

Trust Versus Fear

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The opposite of trust is fear, and fear causes us to make wrong choices. Trusting in God frees us from desperate actions because we believe God will take care of us. When we don't trust in God, we are left to rely on ourselves. But when we doubt our ability to manage our security, we fall into fear. The uncertainty of the future causes us dread and we feel uneasy because we have little or no control over it.

Fear and trust oppose each other. When we're filled with fear, we find it hard to trust, if not impossible. When we fully trust, we don't fear because we have complete confidence in God's promise and ability to care for us. Most of us fall somewhere in the middle. We're afraid to trust in God because we doubt He exists or doubt His love and concern. Every choice we make is based on what we believe about our security, what or whom we rely on.

Trusting in God's Provision

A few years after college, my roommate, Tim, and I went crabbing off the Pismo Beach pier. We had a crab trap, fishing line, and some bait. In setting up the trap, we discovered we had nothing to cut the fishing line. Tim left to search for something sharp to cut the line, hoping someone might help. While I waited for him to return, I asked God for something to cut the line. As soon as I had finished praying, I saw a knife less than three feet away at the edge of the pier. Why hadn't I seen it before? Was it always there? Had my expectation of God opened my eyes? When Tim came back empty-handed, I held up the knife and smiled. "Look what God provided," I said.

When we trust in God's provision, we believe He will provide for our needs. He doesn't promise to give us our dream job or house, but He will take care of us, often in unexpected ways. Nor does He promise to keep us in our current job or housing. What God will do is keep us in His care when we trust Him to do so, even if it shows up as a friend's couch to sleep on. If God responded to need alone, He would meet all the unmet needs in the world. But God responds to belief, not to need. He responds to what we believe about our needs and God's ability to meet them.

When we don't trust, we fear we won't have what we need. So we worry about how we will get those things. We worry about what will happen to us. Because of fear, we rationalize our need to keep more for ourselves or take more for ourselves. We lie, cheat, and steal to insure our security because we

believe we alone are responsible for it. When we trust God for our needs, we have peace because we know God will meet our basic needs in response to our trust.

Trusting in God's Protection

I grew up in a neighborhood built near an undeveloped shoreline. The shoreline had unmanaged trails between the tall scrub where kids used to ride their bikes on the weekends. Most of the time, the area was devoid of people. I used to go to this deserted area to think and pray. One time, I noticed a pack of four teenagers in the distance moving in my direction. Feeling unsafe, I turned around to go back to the street. I heard someone shout, "Hey, you," but I didn't look so as to pretend I didn't hear. I asked God to protect me. Then I heard many feet running toward me from behind, getting louder. I continued to trust in God and didn't run or look behind me, but stayed calm. It would be a lie to say I wasn't afraid, but in spite of my fear, I placed my safety in God's hands, believing that if they attacked me, He would be with me. To my amazement, the running sounds stopped abruptly. Curious, I looked behind me, but saw no one. When I looked ahead, I saw a police car parked on the street fifty feet away. God has answered my prayer and protected me.

When we trust in God for protection, we believe in God's peace in the midst of threat. God doesn't always protect us from harm. The apostle Paul was jailed and beaten. But he had peace because he believed God was with him. God gave him strength and endurance in those situations. When we don't trust, we don't have peace, we feel unsafe everywhere we go, even at home. We buy a gun, we distrust all strangers, we don't go out alone, we always fear the worst. When we entrust our lives to God, then He becomes responsible for what happens to us. Whatever happens to us, He can give us peace and confidence that He will take care of us in the midst of threat.

Trusting in God's Justice

When a close friend had wronged me, I was deeply hurt and disappointed. But I entrusted the situation to God. My friend felt justified in his actions at the time, but a year later, he contacted me to apologize. He said that what he had done to me had now happened to him. He now knew how awful he had been and how it felt to be on the receiving end of such treatment. I wasn't expecting

an apology, but God had worked in his life to open his eyes. In my mind, God had brought about His flavor of justice.

When we trust in God's justice, we believe God sees everything. We believe that God feels deeply about what He sees and will respond when we entrust the situation to Him. I think we often judge God for being inactive, but we often fail to exercise our belief in God's justice by committing situations to His care. God responds to our belief regarding His handling of injustice, not to the injustice itself. When we don't trust in God, we feel we must secure our own justice. We get even, we protest, we sue, we refuse to forgive. When we entrust our lives to God, He doesn't protect us from injustice. But God will work circumstances toward our eventual good, if only to teach us trust, patience, and forgiveness. An example from the Bible is the story of Joseph whose brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt. Joseph experienced many injustices, but he trusted in God who eventually rescued him and raised him to a position of honor where he saved many people during a time of famine.

Trusting in God's Kindness

You may have noticed a theme in this article that God doesn't protect us from hardship. What good is it to trust in God if we can't be assured of an easier life? We experience hardship either way. When we trust in God, we can live in peace instead of fear. Hardship becomes a vehicle for God to show Himself to help us through challenges. God uses the hardship to teach us and change us into people of strength, confidence, and joy.

What we believe about God is important. If we believe in a stingy, distant God, then we experience that very thing. If we believe in a loving, generous God, then we experience mercy and abundance. Our experience of God is based on what we believe about Him. Our belief is often formed by how we have judged the circumstances of our lives. We interpret hardship as God's abandonment. If we entrust our hardship to God, He can work it to strip away those blocks in our lives that prevent us from experiencing Him.

Benefits of Trusting God

If our experience of God has been negative, then it will be hard to trust. Try to move past judging God for your disappointments. Learn to trust God with your life circumstances. In doing so, fear will have less hold on you and peace

will have a stronger hold. When we trust, we find it easier to be patient, to make sacrifices, and to take risks. When we fear, we take shortcuts and miss out on the benefits of a life lived deeply.

Romans 14:23 says that whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. Using the language of this article, I can rephrase this to say: Whenever we don't trust in God, we sin. When we don't trust in God, we act from self-preservation that results in behaviors that oppose God's law of love and deny His goodness. When we trust in God, we are free from sin because we are depending on Him. The goal for me is not freedom from sin because I know that Jesus had died to free me. My goal is freedom to experience God in every way possible, to experience His goodness and presence. When we trust in Him, we experience His involvement in our lives, which encourages us to trust in Him more.

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