

THE INCLINING CHRISTIAN

When we lean into God, God provides support and help.

Psalms 78:1-8

1

SCRIPTURE

- **Give ear**, O my people, to my teaching; **incline** your ears to the words of my mouth. (Psalms 78:1 NRSV)
- I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter **dark sayings** (hidden revelation) from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our ancestors have told us. (Psalms 78:2–4 NRSV)
- We will not hide them from [our] children; we will tell to the **coming generation** the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. (Psalms 78:4 NRSV)

2

SCRIPTURE

- He decreed **statutes** for Jacob and established the **law** in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. (Psalms 78:5–6 NIV)
- Then they would put their **trust in God** and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. (Psalms 78:7 NIV)

3

INTRODUCTION

- I don't know if you know this or not but that the **bell tower** of the cathedral in Pisa, Italy, *leans*.
- This is why it is known as the **Leaning Tower of Pisa**.
- It tilts at 3.99 degrees, but the angle used to be 5.5 before restoration work began in the 1900s to save and protect the tower.



4



5

INTRODUCTION

- However, it is not the only such tower that inclines at an angle.
- The **Albert Memorial Clock** (more commonly referred to as the Albert Clock) is a clock tower situated at Queen's Square in Belfast, Ireland.
- Built in 1869, it is several feet off perpendicular because it was built on unstable marshy land.
- Even Big Ben in London has a tilt of 0.28 degrees.



6

INTRODUCTION

- Some leaning towers lean because they were designed to lean.
- One of the most spectacular examples of this is the **Montréal Tower**, which at more than 540 feet is the tallest inclined tower in the world!
- It tilts at an angle of 45 degrees—impressive when you remember that Pisa's bell tower leaned at a mere 5.5 degrees (before preservation work).

7



8

INTRODUCTION

- This incredible 'lean' is possible because the top of the tower has a mass of 8,000 tons which is permanently attached to the infrastructure and the solid concrete base buried 32 feet below ground level.
- This base has a mass of 145,000 tons, or the equivalent of three aircraft carriers!



9

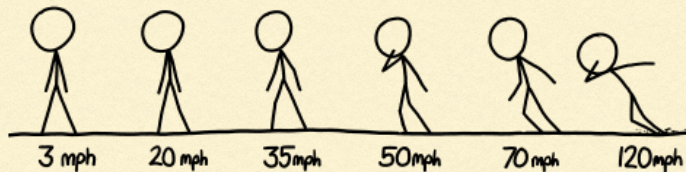
PEOPLE CAN LEAN TOO



- Like leaning towers, we humans can lean as well.
- Sometimes we lean into a headwind so strong that in a photograph it appears that we're defying gravity.

10

LEANING INTO THE WIND



11

PSALM 78:1

- As **human beings**, we have
 - leanings,
 - inclinations,
 - proclivities (bents),
 - predilections (likings), and
 - preferences.
- And according to our text, God says that it would be nice if our **leanings** were centered on pressing in to hear His word.

12

PSALM 78:1

- As the Psalmist says, “Give ear, O my people, to my teachings; **incline** your ears to the words of my mouth.” (Psalm 78:1 NRSV)
- The definition of the word *incline* means, to **feel willing** or **favorably disposed** toward an action, belief, or attitude.
- And so the question is raised: Are we inclining Christians?
- Do we **lean toward God** and long to be in a deep, meaningful relationship with Him, or do we **lean away from God**?

13

THE RECLINING CHRISTIAN

- One **archetype** of the people of God is the lethargic and listless so-called believer who seldom has the energy to do God’s work.
- The prophets railed against those who ‘lie on beds of ivory, and lounge on their couches ... who drink wine from bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!’ (Amos 6:8).
- The apostle James spoke of those who **heard** the word of God, but failed to act upon that word (see James 1:22).
- Jesus was disappointed when he found that even his **inner circle** of trusted disciples fell asleep while he was at prayer only hours before his ordeal that led to the cross.

