

Trusting God Even When It's Difficult

Proverbs 3:1-7, June 7, 2020

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If you have a student at home, they will know that I usually start my lessons at youth group with a question. Each of these questions I have asked my students, I have already had to answer, and many of these questions I am still asking myself now. This morning is no different.

My question for you is; “What do you trust in your life?” Do you trust your dog? Do you trust your family? Do you trust businesses? Do you trust the drive through to get your complicated order right, or do you double check before pulling away? Do you trust that the sun is still in the sky? That it will rise in the morning? Do you trust our history books? Or what you read on Facebook? How about politicians? Many of us have been asking these past two weeks; “can I trust the Government and law enforcement?”

The Morning Consult, a data collecting and interpreting organization, points out that most of us trust our primary doctor. We trust the military, the post office, PayPal—in fact we trust Amazon and Google a lot too. We put our trust in a lot of stuff, like hoping that people will do the right thing, or that things like the sun will rise where it is supposed to. However, some of you may be thinking: “I don’t trust google, I definitely don’t trust Facebook or politicians. I don’t even trust the coffee shop to put cream in my coffee. I *always* check my coffee.”

We often have an extremely hard time with trust. We want to trust, but it’s hard, especially in difficult times. We can’t always be sure. A famous quote, especially in the military, states; “trust but verify.” But, that statement is an oxymoron. See, if you *trusted* you wouldn’t verify. For me to make sure I have cream in my coffee is not trusting that the barista put it in. You either trust or you don’t.

People often struggle with trust. Trust usually means a lack of control, but we as humans usually want to be in complete control. In fact, sin is the act of not trusting God and saying “I know what is best and I will do what I want.” Trust is hard! From politics to driving on the highway with other cars, coffee to family, it can be difficult to trust. Humans will fail you, laws will fail you, and everything on this earth can fail you. Knowing that makes it hard to trust. Chuck Swindoll points out that, “most of us are better at worrying than trusting,” and he is right. We worry a lot more than we trust. We worry more than believe in something or someone.

What can trust in then? As many of you have already figured out, the best place to bestow our trust is in the creator of the universe, the God that sent His son to die on the cross for our sins. Sounds easy enough. Two words: trust God—a small but simple phrase that is just plain hard to do sometimes. This is often due to the fact that we struggle with control, even when it comes to God. If you walk away this morning with nothing more than you asking yourself; “do I really trust God?” I will consider it a win, because it’s an important question to ask ourselves. It’s a question I struggle with and ask almost every day. And in the end, the answer is usually that we need to learn to trust God more.

Trusting in Him, Believing in Him, and having faith in Him are three vital pieces in our relationship with God. I have a helpful way for me to understand these three: Trust, belief, faith. They are all separate concepts, but all are interrelated and in many ways synonymous. For me however, it helps to distinguish them. Before I do, though, I will offer one personal theological caveat; True Faith is a free gift from God, in my understanding, faith is given by God alone.

Now, to distinguish between faith, belief and trust. Faith, in modern language, is a wholehearted commitment, whereas belief is an intellectual acceptance of facts. Trust is having full security, or action based on that security. Therefore, trust is based in faith and belief. All three key elements are interrelated but all distinct in their own way. This morning as we look at Proverbs 3:1-6 I would encourage you to also

make this distinction as we explore trusting God. Many of us have faith in God, a majority of people believe there is a God, but almost everyone struggles to *trust* God.

Prayer- Father as we enter into this time of looking at your word, we pray that we would submit to you, that we would bend our hearts and knees to what you say and what you want for us. God use me this morning and allow me to get out of the way and glorify you, Jesus. Amen.

Life is tough isn't it? It doesn't always go the way we plan. When I was in high school my dad was a pastor in Illinois. The church was struggling to keep its doors open and we had to sell our house and move into a parsonage. This was at the height of the 2008 recession. God's providence during that time was a huge blessing on my life. During this time Jesus, and my parents, taught me to trust on God in times of need and in times of plenty. It changed the way I think about life. A famous Hymn reminds us to, "trust and obey, for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus, then to trust and obey." We trust more when we see evidence of things being done right—like how God provided for my family in times of need. It's the area of where trust connects with belief. I trust God more now because He has done so much for me in the past. Many others have memories of what God has done for them—facts that help them to believe and trust.

Trusting God produces a mindset that is focused on Him. Based on His word and deeds.

Proverbs 3 opens saying; "My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity."

If we look at this through the lens of learning to trust God more, which again will be our focus this morning, we can each ask the questions; do I keep God's commands in my heart? Have they brought me peace and prosperity now or in the past? Do I have the mindset to follow God's teaching, trusting what he says to be true? Jesus' commands are so crucial to hold in our hearts and minds. It changes the way we think to be more focused on Him and His word and deeds. It's security. Jesus reminds us of what His commands are in Matt. 22. "Love the Lord your God, love your neighbor as yourself."

If more people followed these two commands, we would have a much better world. We would have peace and prosperity. We would see the neighborhoods unified, not separation. There would be streets full of loving neighbors, all made in the image of God, regardless of race, class or gender.

Jesus calls us to trust Him and follow his commands—to love God and people. Unfortunately, in our culture and world today some believe that peace and prosperity are a means of financial gain or social status. As Paul states in 1 Cor 10:23 "I have the right to do anything" but not everything is constructive." Wealth is not a sin, status is not a sin. But many taking this verse and many like it, and using them for financial gain, like the prosperity gospel, twists the scriptures, and is wrong.

Be mindful of the things in your lives. Be mindful of who you are listening to and trusting. I would urge you, just as I need to, to rely on God's word. Allow it to transform you by the renewal of your mind, not conforming to this world. Your mind is the greatest source of freedom you will ever have, what are you going to put in it?

