



TODD LEVIN MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

A monthly teaching publication to our partners and friends

WHOSE REPORT WILL YOU BELIEVE?

Dear Friends and Partners,

Life is full of choices. It is something that never fades away. From infancy throughout adulthood we are surrounded with endless decisions that need to be made. Once we decide on something, we then begin to move in that direction. For this reason we must seriously think about each one that we make. Is this a quality decision or a rash one? Is this something that I can live with for the rest of my life or am I letting my mind and emotions get the best of me?

One factor that greatly influences and affects our decisions is our *belief system*. “I said what I said and did what I did because I *believe* it was the right thing to say or to do.” Our belief system has been shaped over a period of time – namely years – and is constantly in the process of being updated; it is a continuous journey. Our belief system has been formed through our education, social influence, life’s experiences, words and then there’s the God factor – the ever present Holy Spirit who convicts the sinner and guides the saint.

When Moses called the children of Israel together, He stood up and said, “***I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.***” (Deut 30:19,20) Even in our spiritual journey, a decision is called for as to whom we will serve. For Joshua, he already made up his mind: “***but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.***” (Joshua 24:15)

Our teaching today begins in the book of I Kings chapter 18. The prophet Elijah had challenged King Ahab to gather the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table. They were all to meet on Mount Carmel. As Elijah drew near to all the people he lifted up his voice and said,

“How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him. But the people said nothing.” (vs 21)

Now keep in mind that they all heard Elijah’s challenge, and it’s what people do with what they hear that makes the difference in the end. These false prophets had equal opportunity to

stand for the true and living God but they decided to go a different direction; with another way of believing; another idea or we could even say with another report. In the end, it cost them their lives. In life we are exposed to both good and evil. On the left you have the experiences of others that leave an impression on you, on the right there is circumstantial evidence and the reports of men. But where do all of these lead us? Toward God or away from Him? At the end of the day it really comes down to *our decision*: What do we esteem as final authority? Whose report will we believe? Will it be the testimonies of men or the testimony of God?

Look together with me at Isaiah 53:1-7. ***“Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed...He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs (sicknesses and weaknesses), and carried our sorrows (or pains): yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed...and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”***

“*Who hath believed our report?*” is what the prophet Isaiah is asking. The report he is referring to is the report of the Lord, how He was despised, rejected, oppressed and afflicted. He would become the sacrificial lamb who would carry away our sin, sickness and pains and in doing so would secure our salvation and freedom from sin and bondage. But notice again, He’s asking a question. This implies at least 3 things: *First*, you’ve got to be listening in order to hear. *Second*, you have a choice in what you believe and *third*, faith moves the arm of the Lord. Let’s look at each of these areas a bit closer.

1. You’ve got to be listening in order to hear

That sounds like a given doesn’t it. But when you think about it, we often tune out a lot of the noise around us throughout the day in our attempt to get through the day. It’s up to us to decide what we will listen to; what channel we tune into. This is an area where many Christians are missing it. They’re looking in the wrong direction; their attention is misplaced. How can I hear what God is saying when I’m busy listening to the world? If I want to hear God, then I must put my ear to His mouth. There is so much distraction that takes place around us that if we’re not careful, if we don’t purpose in our heart to hear, then we will miss what the Lord is wanting to say to us. So if we want to hear from the Lord, then we must give him a place to speak to us. Set time aside each day to hear from the Lord.

2. You have a choice in what you believe

It is your decision as to what you believe. You have a free will and the right to exercise it. If you so desire not to believe God’s word or only portions of it, then so be it. If you believe that the Bible is the infallible word of God that’s wonderful! So remember, it’s your call; you make the choice; it’s your decision. Will you believe God or not? Do you believe that God’s word is full of power; God breathed; God inspired;

quicker and sharper than any two-edged sword? Do you believe that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever? At the end of the day, it's really your call. Will you favor God's report or man's?

3. Faith moves the arm of the Lord

Did you notice that Isaiah is telling us that the arm of the Lord is revealed to the one who believes this report. The arm of the Lord is the manifested presence and power of God. When we decide to go with God and believe His report, which is actually an exercise of faith, then His "arm" or power is released to us. Let me show you what I mean. Let's look at some examples in God's word where God's power was manifested because someone decided to believe God's word or God's instruction.

Naaman's leprosy

There once lived a man by the name of Naaman. He was the captain of the host of the king of Syria. He was a mighty man in valour but he was also a leper. In his attempt to be made clean, he journeyed to Elisha's home in hope of a miracle.

"So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper... So he turned and went away in a rage. And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."

