

## LOOKING FIRST

One morning last week I was driving down my street coming back from Tim Hortons when I spotted out of the corner of my eye a boy coming down his driveway with his backpack heading to the bus stop. I slowed down when I saw him and I am so thankful that I did. He did not look before running into the street from his driveway. I easily came to a stop but when the boy turned to see that he had almost run into an on-coming car without looking, it was quickly evident he was in shock at what almost happened. I waved for him to continue crossing the road, but I think the shock of what just happened made him decide to reverse course and go back onto his driveway and let me pass first.

I wish this was a rare occurrence, but I experience it so often of late. There are so many times in parking lots when I have seen people walk right in front of cars without looking first to ensure it is safe to do so. I was always brought up to look both ways first before crossing. Nowadays it seems to be more of the norm to "go" first, then "look." It is surprising to see this change considering in my day there was less traffic on the roads and in the parking lots. I don't know if the reason why we are seeing this trend has to do with people caught up in their thoughts and not paying attention if they have their earbuds in and don't hear a car approaching or are talking on their phone and distracted. I am so glad that when I used to be a long- distance runner that I never had ear buds or a smart phone with me. I used to run in many residential neighborhoods early in the morning and I would always be listening for cars being started in driveways and prepare myself to stop ahead in case they pulled out without looking. I do not run like I used to but if I still did, I would not be wearing earbuds so I could look for possible vehicles pulling out from their driveways.

Sometimes we have this same tendency of looking after-the-fact when it comes to God. So often people look to God for help as a last resort rather than their first. Whether it is pride, stubbornness, or a desire to try and fix things with their own strength first, people will often turn to God for help when all else has failed them. Just as there are risks for people to walk first then decide to look, this approach with God leaves us at risk for unnecessary fear and worry. David experienced the wisdom in learning to "look" to God first rather than delaying and waiting. He shared this experience in **Psalms 34:4-5**:

**I prayed to the Lord, and He answered me. He freed me from all my fears. Those who look to Him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will darken their faces.**

David understood that to receive God's blessings and help it required the choice on his part to actively look toward God first. David shared in portions of this psalm how looking toward God first benefited him:

- He was freed from his fears and troubles (vs. 4 and 6)
- He felt joy as a result of looking to God for help (v. 5)
- He felt surrounded and defended while God led him out of his troubles (v. 7)
- He understood God would provide him with all that he needed (v. 9)
- He felt God's presence close by when he was brokenhearted. (v. 18)

David understood that to experience these blessings it required him to be active in looking to God as his first resort rather than it being his last.

It seems to be a tendency more and more in these days and times that people will "go" before they "look." Hopefully this has not become our pattern when it comes to the Lord. If we have been falling into this pattern when seeking God's help, then David's advice to us would be **"Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in Him" (Psalm 34:8).** David's use of "taste and see" is his way of inviting everyone to follow his example and look to God for help first. By so doing David shares how we will discover how good and kind God is.

There are so many risks when people proceed without looking first like what I shared with the young boy on my street. Let's take a lesson from this example in life to ensure we do not risk losing out on experiencing God's blessings by failing to look in His direction first.

Keep safe and God bless,

Pastor Dean