on her own strength rather than trusting fully in God. Her journey has been one of learning to surrender, finding that the grace and power of God are sufficient in every weakness.

I first met Madalyn during a season when we both were learning what it meant to depend on God. Our paths crossed in a way that only God could orchestrate, and as we grew together, I saw how God was shaping her into a vessel of His wisdom and love. Her transparency about her struggles with self-reliance—and her ultimate victory in surrendering to God—has not only strengthened our marriage but has also

become a source of inspiration for everyone she touches.

This book is born out of that journey. It is an honest, heartfelt reflection on what it means to trust God fully and to abandon the illusion of control. Madalyn writes not as someone who has it all figured out, but as someone who has walked the road of faith, stumbles and all. Her words will challenge you, encourage you, and ultimately lead you to a deeper dependence on the One who is truly able.

As you read these pages, I encourage you to keep the story of King Asa in mind. His life reminds us that even the strongest among us can falter when we forget where our strength comes from. Let Madalyn's story remind you that God's grace is sufficient, His power is made perfect in our

weakness, and He is faithful to those who place their trust in Him.

May this book be a light on your path as you, too, learn to lay down the burden of self-reliance and lean fully on the everlasting arms of God.

With gratitude,
John Allen

Introduction

Leaning on the Lord has quite literally saved my life—what little life I had left after I had given so much of it away. By the age of twenty, relying on myself had left me broken and living in my father’s spare room with two small children under the age of two. Every effort to fix things in my own strength only seemed to dig me into a deeper hole, and I had reached the bottom. It was there, in the darkness of desperation, that I experienced a life-altering revelation: I could not continue on my own. My strength

was insufficient; my wisdom was lacking;
my way was leading nowhere.

Thankfully, the seeds planted in my childhood through growing up in the church began to take root when I needed them most. The God I had heard so much about in Sunday school and sermons was no longer a distant figure but the very One I needed to survive. I began to cultivate a real relationship with Him, and little did I know what rekindling that relationship would do for the trajectory of my life. It would transform not only my path but also the lives of everyone connected to me.

This book is about the sin of self-reliance, a sin that nearly destroyed me. I shudder to think where I would be today had I continued to wrap myself in the false security of self-reliance. What doors would

have remained locked? What relationships would I have forsaken? What blessings would I have missed if I hadn't closed my eyes and made the leap of faith—the trust fall of a lifetime—into the arms of my Creator?

Self-reliance isn't just dangerous; it's deceptive. It whispers promises of independence and control while dragging us further from the One who holds all things in His hands. In my own life and in the lives of countless biblical figures, we see that self-reliance is more than a misstep; it is a direct affront to the God who made us. It is like clay telling the potter, "I have no need of you," as though it could shape itself into something of worth. Scripture is clear: God takes the sin of self-reliance very seriously.

Of all the kings chronicled in the Bible, King Asa's story stands out as a vivid example of the contrast between relying on God and succumbing to self-reliance. His life is a case study in both success and failure, triumph and tragedy. Asa began his reign with a heart fully devoted to the Lord, and his reliance on God brought him great victories. But as the years passed, his trust shifted from the divine to the earthly, leading to his downfall. His story is a treasure trove of lessons—warnings and encouragements—that guide us toward wholehearted trust in our Father.

As we journey through Asa's life and reflect on our own, my hope is that this book will serve as a mirror, revealing areas of self-reliance that need to be surrendered to the Lord. Together, we'll explore what it means to fully trust God, the consequences

of failing to do so, and the joy of living in the freedom of His care. May Asa's story, along with the many other biblical truths we'll uncover, lead us to a deeper understanding of the only One worthy of our trust: the Lord our God.

Part 1

The Call to Rely Fully on the Lord

Chapter One

What Does it Mean to Rely on the Lord?

What does it mean to rely on the Lord? It's a phrase we've heard countless times in church, on coffee mugs, and in well-meaning advice from friends. But let's face it—when life feels like a runaway train, it's easy to wonder what that actually looks like. Does it mean sitting back and doing nothing while waiting for God to work things out? Is it just a fancy way of saying, “Pray and hope for the best”? Or is it something deeper? Spoiler alert: it's the latter.

To rely on the Lord is to place your full weight on Him. Think of it like leaning back in one of those zero-gravity chairs—

you're not half-hovering, not bracing yourself, but fully committing to the chair's ability to hold you up. Similarly, relying on God means fully committing to His ability to guide, provide, and sustain us. It's not a backup plan or a "just in case" measure; it's the main event.

The Bible is full of examples of what this kind of dependence looks like, starting with some of the greats. Remember Noah? This guy relied on God's Word so completely that he spent decades building a massive boat in the middle of dry land. He didn't wait for a drizzle to confirm the forecast—he trusted God's promise of rain, even when it seemed absurd. And guess what? That ark wasn't just for show.

Then there's David, the shepherd boy turned king. When he faced Goliath, he

didn't suit up in Saul's armor or sharpen the biggest sword he could find. Instead, he relied on the Lord, grabbing five smooth stones and trusting God to take care of the giant in his path. David's confidence wasn't in his slingshot skills; it was in the God who had delivered him before and would do it again.

And let's not forget Moses. God told him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt—no big deal, just convince the most powerful man on earth to let his free labor force walk away. Moses knew he wasn't up to the task in his own strength (he even tried to talk God out of choosing him), but he leaned into God's power and direction. The result? Plagues, parted seas, and manna from heaven. Relying on God doesn't mean it'll be easy, but it does mean God shows up in powerful ways.

But let's also talk about what relying on the Lord is *not*. It's not a free pass to avoid responsibility or ignore wisdom. Noah didn't sit around waiting for God to send an ark-shaped cloud down from heaven—he picked up his hammer. David didn't stroll into battle and say, “Well, God's got this” without taking aim. Relying on God means working *with* Him, not trying to be the hero of our own story or the manager of the universe.

At its core, relying on the Lord means surrendering control (gasp, I know) and admitting that we're not God. It's about recognizing that our own strength, intelligence, and planning have limits—but God's power, wisdom, and provision do not. It's trusting Him to lead us, even when we can't see the next step.

The Bible shows us that dependence on God is not just a nice idea; it's essential. When we lean into Him, we tap into a power source that never runs dry. So whether it's building a boat, facing a giant, or leading a nation, relying on the Lord means choosing faith over fear and trust over striving. It's not always easy, but it's always worth it.

God's Promises for Those who Rely on Him

If there's one thing God loves to do, it's keeping promises. Seriously, He's never broken a single one. Not one! And when it comes to the promises He's made to those who trust Him, well, let's just say He's given us some absolute gems—better than

any gift card or coupon you've ever found at the bottom of your junk drawer.

Let's start with one of the most well-known promises, found in **Proverbs 3:5–6**:
“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

This verse is like a GPS for life—but better, because God doesn't reroute us based on traffic; He sets the course perfectly the first time. Trusting Him means He's in charge of the map, and we're simply following the directions. No U-turns, no “recalculating,” just straight paths that lead to His perfect plan.

And then there's **Isaiah 26:3**, which says:

“You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in You.”

Perfect peace. Let that sink in for a second. Not just “kind of peaceful” or “peaceful as long as nothing goes wrong,” but *perfect peace*. Trusting in God is like having an unshakable calm in the middle of chaos—a gift that no amount of bubble baths or meditation apps can provide.

God doesn’t just stop at peace, though. He promises strength, too. **Isaiah 40:31** gives us this gem:

“But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

Now, I don't know about you, but this promise speaks to my soul. Some days, I feel like I'm crawling more than walking, let alone soaring like an eagle. But this verse reminds me that when we rely on God, He gives us the strength to keep going—not in our own power, but in His.

And let's not forget **Jeremiah 17:7–8**, which paints the most beautiful picture of a life rooted in trust:

“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”

Can we just appreciate that for a moment? A tree planted by the water,

unbothered by droughts, always thriving. That's what trusting in God does for us—it keeps us grounded and flourishing, no matter what life throws our way.

God even promises provision for those who trust Him. In **Matthew 6:31–33**, Jesus Himself tells us:

“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Translation? God's got you covered. Literally. Food, clothing, every necessity—He's not just aware of your needs; He's ready and able to meet them. All He asks is

that we put Him first and trust Him to handle the rest.

Now, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention **Psalm 37:4–5**, because this one's a fan favorite:

“Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will do this.”

Wait, what? The *desires of your heart*? Yes, but here's the catch (and it's a good one): When you trust God and delight in Him, He aligns your desires with His perfect will. So it's not about getting a shiny new car or winning the lottery; it's about receiving blessings that are far better—ones that truly satisfy your soul.

From peace to strength to provision, God's promises to those who trust Him are rich and abundant. They're not just pie-in-the-sky ideals; they're real, dependable truths that can anchor us through every storm. And the best part? God doesn't over-promise and under-deliver like that sketchy "same-day shipping" website we've all regretted ordering from. His promises are backed by His character—faithful, unchanging, and good.