II Kings 5:9-14 (KJV)

How quickly Naaman became offended because God didn't respond the way He had imagined He would. By sending a messenger out to Naaman as opposed to facing the prophet himself, he was finding it very difficult and somewhat ridiculous in light of the instruction, which the servant had given him. His initial reaction aside from becoming angry was to ignore and cast aside the word of the Lord so he just turned and walked away. You see the answer that he was waiting for did not come in the package that he had imagined. It was a God instruction that required an act of faith from Naaman's side. But whose report would he believe? It wasn't looking too good. Thank God in the end he did change his mind after some serious consideration and decided to follow the order and went and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan River. As a result of believing the word of the Lord, "go wash seven times," he was healed. For Naaman, it was well worth the dip. Accepting a word from the Lord is always a wise decision even when our flesh doesn't agree and our mind is wrestling within. Dare to believe God!

Interesting enough, ministers are not exempt from living by faith and believing God on a personal level even for their own immediate needs to be met. Elijah, who was Elisha's mentor, had faced a time in his own life where he too would need the hand of the Lord to intervene. How

does he respond? Let's take a look. Now keep in mind that at this particular time, the Lord had withheld the rain on the land due to King Ahab's wickedness. The scripture tells us that, "***Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.***" (I Kings 16:33) It was at this time that the Lord told Elijah where to go and how he would sustain him during this drought.

"Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there."

I Kings 17:4,5 (KJV)

I'm sure that Elijah had seen a lot of things in his lifetime but this would have to be his first – being served daily by ravens. You have to admit, this is unusual, out of the box, beyond all human reasoning. However, He was faced with a decision? Do I believe God's report and follow His instruction, or do I stay right where I am and fast until I hear something more sensible? I'm sure he was happy that he obeyed, because in believing God's report and obeying his instruction, he never missed a meal and neither will you friend if you believe the report of the Lord. He is Jehovah Jireh your provider. The One who supplies all of your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (**Genesis 22:14; Philippians 4:19**)

Who can forget the amazing walls of Jericho and Joshua's challenge that was before him? As the new leader of the Israelites with Moses gone, He was now God's chosen vessel who would lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land.

"And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour. And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him."

Joshua 6:2-5 (KJV)

This is rather an uncommon manner of war wouldn't you agree? "*Walk around the city once a day for six days and on the seventh day, go around seven times, shout and blow your horns.*" Okay...I'm not sure if unusual is even the right word to use but at any rate, Joshua was faced with a decision. Do I believe this or not because if it doesn't work, then I could be out of a job by next week. No sensible person will follow my lead if those walls don't come tumbling down.

Surely you must know what that feels like...to be between a rock and a hard place. On one side, your heart is telling you yes, this will work, God said it would. But staring at you from the other side of the room is "common sense," the experience and testimony of others, circumstantial evidence that cannot be denied. What do you do in a situation like this? What do you do when the doctor announces to you that, "This condition is irreversible? There is nothing you can do to change it so get used to it because it has now become a part of your life." I'm talking about

sustained injuries that will never heal; permanent damage; hereditary illness and diseases, arthritis and other physical ailments that can be somewhat treated with medication but never cured. Whose report are you going to believe? Will you believe the report of the Lord?

Joshua did believe the report of the Lord in light of some unusual circumstances and came out on the other side victorious. Those walls of Jericho did come down and the children of Israel did celebrate a great triumph that day. But I would imagine that walking around those walls day after day for a week with no apparent change could have invited some trouble into the camp or at least into the hearts and minds of the Israelites. Because you and I both know that once you decide to believe God for anything, the enemy attempts to move in, in hope of persuading you to abort the whole operation. But your friend are not going to abort isn't that right? You're not going to quit; you're not going to give up or succumb to his wasted attempt to get your eyes off of God's report. No, you are going to stay with the word of promise. You have decided to believe God's report in light of the circumstances and in light of the voices around you. You are going with the WORD! Why? Because His WORD is enough! You're not looking for a feeling or some kind of emotional response and confirmation. Instead, you are looking to and believing in God's report. It is His report that says you are healed. It is His report that declared you are forgiven, made right with God, accepted in the Beloved, valuable and precious. It is His report that declares you FREE. Free from sin, free from addictions and bondage; free from fear; free from poverty; free from pain and misery; free from condemnation and guilt; free from sickness and disease. Will you believe God's report today? Let's take a look at a few New Testament examples where individuals had a decision to make, and let's see if the decision they made paid off for them.