Apply these first verses in proverbs 3 to the gospel, "do not forget my teachings but keep my commands in your heart." A gospel paraphrase in my own words would be, "do not forget what Jesus did for you on the cross, but keep his command of Love God, and love people in your heart." The gospel is what will ultimately bring us peace and prosperity, salvation and the very presence of God. Trust the Gospel and allow it to change your mindset. Ask yourself; do I trust that God will take care of my needs? Do I trust that His gospel is true? That it will lead to true peace and prosperity?

Often when I start to think of wisdom and teachings of the bible I can get carried away with the study of theology and focused on facts. I have to remind myself of 1 Cor. 13, where Paul says that if we do not have love we are nothing. King Solomon, the wisest man to ever live, understood this. Proverbs 3

continues in verse 3: “Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.”

Trusting God produces action in our lives.

Trust is active; it is not a stagnant idea. You keep trusting because at any moment things could change. When we trust God it should make us want to be active. If we only have the mindset to love but do not live it out, the mindset is useless. One act of trust and love leads to another. We love because he first loved us. At the core, trust is fueled by love, trust should be an out pouring of that love. Verse 3 says; “Let love and faithfulness never leave you.” Full faith in God is trust—security. Solomon says to let love and trust never leave you. The result of these two in our lives is action that leads to winning favor in the sight of God and man. Loving our neighbor, turning from sin, and good works all lead to winning favor with God and man. But, it is important that these things be done not out of selfishness, nor as a means to Salvation, but as a sign of God’s work in us. Trusting God has to produce godly action in our lives.

With a mindset of trusting God’s word and understanding that trust produces action in our lives, we are led to verse 5 and 6. These verses have comforted many people, including myself, but have also been the place where others have walked away. I would say that in this time of Covid-19, riots, economic uncertainty, and so much more, these two small verses are perhaps harder than ever before to live out.

“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.”

These are heartwarming and comforting words we often put on graduation cards and social media statuses. Yet, they are frightening and difficult verses to apply in our lives and follow. Our longing for control is why so many walk away from these verses. Some walk away from God because they do not want to trust in Him and His word. They argue with what He says, the morals He upholds, and the order in which He created. They want to trust the world and not the creator of the world. The problem is, we can’t see far enough down the narrow path that Jesus talks about, the path that is actually straight, because it is concealed to us in the present we struggle to trust. It’s scary, as you know.

Those who choose the wide and easy path do not trust the pathfinder, they do not trust the guide or the lamp for our feet. This is much like people who do not want to trust and rely on Google maps. They want to trust their own nose and understanding of traffic. They often end up getting lost and worse off. I know this because I don’t like using google maps...

This is where our hearts have to ask an important question; am I going to trust, give up the control, or not? This is the test of your mindset and actions. Do I trust that if submit to Him, fully, He will make my paths straight? Do I trust that God’s word true? Have I been saved through grace? If I accept Him will I be saved after death?

If you haven’t noticed, I am fascinated with both asking questions and answering them, for my own life and others’. Humans desire to know. We are nosey, curious, and obsessed with knowledge—both academic and social. We want to know the newest gossip, or “tea” as the students call it nowadays. We desire to know what is over the next hill, what the next year will hold, what our next job might be, or new house might look like. But when it comes to questions in life, are we going to trust that God’s answers are true? Are we going to trust that God has all the answers? Will we trust that He is completely sovereign?

I am not saying that we blindly trust, nor am I saying that the answer is “simply trust God.” But at the same time, I am saying that; blindly following Jesus as He leads us down the narrow, straight path. But I say this based off what He has already done. God has already gone down the path. We trust based off of who He is and what He will do, knowing already what he has done for us.

In this time of Covid-19 and riots, you, like myself, have probably asked why God is allowing this to happen. “He should do something”, “I doubt he will”, etc. We rush to be cynical of the creator because we do not trust, and we lean on our own understandings. We think that we know more than the government,

more than our parents, and more than God. Reality check: you don't know more than God, no one does. And that's the point of trusting Him.

A few weeks ago, Dr. Ravi Zacharias, a famous Christian Theologian, went home to be with Jesus. In one of the many lessons I learned from him, he was asked about questions and doubt. Ravi replied "we will always have questions, but we must separate doubt from questions." As Ravi said, doubt and questions are not the same. A lot of questions will be answered in our lives, but some never will be, much like what God is doing amidst the Covid-19 pandemic and the civil unrest around the world. A biblical example would be Job's question to God about his unknowingly purposeful suffering in the Old Testament. Job wasn't alone in his questioning; Moses, Jeremiah, Elijah, and others also questioned God. But like Job, they fought their doubt. They knew that the Lord could be trusted, just as He can be trusted today.

I would encourage you to reach out and try and find the answers you seek. Ask a godly friend, call one of the pastors, or research on your own. But most importantly, *pray*. Ask the Holy Spirit for Wisdom. James 1:5 says "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." God's ways are not our ways, and we will never know everything, but how amazing is it that He still gives us answers? He still shows us so many things, like Philosophy, science, medicine, mathematics, Theology, and much, much more.

When it comes to a test, a time where the rubber hits the road, and you need to fully trust in God, *will you?* Will you rely on the mindset of knowing and keeping his commands? Will you love and be faithful to Him, leading to testimony and action in your life, or will you lean on your own understanding?

Covid-19, riots, national division, medical emergencies, financial troubles, not knowing the future, and so many other things will put your trust to the test today. But remember this: *He is faithful and will make your paths straight*. Jesus helped us 2000 years ago on the cross, and he is here to help now, too. He promises help in the future as well. To trust God or not is an open and individual choice each of us must answer. Will you trust Him?

Prayer; God we pray that we would listen and follow you along our path. The Path you set us on. The straight path to the narrow gate that leads to life. Give us strength along the journey.