So if trusting in the Lord comes with all these incredible promises, why do we so often resist it? Why do we keep trying to carry the weight of the world on our own shoulders? Maybe it's because trust feels risky. But as you'll see in the next section, learning to lean on God is the best risk you'll ever take—one I've personally reaped the fruit of.

From Rock Bottom to Reliance

There I was, sitting in my dad's spare room in Wisconsin, surrounded by two small children and about a metric ton of uncertainty. I wasn't just out of my element; I was out of options. My life felt like a sitcom gone terribly wrong—a “What Not to Do” episode of adulthood.

Let me back up for a second. I had just left Ohio, my college dreams, and a marriage that could have been the plot of a particularly scandalous soap opera. My high school sweetheart-turned-husband had turned out to have a hobby I wasn't aware of: infidelity. And not just your average, garden-variety infidelity—oh no, this was *epic proportions* level.

So, I packed up what little dignity I had left, along with my two kids, and moved into my dad's house. I'd like to say I had a grand plan, but the truth is, I was flat broke, freshly brokenhearted, and had about as much direction as a GPS with no signal. College was a distant dream I'd dropped out of, and my future was as blurry as my kids' crayon "artwork" on my dad's walls.

One day, while I was knee-deep in what I like to call the Great Depression: Post-Heartbreak Edition, my brother called. Now, let me tell you, my brother is not the sentimental type, but he has this knack for saying exactly what I need to hear. And on that particular day, he said, "You're too smart for this. Go to college. Get your degree."

Cue the record scratch in my brain. College? Degree? At that moment, it felt about as attainable as a luxury yacht. “How, exactly?” I wanted to ask. I didn’t have a car, a job, or even a shred of confidence. All I had were two kids, a pile of doubts, and an unshakable awareness that I couldn’t do this on my own.

But then it hit me: I didn’t *have* to do this on my own. That same God who owns the cattle on a thousand hills could certainly provide a little something for a mom stuck in her dad’s spare room. So, I prayed. And then I took a step—a small, scary, faith-filled step. I started applying to colleges.

I learned something profound in those moments of uncertainty: when you have nothing left to rely on, God becomes everything you need. It’s not that He wasn’t

there all along—it's just that I hadn't fully leaned on Him before. And let me tell you, His shoulders are *way* broader than mine.

That's how my journey of reliance on God really began. It wasn't glamorous, and it definitely wasn't easy, but it was a beginning—a step out of self-reliance and into the arms of a God who had a plan, even when I couldn't see it.

Sometimes, relying on the Lord starts in the unlikeliest of places: a spare room, a moment of desperation, or even a conversation with your brother. It's not about how strong you are; it's about trusting the One who's already strong enough to carry you through.

And guess what? He does. Every single time.

Chapter 2

King Asa's Early Years: Trust in God

Let's take a little trip back in time to the kingdom of Judah. Picture it: the year is around 900 BC, and King Asa is on the throne. Asa wasn't one of those kings who's remembered for being a tyrant or a drama magnet. No, Asa's story kicks off like a breath of fresh air—a leader who actually trusted God. Shocking, right?

According to 2 Chronicles 14, Asa inherited a kingdom that had a long, complicated relationship with obedience. His dad, Abijah, wasn't exactly known for his spiritual leadership, but Asa? Asa was

different. He stepped up to the plate and said, “Enough is enough!” No more idol worship, no more halfhearted devotion. He cleared out the foreign altars, smashed the sacred stones, and cut down the Asherah poles like he was cleaning house on an extreme episode of *Divine Decluttering*.

And guess what? The people followed his lead! Asa commanded Judah to seek the Lord, the God of their ancestors, and to obey His laws and commands. For ten glorious years, the kingdom had peace. That’s right—no wars, no invasions, just ten years of quiet. Asa used that time to build fortified cities, beef up the army, and stockpile supplies. The Bible says the land was at peace because the Lord gave them rest. Asa didn’t rely on his smarts or military strength; he leaned on God, and God delivered.

Now, just when you're thinking, "Wow, this guy's life is a cakewalk," things get interesting. Cue Zerah the Cushite, who comes marching in with an army so massive it could make your head spin. But more on that in the next part!

Back to Asa: in 2 Chronicles 15, we see God send a prophet named Azariah to give Asa and his people a little pep talk. Azariah tells Asa, "The Lord is with you when you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you, but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you" (2 Chronicles 15:2). Talk about a motivational speech! Azariah goes on to remind them of how God had been with His people during their past struggles and how seeking Him always led to peace and prosperity.

And Asa? He didn't just nod and move on. He took action! He gathered the people, made sacrifices to the Lord, and entered into a covenant to seek the Lord with all their hearts and souls. He even got rid of his own grandmother's idol. (Can you imagine that family reunion? "Hey Grandma, sorry about the idol, but it had to go.") Asa wasn't playing around—he was all in for God.

This part of Asa's story is one of trust, action, and obedience. He didn't just talk the talk; he walked the walk. And the result? Peace, blessings, and a kingdom that flourished under his leadership. It's a reminder that when we wholeheartedly trust in God and act in obedience, He shows up in ways that exceed our expectations.

When Asa Faces Zerah the Cushite

At this point, Asa's kingdom was peaceful, the people were seeking God, and all was well in the land of Judah. Enter Zerah the Cushite, stage left. And let me tell you, this guy didn't just come knocking on the door with a couple of friends. He marched in with an army of thousands of men and 300 chariots. Not one thousand. The Bible says "thousands upon thousands!" Imagine looking out over your backyard and seeing an endless sea of warriors. That's what Asa was up against.

Now, I don't know about you, but if I saw a million soldiers headed my way, my first instinct would probably be to hyperventilate, followed by some frantic Googling: "*What to do when hopelessly outnumbered?*" But Asa? Asa didn't rely on

his own strength, his army, or a well-timed YouTube Short for inspiration. No, Asa did the one thing we often forget to do when we're overwhelmed: he turned to God.

In 2 Chronicles 14:11, Asa prayed an absolutely beautiful prayer. He said, "Lord, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. Lord, you are our God; do not let mere mortals prevail against you."

Now pause for a second and soak that in. Asa didn't throw a pity party or try to negotiate terms with Zerah. He didn't say, "Okay, God, here's my backup plan; can you sprinkle a little miracle on it?" No. He fully surrendered the situation to God,

admitting that Judah was powerless without Him.

And let's talk about that trust! Asa recognized that this wasn't just *his* battle; it was *God's* battle. He didn't tell God how to fight it, and he didn't demand instant results. He simply said, "Lord, we're relying on you. Show them who You are." That's the kind of faith that moves mountains—or, in Asa's case, defeats a thousands upon thousands-man army.

So, what happened next? Spoiler alert: God came through. The Bible says that the Lord struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah. That's right—God Himself stepped into the battlefield. Zerah's massive army? They were routed so badly that they couldn't recover. Asa and his troops chased them down, collected an overwhelming

amount of plunder, and came back to Judah victorious.

Let's be real: this wasn't because Asa was a brilliant strategist or had cutting-edge weaponry. It was because he trusted God. Asa didn't let fear take over or try to figure everything out on his own. Instead, he relied on the only One who could handle the impossible.

And isn't that just like God? When we're faced with situations that seem way too big for us to handle, He steps in and shows us that He's got it. Whether it's a million soldiers or a million worries piling up in your mind, God is more than capable of taking care of it all.

What I love most about Asa's story here is that it's a reminder for us to stop

stressing over things we were never meant to control. Asa's army was severely outnumbered, and yet, victory came because he trusted in God. There's a lesson in that for all of us. Maybe you don't have a Cushite army breathing down your neck, but you've got your own battles—work struggles, family issues, financial problems, you name it. The question is, will you rely on your own strength, or will you hand it over to the Lord?

Because here's the truth: the God who defeated Zerah and his thousands upon thousands-man army is the same God we serve today. And trust me, He's not intimidated in the least by your battles.

The Blessings of Trusting God

Let's talk about the perks of trusting in God, shall we? Ready for another spoiler alert? They're not small. Asa's story is proof that when we lean on the Lord, we're not just scraping by—we're walking in victory and blessings that blow our minds.

Remember when Asa and his vastly outnumbered army faced Zerah the Cushite? They didn't just survive; they *thrived*. After God delivered Judah, Asa and his troops chased the enemy down, ransacked their camps, and brought back so much loot they probably needed a caravan of U-Hauls to carry it all. And this wasn't just victory—it was a victory *with interest*. That's how God works: He doesn't just fight for us; He blesses us in ways that go above and beyond.

But the blessings weren't just physical spoils. Asa and his people experienced peace and rest on every side. You can't put a price tag on that. In 2 Chronicles 15:15, it says, "The Lord gave them rest on every side." Let's pause for a second and appreciate that. We're not talking about a quick nap or a weekend off—we're talking *rest* in the deepest sense of the word. No wars, no drama, no threat of invasion, just peace. Judah could finally breathe because they trusted God.