14

THE RECLINING CHRISTIAN

- Jesus also repeatedly urged his followers to be **awake** and **watchful**, and the apostle Paul repeated this advice in his letter to the church at Rome:
 - *The hour has come for you to **wake up** from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.* (Romans 13:11 NIV)
 - *So let us **put aside** the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, ...* (Romans 13:12–13a NIV)

15

THE RECLINING CHRISTIAN



- The **'reclining Christian'** is someone who may love God at some level, but cannot really seem to put his or her shoulder to the wheel.
- These Christians not only hurt the body of Christ functioning properly, but also **frustrate** the grace of God in their own lives.

16

THE DECLINING CHRISTIAN

- Another type of believer is the **declining disciple**.
- They are a follower of Christ and believe in the resurrection of our Lord.
- But they **doubt** that their gifts, talents, and skills will make any difference in the church.
- They have plenty of time, but for some odd reason **decline** to stand in the gap, volunteer, or be of much help.

17

THE DECLINING CHRISTIAN

- The truth of the matter is we put far too much emphasis on the **spectator gifts** and give too much honor to those who have those gifts.
- The reality is **everyone** and **everyone's gifts** are important.
- As the Scripture says ... *God has combined the members of the body and has given **greater honor** to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be **no division** in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.* (1 Corinthians 12:24–25 NIV)
- Since all the gifts are needed, God has given honor to all the parts—even those parts which aren't all that spectacular. In other words, the church is **interdependent** on each other.
- In this way **unity** is a real intrinsic need and all parts of Christ's body are needed and should be honored.

18

THE INCLINING CHRISTIAN

- Now the **inclining Christian** is one whose hope is in God.
- They are person who is leaning into God, tilting toward the things of the Spirit, inclining their ear to the voice of God, are one whose hope is in God—and nothing else or no one else.
- The inclining Christian is also one who doesn't **forget** the works of God.
- The person who is leaning into God does so because he or she **remembers** the goodness and greatness of God in years past.
- An inclining Christian remembers **God's faithfulness**.

19

THE INCLINING CHRISTIAN

- The **inclining Christian** is one who keeps God's instruction.
- This is what the psalm says, *A person who leans into God, who listens to God, who 'inclines' the ear to the voice of God, is a **person** who does what God says.*
- Such a **person** is more likely than not to have a happy and fruitful life than the person who disregards God's guidelines.
- These 'rules' are meant to benefit us, and any person who truly is listening to God will be a **"doer"** and not just a 'hearer' of God's word to us.

20

THE INCLINING CHRISTIAN

The **hallmark** of a person who is leaning into God should be obvious.

While they may not be perfect they should have the following qualities:

- They strive for **integrity** in everything they say and do.
- They'll be **kind** and **respectful** to everyone.
- They'll go out of their way to be **helpful**.
- They will be **dependable** and someone who carries their own load.

21

- They will **do unto others** what they would want done to them.
- They will be quick to **forgive** and refuse to hold on to bitterness and resentment.
- They will be **lovers of the truth** and hunger and thirst for righteousness.
- They will take all their **troubles** to the Lord in prayer and intercede for others as well.
- They will walk in **love**, and
- Keep a **clean conscience** before God and man.

22

THE INCLINING CHRISTIAN

And what are the **benefits** of such faith that seeks after God:

- **Peace** that transcends all understanding.
- A deeper **knowledge of God** and sensitivity to the **Spirit's** voice.
- A greater ability to **discern** God's good, pleasing and perfect will.
- In position to experience **answered prayers** and see other miracles of God's grace in their lives.

23

THE INCLINING CHRISTIAN

- *[I]f . . . you seek (lean toward) the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for (or lean toward) him with all your **heart** and with all your **soul**. (Deuteronomy 4:29 NIV)*
- *Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him **turn** (lean toward) to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him. (Isaiah 55:7 NIV)*
- *For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no **good thing** does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. (Psalms 84:11 NIV)*

24

CONCLUSION



- The moral of the story is this, the Lord blesses those who **lean toward** Him—putting Jesus' words into action.
- Or in other words, when we **lean toward God**, God provides support and help even in times of trouble.
- AMEN

25



26