Peter and the coin

"When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax came up to Peter and said, "Your teacher pays the temple tax, doesn't he?" He answered, "Yes." When Peter went home, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings on the earth collect tolls or tributes? From their own subjects, or from foreigners?" When he said, "From foreigners," Jesus said to him, "In that case, the subjects are exempt. However, so that we don't offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook. Take the first fish that comes up, open its mouth, and you will find a coin. Take it and give it to them for me and you."

Matthew 17:24-27 (ISV)

What did Jesus just say? How on earth would He know that some fish floating out there at sea is holding in its mouth a coin and waiting for me to remove it; and that it happens to be enough to pay both of our taxes; and coincidentally will be the first one that I catch? Do you think Peter believed Him? Would he receive this report? To tell you the truth, He had nothing to lose. If what Jesus said was true, then Peter would be better off simply to trust Jesus and take Him at His word. I believe that He did. What would you have done if the Lord said something to you and it seemed a little far-fetched and hard to believe? The Lord may never tell you to go catch fish and open the mouth of the first one that you reel in and inside you'll find enough to pay this month's mortgage payment. But He may tell you to write a check and send it to someone that He lays on your heart because you have been praying for supernatural provision and you are in need of a financial miracle. Will you do it? Or will you hold onto your seed, which by the way is nowhere large enough to meet your expenses. The Lord is wanting to multiply your seed sown and bring

harvest back 100-fold, with more than enough and plenty left over to meet your every need but will you obey? Whose report will you believe? I realize that it can be challenging but the rewards of obedience far outweigh what we may try to compensate through disobedience.

The 10 Lepers

“And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.”

Luke 17:11-19 (KJV)

Imagine standing there with your friends, all of you being lepers. This condition has affected your social life, your family, your friends and your future. There hardly seems to be a way out. But then one day you hear about a man named Jesus who heals the sick and cleanses lepers. Suddenly the sky doesn't seem so dark, your future is beginning to look brighter already; there is hope where there seemed to be none only days earlier. Just one thing, how do I meet this man? Then suddenly what started out as a blue Monday was getting ready to change for these ten men. As Jesus entered into their village the lepers began to call on the Lord and pleaded for mercy. Without hesitation Jesus immediately responded and ordered them to, ***“Go show yourselves to the priests.”*** The priest was the one who would examine you and give you a “clean bill of health” meaning your now permitted back into the general population. There's only one thing: when these 10 men departed from the Lord they were still covered in leprosy. It was ***only as they went, that they were cleansed.*** They had a decision to make that day. When the Lord instructed them as to what to do, they didn't stand there and reason, they simply accepted Jesus' word or Jesus' report and then obeyed Him. Their decision in choosing to believe His report and follow His instruction is what gained them victory over leprosy. Everyone was healed. (vs. 17)

From the Old Testament to the New Testament, it is filled with man responding time and time again to a God report or God instruction. The outcome was always the same. When they believed God's report, they were blessed. When they disbelieved a God report or refused to obey they forfeited the blessing of the Lord that was meant for them to enjoy. It is no different for you and I today. When we believe the report of the Lord, the hand of the Lord is revealed to us every single time! Living in a sight and sound generation, don't allow your mind to get the best of you. Follow your heart. Listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit within and remember that God works with and confirms His word with signs following (**Mark 16**) As you purpose in your heart today to obey God and believe His report, which simply is His **WORD**, then know right now you will not be disappointed that you did because the Lord never turns faith away empty handed!

Your Friends and Partners,

Todd + Eva

PRAISE REPORTS AND PRAYER REQUEST:

Let us know how we can pray for you. Please take a few moments and write down your prayer requests and praise reports. We want to lift up your requests to the Lord. Tell us how God has blessed you and let us rejoice together!

- () Todd, enclosed is my *monthly* partner gift of: \$ _____
- () Todd, I've prayerfully decided to become your faithful monthly partner, an armor-bearer. I am enclosing my first monthly support gift of: \$ _____
- () Todd, enclosed is a *special* gift of: \$ _____

If you would like to schedule Todd Levin in your Church or Bible School, please contact us at: 724-872-0347 or email toddlevintoday@hotmail.com

P.S. Would you do me a favor? Would you **pray** about partnering together with us? Your prayers and financial help go a **long way** in aiding us to spread the Gospel not only in the United States but across the globe. As more **partners** link up with us, we will be able to travel to more countries and bring the uncompromised Word of God to a hurting people. Others need to know that Jesus is the answer to every problem they face in life. Thank God for an opportunity to be a part of His plan. **Together** we can reach our generation for Jesus. **Let us know** if we can count on you! Your best **seed gift** will help keep this ministry going strong. **Thank you** in advance for your **prayerful** consideration.

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