And isn't that what we're all craving? Life can feel like an endless battle: bills piling up, kids acting like they're auditioning for a reality show, work stress turning your brain into scrambled eggs. But when we put our trust in God, He brings us peace that doesn't make sense to the

world—a peace that lets us sleep at night knowing He’s got it all under control.

But wait, there’s more! God’s blessings don’t stop at peace and victory. Asa’s trust in the Lord also led to spiritual renewal in Judah. After defeating Zerah, Asa doubled down on his reliance on God. He cleaned house—literally and spiritually—tearing down idols and leading his people back to worshipping the one true God. Asa’s trust didn’t just change his circumstances; it transformed his nation.

Now, let’s be real: trusting God doesn’t mean life suddenly becomes a perfect Hallmark movie. It’s not like you wake up one morning, put your faith in God, and boom—no more problems, your laundry folds itself, and you find a twenty-dollar bill in every jacket pocket. No, trusting God

doesn't erase challenges, but it does invite Him into the mess, where He works all things for our good. And more often than not, He blesses us in ways we couldn't have even dreamed up on our own.

Take a moment and think about your own life. Maybe you trusted God in a tough situation, and He came through in a way that left you speechless. Or maybe you're in the thick of it right now, wondering if trusting Him is worth the risk. Here's the deal: God's track record is spotless. Asa trusted Him and saw victory, peace, and blessings beyond measure. And the same God who showed up for Asa is the God who shows up for you.

The blessings of trusting God aren't always flashy, but they're always powerful. Sometimes they look like restored

relationships, financial provision, or unexpected opportunities. Other times, they look like the quiet assurance that you're not fighting your battles alone. Either way, you win because you've got the Creator of the universe in your corner.

Asa's story teaches us that trusting God doesn't just bring victory over the enemy—it brings a ripple effect of blessings. It changes our hearts, deepens our faith, and sets us up to experience life in a way that only God can orchestrate. So, if you're sitting on the fence, let Asa's story nudge you off. Trust God, watch Him work, and be ready to pick up your blessings (and maybe a spiritual U-Haul for all those victory spoils).

Taking a Chance on God

If trusting God were a sport, this was my Olympic moment. After sending out college applications like I was Oprah handing out cars (“You get an application! *You* get an application!”), God narrowed it down to one school: Western Illinois University in Macomb, Illinois. Macomb was a small town tucked so far away from anything familiar it might as well have been on the moon. The nearest family? Four hours away. Comfort zone? Packed up and left behind. But the Lord made it clear, so I packed up too.

Here’s the kicker: While I had a place to live in the graduate and family housing units (thank you, kids, for making me eligible for the "automatic mom pass"), nothing else had been figured out. No financial aid. No daycare. No job. Just me,

my two kids, and a whole lot of faith. Now, if this were a movie, this is the part where the inspirational music swells, and everything magically falls into place. But this was real life, and the clock was ticking. I had less than two weeks for God to show up, or I'd be reversing that U-Haul right back to square one.

Let me tell you, trusting God with no backup plan feels a lot like walking into a buffet with no wallet. You're either going to be wildly blessed, or it's going to get awkward real fast. But here's the thing: I'd learned enough about God to know He doesn't operate on "Plan B." He doesn't need one. So, I leaned into that truth, even though every logical part of me wanted to curl up in a ball and panic.

And let's be honest, I'd been on the receiving end of God's grace more times than I could count. I had my fair share of moments where He had taken a chance on me when I didn't deserve it. So, this was my chance to take a leap of faith and trust Him to work it out.

It wasn't easy. I'd look at my kids and think, "Lord, this isn't just about me. They need a home, stability, daycare, *snacks*—you know, the basics." But every time the doubt crept in, I chose to believe. I started speaking it out loud: "One day, I'll tell the story of how God did it." I said it so often it almost became my mantra. "How God did it." Because if anyone could pull this off, it was Him.

I started praying like my life depended on it—because it did. I prayed

about financial aid, jobs, daycare, and peace of mind (because let's face it, mine was hanging by a thread). And every time I am reminded of the weight of uncertainty I held in those moments, I think about King Asa. If he could trust God in the middle of a full-blown battlefield, I certainly could trust Him in the middle of Macomb, Illinois.

Here's what I learned during those two weeks: trusting God doesn't always mean you have all the details; it means you trust *Him* with the details. It's like handing over the recipe to a world-class chef and not worrying about what's going into the pot because you know the final dish is going to be amazing. So, I stopped trying to figure out the "how" and started focusing on the "who."

God gave me peace—not the kind of peace that magically solves all your problems but the kind that reminds you that He’s in control. And let me tell you, that peace made all the difference. I stopped obsessing over the ticking clock and started leaning into the faith that God was writing my story, and it was going to be one for the books.

Those two weeks were a whirlwind of faith, prayer, and a whole lot of “Okay, Lord, I trust you” moments. And while I don’t want to spoil the next chapter of this story, let’s just say God showed up in ways that blew my mind. Because that’s what He does. He doesn’t just meet our needs—He exceeds them, all while teaching us to rely on Him more than we ever thought possible.

And trust me, when you look back and see how God worked it all out, you'll laugh at how stressed you were in the moment. But isn't that the beauty of trusting Him? He takes our uncertainties and turns them into testimonies. So, if you're standing at your own crossroads, unsure of what's next, let me just say this: Take a chance on God. He's worth it every time.

Part 2

The Subtle Drift Into Self Reliance

Chapter Three

What is the Sin of Self Reliance

Self-reliance sounds like such a noble thing, doesn't it? It's the stuff motivational posters are made of—some guy climbing a mountain with the words “Believe in Yourself!” plastered underneath. Society celebrates the self-made, the independent, and the “I've got this!” mindset. And while those qualities might win you awards at your company's yearly banquet, they don't win you any favor in God's eyes.

Biblically speaking, self-reliance isn't about resourcefulness or independence. It's about the posture of your heart—where you place your trust when things get tough.

God designed us to rely on Him, not on ourselves. When we decide we can handle life on our own, we step into dangerous territory. That's when self-reliance shifts from being a harmless mindset to a full-blown sin.

Now, let's be clear: the Bible doesn't condemn planning, working hard, or being responsible. In fact, Proverbs is basically a greatest-hits collection of wisdom on the importance of diligence. But here's the catch: those things must always be done with a reliance on God, not on ourselves. The moment we start thinking, "I don't need God—I've got this," we're heading down a slippery slope. And let's be honest, that slope is greased with pride, coated in overconfidence, and ends in a giant pit of regret.

Take a look at Proverbs 3:5-6:

**“Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own
understanding. In all your ways
acknowledge Him, and He will make your
paths straight.”**

Notice the phrasing here. It doesn't say
“Trust in yourself with half your heart” or
“Lean on your understanding when it makes
sense.” God's Word is pretty clear: our
hearts were designed to fully trust Him, not
ourselves.

When we choose to rely on our own
strength, we're essentially telling God,
“Thanks, but I've got this covered.” Imagine
saying that to the Creator of the universe.
The One who spoke galaxies into existence
and holds the entire world in His hands. It's
like trying to teach Einstein basic math or

offering Michelangelo a tip on painting. It's ridiculous!

And here's where it gets even trickier: self-reliance doesn't usually announce itself with a bullhorn. It sneaks in quietly, disguised as responsibility, ambition, or independence. At first, it seems harmless—like saying, “I'll take care of this one little thing; God doesn't need to be bothered.” But before you know it, that little thing turns into a long list of “I'll handle it myself” tasks, and suddenly, you're living life like you're the CEO of the universe.

Remember the Israelites? Their downfall wasn't just about golden calves or grumbling in the wilderness. Time and time again, they relied on their own strength, alliances, or idols instead of trusting God. They fought battles God didn't call them to

fight, made decisions He didn't approve, and suffered the consequences. The lesson? Self-reliance always leads to a spiritual dead-end.

Jeremiah 17:5 lays it out plainly:

“Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord.”

Ouch. Trusting in yourself doesn't just put you in a tough spot—it puts you under a curse. That's how serious this is. When you lean on your own understanding, you're essentially pulling your heart away from God. And a heart that isn't aligned with Him is a heart in trouble.

But here's the good news (because we could all use some good news): God doesn't leave us in our self-reliant mess. He gently calls us back to Him. He reminds us that His strength is made perfect in our weakness (2

Corinthians 12:9). That He is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1).

The spiritual danger of self-reliance is that it tricks us into thinking we don't need God. And the moment we buy into that lie, we cut ourselves off from His power, provision, and peace. But when we humble ourselves and acknowledge our need for Him, we open the door for Him to do what only He can do: lead, guide, and bless us beyond our wildest imagination.

So, let's get this straight: self-reliance isn't just a bad habit—it's a sin. And like all sin, it separates us from God. The good news? There's always a way back. And trust me, God's way is a million times better than anything we could come up with on our own.

The Contrast Between Godly Stewardship and Self-Reliance

Here's the thing about self-reliance: it loves to dress up like godly stewardship. It's like a bad actor trying to pass as the real deal—close enough to fool you for a minute but not quite convincing once you know what to look for. So, let's unpack the difference between the two because knowing how to spot the impostor is half the battle.

Godly stewardship is essentially managing what God has entrusted to you—your time, resources, relationships, and talents—in a way that glorifies Him. Think of it like being a manager at a fancy hotel. The owner (God) hands you the keys and says, “Take care of this for me, and follow my instructions.” You don't own the place,

but you're responsible for keeping things running according to the owner's wishes.

When you're walking in godly stewardship, you're constantly checking in with the Owner. "God, what do You want me to do with this paycheck? How should I spend my time today? What's Your plan for this challenge I'm facing?" It's not about what *you* want to do; it's about managing everything according to His will.

Stewardship keeps you in a posture of humility and dependence. It acknowledges that everything you have belongs to God in the first place. Even your breath is on loan! When you operate as a steward, you're saying, "God, I trust You to guide me, provide for me, and show me how to handle this. I'm just here to follow Your lead."

Self-reliance, on the other hand, is like that one friend who borrows your car and suddenly thinks they own it. It takes the resources God has given you and acts like they're yours to control, without consulting Him. Self-reliance whispers things like, "I worked hard for this money, so I'll decide how to spend it," or, "I'll figure this out on my own—I don't need to bother God with the details."

At first glance, self-reliance can look a lot like stewardship. After all, it's still "handling business," right? But the key difference lies in *who's in charge*. Stewardship keeps God in the driver's seat, while self-reliance pushes Him out of the car and says, "Don't worry, I've got this." And

yet another spoiler alert: the car is about to hit a ditch.

Let's look at a Biblical example of this contrast. Remember the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30? The master entrusted his servants with varying amounts of money before leaving on a journey. Two of them invested wisely and brought back a return, while one buried his talent in the ground out of fear.

The first two servants demonstrated godly stewardship—they used what the master gave them to fulfill his purposes. The third servant, however, was stuck in self-reliance. Instead of trusting the master's plan, he relied on his own understanding, thinking, "I'll just hide this and play it safe." The result? The master called him "wicked and lazy." Yikes.

Self-reliance doesn't always look like pride or arrogance; sometimes, it looks like fear, procrastination, or overthinking. It's the subtle belief that *your way* is better—or safer—than God's way. And let's not miss the point: when we rely on ourselves, we're not just mismanaging what God has given us; we're robbing Him of the opportunity to show up and show off in our lives.

Here's the bottom line: godly stewardship starts with trust. It says, "God, I don't know how this is going to work out, but I'm trusting You to guide me." Self-reliance, however, starts with control. It says, "I'll handle this myself because I can't afford to risk depending on anyone—even God."

Think of it like baking a cake. Godly stewardship is when you follow the recipe God gives you, trusting that He knows exactly how to make it turn out right. Self-reliance is when you throw out the recipe, eyeball the ingredients, and hope for the best. Sure, you might end up with something edible, but it's probably going to be lopsided and taste like regret.

When you operate in godly stewardship, you get to experience the peace that comes with trusting God. You're not carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders because you know it's His responsibility to provide and guide. Stewardship leads to freedom, joy, and a deep sense of purpose.

Self-reliance, on the other hand, is exhausting. It's like trying to push a car

uphill with a flat tire—you're working hard, but you're not getting very far. And the worst part? You miss out on seeing God's power in action.

So, the next time you're faced with a challenge or decision, ask yourself: "Am I approaching this as a steward or as someone who thinks they've got it all figured out?" Because trust me, one leads to peace and the other leads to a stress headache.

Doubt Doubling Down

You know those moments when you step out in faith and then start second-guessing everything? That was me, sitting in a tiny apartment in Macomb, Illinois, with my two little girls, wondering if I had completely lost my mind. On one hand, I

was clinging to this tiny spark of hope that God was going to show up in a big way. On the other hand, I was wondering why God would bother showing up for someone like me.

The days felt long and heavy, like I was stuck in some sort of limbo. Every morning, I'd wake up determined to believe: *God's got this. I don't know how, but He's got this.* And then by lunchtime, I'd spiral into, *You know, I should probably go ahead and pack just in case we have to leave. Is there a polite way to tell your baby girls you've failed them?*

The back-and-forth was exhausting. My spirit would rally, cheering, "Faith moves mountains!" But then my flesh would chime in with a sarcastic, "Yeah, but have you seen the size of this mountain? Maybe

you should start climbing.” It was like having two wildly unhelpful roommates living in my head, each trying to shout over the other.

Let me tell you, the war between faith and fear is no joke. One moment, I’d be praying fervently, reminding God (as if He needed reminding) of all the Scriptures about His faithfulness. “Lord, You said You’d supply all my needs according to Your riches in glory! You parted the Red Sea! Surely, you can figure out my financial aid!”

But the next moment, doubt would creep in like an uninvited guest, whispering, “What makes you think this will work out for you? You’re not exactly Moses. Maybe this was all just wishful thinking.”

I felt like Peter, stepping out of the boat to walk on water, only to look down and realize, “Oh no, I can’t swim!” Except, instead of a lake, my sinking moment involved overdue bills, no daycare, and the terrifying reality of raising two kids with not so much as a job prospect.

And then there was the guilt. Oh, the guilt. I’d think, *If I really trusted God, I wouldn’t be doubting like this. What kind of example am I setting for my kids?* It was a vicious cycle: doubt led to guilt, guilt led to more doubt, and somewhere in between, I was trying to keep my kids fed and entertained with nothing but my prayer life and Disney movies on repeat.

I’ll be honest—there were moments when I wasn’t sure faith was enough. I had heard all the sermons and read all the

Scriptures about faith being the key to victory, but when you're staring at a serious lack of resources, theory and reality don't always line up as neatly as you'd like.

But even in my darkest moments, there was this small, persistent hope that refused to let me give up. It was like a flickering candle in a storm, barely holding on but still refusing to be snuffed out. I didn't know how God was going to do it, but I couldn't shake the feeling that He was working behind the scenes, even if I couldn't see it yet.

Looking back now, I realize that faith isn't about never doubting; it's about choosing to trust God even when doubt is screaming in your ear. It's about holding onto hope when everything in you wants to let go. And sometimes, it's about sitting in

your apartment, surrounded by unpacked boxes, and deciding, “I’m going to trust God even if it feels like the craziest thing I’ve ever done.”

Chapter 4

King Asa's Turning Point

If you're paying attention, 2 Chronicles 16 will leave you scratching your head in confusion. Oh, King Asa. What happened? You started out so strong, putting your faith in God and reaping the rewards of divine guidance. But then, somewhere along the way, you made a hard left turn straight into the cul-de-sac of self-reliance. Let's dive into 2 Chronicles 16:1-10 and unpack how this once-faithful king went from a shining example of godly trust to, well, not-so-great decision-making.

So here's the scene: Baasha, king of Israel, decides to get under Asa's skin by

fortifying Ramah, a border city designed to cut off Judah's trade and communication. Basically, Baasha set up a giant "Do Not Enter" sign for Judah. Instead of turning to God, Asa panics and goes full-on "fix it myself" mode.

Instead of seeking God's guidance, Asa raids the temple treasury (yes, the *temple treasury*—the money dedicated to God!) and sends a bribe to Ben-Hadad, king of Aram. His pitch? "Let's be besties and gang up on Baasha." Surprisingly, Ben-Hadad agrees, and together they take out Israel's supply cities, forcing Baasha to abandon his Ramah project.

Now, you might be thinking, *Well, it worked, didn't it?* And yeah, on the surface, it looks like Asa's plan paid off. But hold on—just because something *works* doesn't

mean it's *right*. Asa's reliance on human alliances instead of divine intervention showed a significant shift in his heart.

God, being the faithful and loving Father that He is, doesn't let Asa's mistake go unchecked. He sends Hanani the seer to give Asa a spiritual reality check. Hanani's message? "Asa, you blew it." (Okay, that's the paraphrase.)

In verses 7-9, Hanani points out the contrast between Asa's earlier faith and his current actions. He reminds Asa of how God delivered him from the massive Cushite army because he relied on the Lord. Then comes the mic drop:

Hanani tells Asa that what he's done in not relying on God is nothing short of foolish and will be repaid by war.

Ouch. That's the spiritual equivalent of getting called out in front of the whole class.

Now, you'd hope Asa would take this as a wake-up call, fall to his knees, and repent. But no, our boy Asa doubles down. Instead of owning up to his mistake, he gets angry at everything except his own choices. He throws Hanani in prison (because apparently, shooting the messenger is easier than dealing with the message) and starts oppressing his people.

So what happened? How did Asa go from trusting God to trusting bribes? The key lies in his turning point. Somewhere along the way, Asa forgot that his strength came from the Lord. Maybe it was pride creeping in, whispering, *You've got this*. Or maybe it was fear, convincing him that God wasn't moving fast enough. Either way,

Asa's decision to rely on human schemes instead of divine wisdom was a clear indicator that his heart had drifted.

And here's the kicker: God wasn't mad because Asa needed help. He was grieved because Asa didn't come to Him for that help. Asa's actions said, "I can do this on my own," and God, not overriding his free will let him try and, unfortunately, it didn't end well.

Asa's Reliance on Human Alliances

King Asa, King Asa, King Asa! What were you thinking? For someone who once put all his chips on God, you'd think he'd know better than to hedge his bets with Ben-Hadad. But no, Asa decided it was time to trade divine alliances for political ones.

Let's unpack this less-than-stellar decision and see what we can learn from it.

The thing about human alliances is they feel comfortable because they're tangible. Asa looked at his problem—Baasha fortifying Ramah and cutting off Judah's access to, well, everything—and instead of saying, “God, I need you,” he said, “Hmm, who's got a strong army and a price I can afford?” Enter Ben-Hadad, king of Aram.

Asa sent a sweet little care package—aka the temple gold and silver—and said, “Hey, how about you break your treaty with Israel and help me out?” Ben-Hadad, being no fool, took the deal. He attacked Israel, forcing Baasha to abandon Ramah. Boom. Problem solved, right?

Wrong. So very wrong.

Here's the tricky part: Asa's plan *worked*. On the surface, it looked like a win. But just because something works doesn't mean it's the right thing to do. Asa's reliance on Ben-Hadad over God revealed a heart shift. He went from "God is my refuge and strength" to "I'll just write a check and call it a day."

This reminds me of every time I try to make slime with my daughter without reading the instructions. Sure, we end up with a slimy glob in our hands—but it's either too sticky, too stiff, and probably one ingredient away from resembling anything but slime. It works, but it isn't always *right*.

When we rely on human alliances instead of God, we're essentially saying,

“Lord, I think I’ve got this one. Stand down.”

It’s not that working with people is bad—God often uses relationships to accomplish His will. The problem arises when we start seeing people as the *source* of our help rather than the *vessel*. Asa forgot that Ben-Hadad’s strength was nothing compared to God’s power.

In Asa’s earlier days, he trusted God to deliver him from a million-man Cushite army. But here, with Baasha breathing down his neck, he panicked. Fear said, “Do something—anything!” And pride whispered, “You’ve got the resources. Make it happen.” So Asa did. And while his plan worked temporarily, it came at a cost.

Hanani the seer delivered God's response loud and clear:

“Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the Lord your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand.” (2 Chronicles 16:7)

Translation: Asa didn't just lose an opportunity for God to show up in a big way; he actually weakened his position by relying on someone who could—and did—turn on him later. Hanani's rebuke wasn't just about Asa's decision; it was about the *heart* behind it. Asa chose human strength over divine power, and that choice set the tone for the rest of his reign.

Before we judge Asa too harshly, let's be honest—haven't we all done the same thing? How many times have we

trusted a quick fix over God's timing? Maybe it's borrowing money to solve a financial crisis instead of praying for provision. Or leaning on a friend's advice without first seeking Godly wisdom.

I'll admit, I've been Asa more times than I'd like to count. There's something so tempting about taking matters into my own hands, especially when God's timeline doesn't align with my sense of urgency. But every time I've chosen self-reliance, I've missed out on seeing God move in ways only He can.

Asa's story reminds us that God is *always* our first and best option. When we rely on Him, we invite His power, His timing, and His wisdom into our situation. And trust me, His solutions are always better than our shortcuts. Ben-Hadad might have

been a temporary fix, but God's deliverance would have been a permanent victory.

The Role of Pride and Fear in Self-Reliance

There are two sneaky little troublemakers that have been derailing humanity since the garden of Eden: pride and fear. These two are like the dynamic duo of bad decision-making. They whisper lies, hype up your self-confidence (or crush it), and before you know it, you're running your life like Asa ran Judah in his later years—off course and way too dependent on human strength.

Ah, pride. It's that inner voice that says, "*I've got this. No help needed, thank you very much!*" Pride is sneaky because it can wear so many disguises. Sometimes it

looks like confidence, other times it's wrapped up in a fear of looking weak or admitting you need help. For Asa, pride probably whispered, "*You're the king of Judah! Why should you bother God with this little skirmish? You've got connections!*"

Pride convinces us we're capable of handling things on our own—even when history has proven otherwise. Remember when Asa relied on God to defeat that enormous Cushite army? He *knew* what God could do, but somewhere along the way, he decided, "*Eh, I'll handle it this time.*" Pride made Asa forget who got him this far in the first place.

Sound familiar? Maybe it's when you tell yourself you don't need to pray about that job offer because, "I've got the experience for it." Or when you think, "*I*

don't need to ask for advice—I already know what I'm doing.” That's pride, my friend, setting you up for a fall.

If pride is the boastful voice that says, “I can do it on my own,” fear is the trembling voice that says, “What if no one helps me?” Fear often drives us to self-reliance because it tricks us into thinking that if we don't act fast, everything will fall apart. Asa's decision to make a treaty with Ben-Hadad wasn't just about pride; it was fear whispering, “*You've got to do something now, or Judah's done for!*”

Fear has a way of making us feel cornered, like we have no choice but to take matters into our own hands. And let's be real: sometimes fear is downright persuasive. Have you ever been so scared of failing that you skipped prayer altogether

and went straight to action? Fear doesn't wait for God's timing—it shouts, "*Move now, or it's all over!*"

Now, here's where things get messy: pride and fear love working together. Pride says, "*You've got this!*" while fear shouts, "*You'd better have this, or else!*" It's a toxic combo that pushes us into overdrive, leaving God out of the equation completely. Asa's alliance with Ben-Hadad was the result of pride saying, "*I'm king—I know what to do,*" and fear saying, "*If I don't act fast, Baasha will crush us!*"

We've all been there, haven't we? Maybe you've taken on a huge project because pride convinced you no one else could do it as well as you. Meanwhile, fear told you the team would fall apart without your involvement. You end up overworked,

overwhelmed, and wondering why everything feels so heavy.

The reason pride and fear lead us to self-reliance is simple: they take our eyes off God and put the focus squarely on us. Pride puffs us up, making us think we're the solution. Fear shrinks us down, making us believe God won't come through in time. Either way, the result is the same—we try to take control, and it doesn't end well.

For Asa, his pride and fear cost him not only a chance to see God move but also his peace and security. His alliance with Ben-Hadad may have worked in the short term, but it left Judah vulnerable and robbed Asa of the opportunity to demonstrate faith in God's power.

So, how do we avoid falling into the same trap? The answer lies in humility and trust. Humility reminds us that we don't have all the answers—and that's okay. Trust reminds us that God does—and He's never late. When pride tells you to prove yourself and fear says you're running out of time, Scripture whispers,

“Be still, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10)

We're not called to fix everything ourselves. We're called to rely on the One who already has the perfect plan. Pride and fear might try to derail us, but God's promises are the anchor that keeps us steady.

My Own Asa Moment

When I look back on that season of my life, I realize just how close I came to an “Asa moment.” You know, the kind where doubt creeps in, pride teams up with fear, and you’re *this close* to making a hasty decision that screams, “*God, I got this!*” Except you *don’t* got this.

Let’s rewind to those days in Macomb, Illinois. The boxes were unpacked (mostly), the girls were adjusting, and I was...well, I was floundering somewhere between faith and a nervous breakdown. Financial aid hadn’t cleared, daycare for the girls wasn’t finalized, and my bank account looked like it had been on a diet. Every ticking minute felt like a countdown to catastrophe.

Looking back, I can see all the flashing red lights signaling a potential detour into self-reliance:

1. **Overthinking Everything** – I spent countless hours plotting out “Plan B,” “Plan C,” and—just in case—“Plan Z.” Each plan was more far-fetched than the last. There was even a moment where I wondered if I could homeschool the girls while working multiple jobs and going to school. (It turns out I could not.)
2. **Googling Myself into Oblivion** – I became the queen of internet searches. “How to make money fast without a job.” “Can you sell plasma twice a week?” “Is there an age limit

for child actors?” I wasn’t just looking for solutions; I was chasing after control.

3. **Doomsday Scenarios on Repeat** –

My mind kept playing out every worst-case scenario, complete with dramatic endings like, “*And that’s how I ended up living in my car with two kids.*”

At that moment, I had a choice. I could go full-on Asa, forging my own alliances with shady side hustles and half-baked schemes. Or I could lean into God, trusting Him to do what He said He would, even when I couldn’t see how He’d pull it off.

Doubt is a slippery slope, isn’t it? It starts as a little whisper, “*What if God*

doesn't come through?" Before you know it, it's a full-on panic parade: *"What if He forgot about me? What if I'm not worth helping? What if I've messed up too much for Him to care?"*

But here's the thing about doubt: it doesn't disqualify you. It just gives you a choice. Asa had doubt, and he chose alliances over the Almighty. I had doubt, and I had to decide whether I'd trust God or let fear drive me into a spiral of self-reliance.

I wish I could tell you that my decision to rely on God was a grand, heroic moment, complete with a soundtrack and heavenly light shining down on me. But it wasn't. It was messy. It was tear-streaked prayers and shaky whispers of, *"Lord, I don't know how, but I trust You."* It was me taking baby steps

of faith, one day at a time, even when nothing made sense.

I didn't have all the answers. I didn't know how the bills would get paid, how the girls' daycare would work out or how I would even get to class. But I knew I couldn't do it on my own. I knew that trying to take control would only lead me further away from the peace I desperately needed.

And so, I chose to wait. I chose to lean on Him instead of Googling one more "quick fix." I chose to let my faith be louder than my fear.

Let me tell you, trusting God in the bleak moments isn't glamorous. It's not Instagram-worthy or hashtag-friendly. It's clinging to His promises when all you have is hope and a sliver of courage. It's standing

firm when the world screams, “*Do something!*” and God whispers, “*Be still.*”

That choice to rely on God didn't just keep me from making an Asa-like mistake—it strengthened my faith. It reminded me that God's timing is perfect, even when mine feels overdue. And it taught me that reliance on Him isn't just a good idea; it's the only way to truly live.

Chapter 5

The Consequences of Self-Reliance

If King Asa's story were a movie, this would be the part where you're screaming at the screen, "*Asa, don't do it! Turn back! You can still fix this!*" But sadly, Asa's script didn't include a redemption arc. Instead, it reads more like a cautionary tale, complete with a heartbreaking ending that leaves you shaking your head.

Let's pick up where we left off, in **2 Chronicles 16:11-14**. Asa's health was failing, and he had developed a severe disease in his feet. But instead of turning to the Lord for healing, Asa doubled down on

his stubborn self-reliance. He placed his trust entirely in physicians, not God.

Now, before you get the wrong idea, this isn't the Bible saying, "*Don't go to the doctor.*" Not at all. The problem wasn't that Asa sought medical help—it was that he didn't even consider seeking God's help. God wasn't his Plan A, B, or even Z. Asa had effectively written God out of his story altogether.

Here's the thing about Asa: he had so many opportunities to turn things around. God sent Hanani, the prophet, to call him out. That was Asa's cue to hit pause, reflect, and say, "*You know what? I've messed up.*" But instead of repenting, Asa got defensive. He threw Hanani in prison and started oppressing his people. It's almost like Asa thought, "*If I ignore the problem long*

enough, maybe it'll go away.” But as you can probably guess, it didn’t.

Asa’s failure to repent is one of the saddest parts of his story. He had seen firsthand what God could do when he relied on Him. Remember the victory over the Cushites? That wasn’t just luck; that was divine intervention! Asa knew better, but pride and fear kept him from admitting his mistake.

Asa’s refusal to rely on God didn’t just affect him; it impacted his kingdom, his legacy, and his relationship with God. Self-reliance has this sneaky way of isolating us. It convinces us that we can handle everything on our own, but in reality, it builds walls—walls between us and God, and often between us and the people around us.

Asa's story ends with a burial fit for a king—burning spices, a grand tomb, the works. But let's be honest: a fancy funeral doesn't erase a life that drifted away from God. Asa's legacy could have been one of faith and trust, but instead, it's a sobering reminder of what happens when we let self-reliance take the wheel.

Here's the takeaway: it's never too late to turn back to God—unless you decide it is. Asa didn't lose because he made mistakes; he lost because he refused to admit them. Repentance isn't about perfection; it's about direction. It's about choosing to realign yourself with God, even when it's hard, humbling, or downright uncomfortable.

Let Asa's story serve as a gut-check. Are there areas in your life where you've

been trying to do it all on your own? If so, let this be your gentle nudge—or maybe a not-so-gentle shove—to turn back to the One who’s been waiting for you all along.

How Self-Reliance Distances Us from God

Have you ever tried using a map but decided you didn’t need it? You start confidently down the road, only to end up lost in a neighborhood where every street looks the same. That’s what self-reliance does to our relationship with God. It tricks us into thinking we’ve got it all under control until we realize we’re spiritually stranded and can’t figure out how to get back on track.

Self-reliance doesn’t pull us away from God in one dramatic tug. It’s subtle, like a slow leak in a tire. At first, everything seems fine, but then you start feeling the

wobble. It begins with a little thought like, “*I’ll handle this one on my own. God’s busy, right?*” Then it snowballs: “*I don’t really need to pray about this. I’ve got experience. I’ve got skills.*” Next thing you know, you’re knee-deep in a mess, and God’s voice feels like it’s coming through static.

Why does this happen? Because self-reliance shifts the focus from *God’s power* to *our power*. It’s like saying, “*Thanks for getting me this far, Lord. I’ll take it from here.*” It’s not that God leaves us; it’s that we start shutting Him out of the equation.

When we lean on our own understanding, it’s like trying to cross a rickety bridge without a safety net. Sure, you might make it a few steps, but eventually, the cracks start to show. Here’s

what self-reliance can do to our relationship with God:

1. **We Stop Seeking Him**

Why pray when you think you've got it all figured out? Self-reliance has a sneaky way of making us feel like we don't need God's guidance. But let's be honest—how many times have our “great ideas” turned into disasters? If you've ever started a “simple home project” that ended with you calling a professional, you know what I mean.

2. **We Start Trusting in Other Things**

When we rely on ourselves, we often look for backup plans that don't include God. Maybe it's relying on a

job, a relationship, or even sheer determination. These things might work for a while, but they can't replace the solid foundation of God's faithfulness. It's like building a sandcastle and expecting it to withstand a hurricane.

3. **We Drift into Spiritual Isolation**

Self-reliance builds walls instead of bridges. The more we trust in ourselves, the less we lean into God. And when things inevitably go wrong, we feel like we can't turn back to Him because, deep down, we know we've been doing things our way. That guilt creates distance, but the good news is that God is always ready to welcome us back.

The problem with self-reliance isn't just that it doesn't work; it's that it cuts us off from the very source of life, peace, and wisdom. Imagine a lamp unplugged from the outlet. It might look fine on the outside, but without a power source, it's useless. That's us without God.

Here's the kicker: God never forces Himself on us. He's always there, ready to step in, but He won't wrestle the reins from your hands. Self-reliance creates a gap, but repentance and surrender can close it in an instant.

So, the next time you're tempted to go full DIY with your life, remember this: God doesn't just want to be part of your story; He wants to write it. Trust me, His plans are way better than anything we could dream up. After all, He's the God who parts seas,

moves mountains, and turns loaves and fish into a feast. If He can do that, He can handle whatever's on your plate. Are there areas in your life where you've been trying to go it alone? If the answer is yes, it's not too late to reconnect with the One who never stopped waiting for you in the first place.

The Importance of Confession and Repentance

Let's be real—confession and repentance aren't exactly the topics we rush to discuss over coffee. They can feel awkward, like admitting you accidentally sent a text to the wrong person or walked into the wrong house (don't ask me how I know). But when it comes to self-reliance, confession and repentance are the keys to unlocking freedom and restoring our relationship with God.

Picture this: You've spilled coffee all over a white couch. Do you just throw a blanket over the stain and pretend it never happened? Of course not! (At least, I hope not.) The first step to fixing the mess is admitting it's there. That's what confession is—coming clean with God about where we've gone wrong.

Confession isn't about beating yourself up; it's about being honest with the One who already knows everything. Think of it as hitting the “reset” button. When we acknowledge our self-reliance, we invite God to step back into the driver's seat.

The Bible puts it beautifully: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). That's

not a “maybe” or a “probably”—that’s a promise.

If confession is admitting you’ve been heading in the wrong direction, repentance is making a U-turn. It’s more than just saying “oops” and moving on. Repentance is about realigning your heart and actions with God’s will.

Think of repentance as returning to a loving Father who’s been waiting on the porch for you to come home. He’s not holding a list of everything you’ve done wrong; He’s holding open arms. That’s the God we serve—a God who welcomes us back with grace and joy.

Here’s the thing: avoiding repentance doesn’t just keep us stuck; it makes the gap between us and God feel

wider. Asa's story is a perfect example. Instead of confessing and repenting, he doubled down on his mistakes, turning to human solutions instead of God. The result? A life that ended in bitterness and pain instead of the peace he could have had.

When we refuse to repent, we're like a kid refusing to take a bath. Sure, you can avoid the tub for a while, but eventually, the stink catches up with you. And let's be honest—nobody likes spiritual B.O.

Put plainly, repentance isn't always easy. It requires humility, and that's not something our pride is quick to surrender. Sometimes we avoid repentance because we're afraid God will be disappointed in us. But here's the truth: God's love for you isn't based on your performance. He's not standing there with a clipboard, tallying up

your failures. He's a loving Father who just wants His child to come home.

When we confess and repent, we experience the joy of restoration. It's like opening the windows after a long winter and letting the fresh air in. Suddenly, the weight of self-reliance lifts, and we can breathe again.

Repentance brings us back into alignment with God's plan, where His strength carries us and His peace surrounds us. It's not just about fixing what's broken; it's about living in the fullness of His grace.

So don't wait. If there's an area of your life where you've been relying on yourself instead of God, take it to Him today. Lay it all out—your fears, your pride,

your doubts—and let Him do the heavy lifting.

Confession and repentance aren't burdens; they're gifts. They're the pathway back to the abundant life God has for you. And trust me, the peace that comes from surrendering to Him is worth every step.

My Story of Repentance

There I was, sprawled out in bed like a puddle of melted human, journal in one hand and a tissue in the other. My tears had soaked through the pages, and my face looked like I had lost a boxing match with my emotions. This was no Instagram-worthy “quiet time with God” moment. It was raw, unfiltered, and messy.

For the last week or so, I had been battling the tension between faith and doubt.

I believed God *could* make a way, but my circumstances screamed that He *might not*. And I was beating myself up for even entertaining those doubts, convinced that my lack of faith had disqualified me from seeing a miracle.

Finally, one night, the weight became unbearable. I opened my journal, took a deep breath, and began pouring out my heart to God.

“Lord,” I wrote through blurry eyes, “I don’t know what I’m doing. I don’t know how to trust You the way I’m supposed to. I’ve let fear and doubt run the show, and I’m sorry. Forgive me for believing my circumstances more than Your promises. Forgive me for trying to figure everything out on my own instead of relying on You.”

I confessed every ounce of unbelief I had been carrying. It wasn't pretty, and it certainly wasn't poetic, but it was real. In that moment, I realized how much my self-reliance had been choking out my faith. I had been so focused on trying to *fix* things myself that I had forgotten the One who *holds* all things together.

After I scribbled the last word, I sat there in silence, clutching my journal like it was a lifeline. And then, something happened that I still can't fully explain. A wave of peace washed over me—a peace so profound it felt like someone had wrapped me in a warm blanket straight from the dryer.

In that moment, I knew God had heard me. He wasn't standing there with His arms crossed, waiting to punish me for my

lack of faith. He was right there with me, reminding me that His grace was more than enough to cover my doubts and failures.

To this day, I have no idea what happened to that journal. Maybe I misplaced it in a move or accidentally donated it during a decluttering spree. But I'll never forget what God did in my heart that night. It was like a reset button had been pressed, and the war between faith and doubt that had been raging inside me finally subsided.

And what happened next? Let's just say God started showing off.

Looking back, I realize that night wasn't just about confession and repentance. It was about surrender. It was about admitting that I couldn't do this on my own and trusting that God was enough.

If you've ever been there—sitting in the mess of your own doubt, wondering if God still cares—let me remind you of something: He does. And He's not waiting for you to clean yourself up or get everything right before you come to Him. He's ready to meet you right there in the middle of your tears and tissues. Because that's who He is—a God who transforms our moments of desperation into testimonies of His faithfulness.

Part 3

Returning to God's Reliance

Chapter 6

The Path to Restoration

If you've ever misplaced your keys, only to find them hours later in the fridge next to the orange juice, then you know this: finding something starts with looking in the right places. The same is true for identifying self-reliance in your life. You won't spot it by casually glancing around your soul. You've got to dig a little—especially because self-reliance is sneaky. It doesn't show up wearing a flashing neon sign. It's more like that one quiet friend who somehow ends up influencing the entire group.

So, how do we identify areas where we're relying on ourselves instead of God? Let's shine a light into some common hiding spots.

1. Your Planner or To-Do List

Take a good, hard look at that planner or mental checklist you cling to like a lifeline. If it's packed with tasks, goals, and five-year plans but missing any evidence of prayer, it might be time to pause. Do your plans leave room for God's guidance, or are you barreling forward with the "I've got this" attitude?

Trust me, I've been there. I've penciled in everything from "meal prep for the week" to "world domination" without once consulting God about whether it was even His will for me to have chicken for dinner that night.

2. Your Finances

Money talk can get uncomfortable fast, but hear me out. Where do you turn when an

unexpected expense pops up? Do you immediately whip out your credit card, or do you hit your knees and ask God for wisdom?

Self-reliance loves to camp out in our bank accounts. It whispers things like, “You can handle this on your own,” while conveniently forgetting that God is Jehovah Jireh, our Provider.

3. Your Relationships

This one’s a bit of a curveball, but stay with me. Are there people in your life you rely on more than God? Maybe it’s a spouse, a friend, or even a mentor. Don’t get me wrong—God places people in our lives to support us. But when we look to them for what only God can provide, we’ve crossed into self-reliant territory.

4. Your Worry Patterns

If you want a shortcut to identifying self-reliance, follow the trail of your worries. What keeps you up at night? What are you constantly trying to fix, figure out, or control? Worry is like a red flashing light on the dashboard of our faith, signaling that we're leaning on our own understanding instead of trusting God.

5. Your Google Search History

Okay, this one's a little cheeky, but seriously—how many times have you Googled “how to solve [insert life crisis here]” instead of asking God for guidance? If your search history looks like a self-help manual, it might be time to evaluate where you're seeking wisdom.

A Heart Check

Identifying self-reliance isn't about beating yourself up. It's about inviting God to reveal the areas where you're holding the reins too tightly. Psalm 139:23-24 says it perfectly:

"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

This isn't a one-and-done process. Self-reliance is like weeds in a garden—it tends to grow back if you're not careful. But the good news is, God doesn't point out our weeds to shame us. He does it to help us uproot them and cultivate a life that fully depends on Him.

So, grab your journal (or your prayer app, if you're tech-savvy like that), and ask God to show you where self-reliance is hiding in your life. You might be surprised at what He reveals, but don't worry—He's ready to walk with you every step of the way.

Steps for Returning to Full Dependence on God

If identifying areas of self-reliance is like finding the problem, returning to full dependence on God is the solution—and let me tell you, it's a journey. It's not as simple as snapping your fingers and saying, "Okay, God, I'm all Yours now." No, it takes intentionality. But don't worry, it's not as scary as it sounds. Let's break it down step by step.

1. Start with Prayer

Prayer is the universal “reset button” for our hearts. It’s where we bring all the mess—our fears, doubts, plans, and pride—and lay it at God’s feet. Think of it like a divine heart-to-heart.

When I finally got real with God about my self-reliance, it wasn’t some poetic moment with fancy words. Nope, it was more like, *“God, I’m a hot mess. Help!”* And guess what? That was enough. God doesn’t need your prayers to sound like Shakespeare. He just wants them to be honest.

Start by asking Him to forgive you for the ways you’ve tried to do life on your own. Then, ask Him to help you trust Him more. It’s amazing what happens when we start inviting God into the spaces we’ve kept to ourselves.

2. Repentance: The Heart Shift

Repentance is like making a U-turn after realizing you've been driving the wrong way. It's not just saying, "I'm sorry, God." It's turning away from self-reliance and choosing to trust Him instead.

Here's the thing about repentance: it's not a one-time event. Some days, you'll nail it. Other days, you'll be tempted to grab the steering wheel of your life and say, "I've got this." But repentance is about continually realigning your heart with God's will.

A great place to start is by reflecting on Psalm 51:10: "*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*" Ask God to help you let go of control and trust Him with your whole heart.

3. Walk in Obedience

Now comes the action part: obedience. It's one thing to pray and repent, but living out your dependence on God requires making choices that reflect your trust in Him.

Here's an example: When God told me to move to a new place with my girls, I had to obey—even when it didn't make sense. Did I have all the details figured out? Nope. Did I have moments where I wanted to backtrack? Absolutely. But each step of obedience was a declaration of faith that said, "God, I trust You more than my own understanding."

Obedience often means stepping out of your comfort zone. Maybe it's saying yes to a new opportunity, forgiving someone who hurt you, or letting go of a plan that's more *your will* than *His will*. Whatever it looks like, know that obedience always leads to blessing—even if it doesn't feel like it in the moment.

4. Stay in God's Word

Here's a pro tip: If you want to depend on God, you need to know His voice. And the best way to do that is by spending time in His Word. The Bible is like a GPS for our souls, constantly recalibrating us when we veer off course.

Think about Proverbs 3:5-6: *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways*

submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” When you’re steeped in Scripture, it’s easier to trust that God’s got this—even when you don’t.

5. Rely on God’s Strength

One of the biggest lies self-reliance tells us is that we have to do it all on our own.

Newsflash: we don’t! God never intended for us to carry the weight of the world on our shoulders.

Isaiah 41:10 is a verse I cling to: “*So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*”

Whatever you’re facing, God’s strength is more than enough to carry you through. You

don't have to be the strong one—He's got that covered.

6. Be Patient with Yourself

Finally, remember that dependence on God is a process. You're going to have days where you feel like a faith warrior and days where you feel like you're back at square one. That's okay. God's grace is big enough to cover all your stumbles.

As Philippians 1:6 reminds us, "*He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*" In other words, God's not done with you yet.

Returning to full dependence on God isn't about perfection—it's about progress. It's about choosing Him over and over

again, even when it's hard, even when it doesn't make sense, and even when your self-reliant tendencies start whispering, "You've got this."

And just so you know, *He's got this* has got a much better ring to it.

God's Plan vs. My Plan

Relying on God is like stepping onto a rollercoaster with your eyes closed. You don't know when you'll drop, when you'll twist, or when you'll loop-de-loop—but you trust the Designer has a plan. God's plans are far better than anything we could ever dream up. And let me tell you, my journey of returning to His reliance is proof of that.

It all started with a seemingly random thought: "*Take your social security card and just go.*" Now, I don't know about

you, but when God speaks, He often skips the long explanations. Instead of arguing with Him (this time), I shoved the card in my back pocket and headed out. My sister, in town for a couple of days to help with the girls, probably thought I was losing it, but off I went.

Campus was eerily quiet; classes hadn't started yet. I wandered aimlessly until I ran into a small pizza shop located in the University Union. They looked busy—prepping for the semester's rush—and something inside me said, "*Ask if they're hiring.*"

I walked up to the counter, heart pounding, and casually asked if they needed help. The woman behind the counter smiled and said, "Actually, we do. Are you available to start right away?" As my jaw hit

the floor, she added, “I just need a copy of your social security card to make it official.”

There I was, grinning like I’d just won the lottery because, guess what? *I had my social security card in my back pocket.* Coincidence? Not a chance. I floated back to my apartment like I was walking on clouds, already sensing that God was orchestrating something extraordinary. If God could check this off the list, certainly He could take care of the other loose ends as well.

Finding daycare for two little ones on a tight budget felt impossible. Every phone call led to the same response: “*Sorry, we’re full.*” I was starting to feel that familiar wave of doubt creep in. But then, one daycare miraculously had two spots open—one for each of my girls. If that wasn’t enough, I got a call letting me know I

qualified for a program that would help cover the costs.

At this point, I should've been shouting praises from the rooftops, but I was still trying to process how everything was falling into place. It felt like God was saying, *"You see? I told you I've got this."*

As happy as I was to have the girls squared away in daycare and a brand new job to help get us through this experience, after looking at the cost of books in the bookstore, I knew I had yet another roadblock to meeting my goals. I mean, I could just keep showing up to class without books, but at some point, things were gonna get a little awkward. Of no surprise to God, as I was stressing about how I'd scrape together the money for my books, a neighbor overheard my situation. Without

hesitation, she offered to cover the cost of my first semester's books.

I mean, come on! Who does that? God, that's who. His provision was pouring in from every direction, leaving me both humbled and slightly embarrassed that I had ever doubted Him in the first place.

As if all this wasn't enough, God also blessed me with a wonderful church family. They were my lifeline—praying for me, encouraging me, and helping me stay focused on God's promises.

And then came the cherry on top. During my time at that church, I met an aspiring young pastor. We hit it off, and by the time I left Macomb, Illinois, I wasn't just holding a degree; I was dawning an engagement ring.

Walking away from that small town, I couldn't help but marvel at how God had rewritten my story. What started as a season of uncertainty turned into a testimony of His faithfulness. He didn't just meet my needs—He exceeded them.

Relying on God didn't just save my life; it gave me the life I was destined to have. From the pizza shop job to the daycare provision, from textbooks to a church family, and from a degree to a loving husband—God had it all planned.

Is anything too hard for God? In that tiny college town, I would learn the answer to that question in a way that would change the trajectory of my entire life.

Chapter 7

A Lesson Learned

By now, King Asa might feel like that one character in your favorite drama series who had it all, only to ruin it with a series of bad decisions. You want to grab him by the shoulders and shake him, yelling, “Come on, Asa! You know better!” But the truth is, King Asa’s story is uncomfortably relatable, isn’t it?

Asa started strong—really strong. He trusted God, smashed idols, and even led the people of Judah in a huge revival. He was the guy you’d nominate for “Most Likely to Keep the Faith” in a yearbook. But somewhere along the way, Asa’s grip on

God's hand loosened. Maybe he thought, "*I've got this now, God. Thanks for the head start!*" Or maybe he just got too comfortable in his success.

When Asa faced his biggest challenge—the threat of war—he made a tragic choice: instead of relying on God, he trusted a treaty with a pagan king. You can almost hear the collective gasp of readers centuries later: "*Oh, Asa. What have you done?*"

Here's the kicker. Asa didn't just mess up once and repent. Nope, he doubled down. When the prophet Hanani called him out, Asa didn't humble himself or seek forgiveness. He got defensive, angry even, and threw the prophet in prison. Talk about doubling down on pride!

This is where Asa's story takes a somber turn. The man who once leaned on God so fully had become so hardened in his self-reliance that even in his illness, he refused to seek God's help. Instead, he trusted in physicians. Now, let's be clear—there's nothing wrong with seeing a doctor. But Asa's refusal to seek God's help was a symptom of a much deeper issue: he had drifted so far from reliance on God that he didn't even consider turning back.

But why does Asa's story matter to us today? Because it's not just about one ancient king. It's about the human heart—yours and mine. Asa's story is a cautionary tale that shows how easy it is to start strong but stumble when we stop relying on God.

It's a reminder that self-reliance doesn't announce itself with flashing neon

signs. It sneaks in quietly, disguised as *“I’ll handle this myself”* or *“God’s busy; I don’t want to bother Him.”* It can happen to anyone, even the most faithful among us, if we’re not careful.

Asa’s life teaches us that the true tragedy of self-reliance isn’t just the mistakes we make; it’s the distance it creates between us and God. But here’s the good news: Asa’s story also serves as a wake-up call. It reminds us that as long as we have breath in our lungs, it’s never too late to turn back to God.

King Asa’s life may have ended on a somber note, but yours doesn’t have to. The lessons we take from his story can shape our own paths, leading us to live lives marked by faith, trust, and complete dependence on the One who never fails.

Trusting God with All Your Heart

Let's talk about trust for a moment. Trust is like the foundation of a house. Without it, things crumble faster than a toddler's tower of blocks. And if we're honest, trusting God isn't always as easy as the Sunday school songs made it sound. "Trust and obey, for there's no other way," they sang. But what about when life feels like a whirlwind, and trusting God feels more like trying to balance on a tightrope during a hurricane?

The thing about trust is it requires surrender—*full* surrender. Not the "*Okay, God, I trust You, but I'm also going to keep my Plan B just in case*" kind of trust. Real trust means handing over the reins completely, no backup plans, no safety nets. It's saying, "God, I trust You, even when I don't understand. Even when it's

uncomfortable. Even when it feels like
You're moving at a snail's pace."

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the
Lord with all your heart and lean not on
your own understanding; in all your ways
submit to him, and he will make your paths
straight." Let's unpack that for a minute.

First, "*with all your heart.*" Not
half-hearted trust, not "I trust You, but I'll
keep my Google search history full of
escape plans." All your heart means putting
your whole self into it—your hopes, your
dreams, your worries, your fears.

Next, "*lean not on your own
understanding.*" Now, this is the tough one,
isn't it? Because if we're honest, our
understanding feels pretty solid sometimes.
We like to think we've got it all figured out.
But have you ever leaned on something

unstable, like a flimsy folding chair, only to find yourself sprawled out on the floor? That's what leaning on our own understanding is like. It might hold for a second, but eventually, it's going to give way.

Finally, "*in all your ways submit to Him.*" All your ways—your big life decisions, your daily tasks, your relationships, your finances, your future. Submission is where trust meets action. It's not just saying, "God, I trust You," but actually living like it—praying before you make decisions, obeying His Word, and choosing His way over your own, even when His way feels slower or harder.

If you're reading this thinking, "*Well, that sounds nice, but I'm not sure I'm there yet,*" don't worry—you're not alone.

Trusting God is a journey, not an overnight transformation. It's built one small step of faith at a time.

Maybe your step of faith today is as simple as saying, "God, I trust You to provide for me financially, so I'm going to stop stressing over that bill." Or maybe it's, "God, I trust You with my kids, so I'm going to stop trying to control every single detail of their lives." (Easier said than done, right?)

The point is, trust grows as we take those steps, see God's faithfulness, and realize He really does have our best interests at heart. He's not just sitting in the heavens with a clipboard, marking your progress like a cosmic life coach. He's walking with you every step of the way, cheering you on, even when you stumble.

Here's the thing about trusting God: He never fails. People might fail. Plans might fail. Even our own strength will fail. But God? He's the one thing in this life that's 100% reliable. He's the unshakeable foundation, the sturdy chair, the One who knows the end from the beginning.

When you trust in Him with all your heart, you'll find a peace that doesn't make sense to the world. You'll find joy even in the waiting, hope even in the struggle, and strength even when you feel weak.

So, let's make a deal. The next time life throws you a curveball, instead of reaching for the duct tape and bubble gum to patch things up yourself, try reaching for God. Trust Him. Lean into His promises. As surely as He showed up for Asa when he sought His direction and as surely as God

showed up for that young mother who
thought her life was over, He won't let you
down.

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