

Trusting God One Step at a Time

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Can you trust God with the worst that can happen? It's easy to trust God when things are going well, but what about when things are not? Those are the times when your trust is tested, and it will be tested because God wants to know if your trust is durable. Not only that, but He wants *you* to know the durability of your trust.

To provide a definition: trusting God means to choose to rely on God as one's primary source of help. It's important to distinguish that our trust is *not* in His help because then we get tripped up by relying on specific outcomes which often leads to disappointment. Instead, our trust is in God Himself. We choose to believe that God will care of us, no matter what, even when outcomes aren't to our liking. We trust in His care and loving nature.

My blood test for prostate cancer risk came out high, so I'm scheduled for a biopsy to determine if I have prostate cancer. I'm praying that I don't have cancer, but I'm trusting God to take care of me and be with me through whatever consequences I may face. Regardless of what happens, I will be okay.

Fear Erodes Trust

Trust and fear are both a choice. We choose to trust God. We choose not to fear. Fearful thoughts indicate that we aren't trusting God. The emotion of fear is a different thing. We can feel fear but not give in to it. We can be afraid and still choose to trust. Or we can be afraid and choose to fear, to let fear dictate our thoughts and actions. If we choose to trust God, then our thoughts will be positive and God-centered. Fear erodes trust. They work against each other. The more I fear, the less I trust. The more I trust, the less I fear.

Avoiding Reliance on Outcomes

Trust can be destroyed when we rely on outcomes. For example, you're trusting God that you'll get the job you desperately need, that a relationship will be repaired, that the surgery will remove all of the cancer. How then will you process the news that you didn't get the job, that the relationship can't be fixed, or that they didn't get all the cancer? Trust collapses in these cases

because you were trusting in specific outcomes. But if our trust is in God Himself, and not in outcomes, then we can handle bad news because we believe that God will take care of us when bad things happen, that we will be okay regardless of circumstances. This is the kind of trust we need to have. The ultimate example of trust is found in Job who, after suffering the loss of health, wealth and family, could say, “Even if God kills me, I will still trust him.”

Stepping into the Unknown

During my college years, when I lived on campus, I would climb the hills behind the dorms to pray. On one occasion, I ventured farther down the canyon road and climbed a steep, rocky hill that was covered with thornbushes. I spent time with God on top of that hill for a few hours. When the sun dropped behind the ridge, the light faded rapidly. I started back down the hill, but minutes later, I was unable to see my way. I stopped and worried how I could find my way down when unseen jagged rocks and thornbushes prevented my descent.

“Help,” I prayed.

God told me to trust Him.

“But what if I trip and fall and hurt myself?”

He said, “Step and trust.”

I couldn’t see anything around me. The night was black with no moon or any sources of light. The nearest dorms were out of view, beyond the mouth of the canyon. I pictured thornbushes and rocky crags below me, real threats to my safety.

“Step and trust.”

I took a forward step in the darkness. Due to the steepness of the hill, I couldn’t even gauge when my foot would meet the ground, as though descending an uneven staircase in the dark. My foot landed safely.

“Step and trust.”

Taking one step at a time, I trusted God. As I continued to walk down the treacherous hill in the dark, I began to marvel. Some unseen magic was at work on my behalf as I didn’t encounter any obstacles, as if they had been removed. I struggled to believe what was happening because my mind was aware of the

surrounding dangers. Finally, I made it to the safety of level ground, which I assumed to be the road. I was amazed and grateful and relieved. I learned that when God says to trust Him, He means that we can trust Him. This personal experience was the inspiration for a scene in my book, *Four in the Garden*, which is an allegory about trusting in God.

I appreciate this experience because it highlights how I can't rely on my senses when I'm trusting in God. When we walk in trust, we can't see what awaits us, but we step forward anyway, trusting that God is with us with each step into the unknown. I was asked what my response would have been if I had fallen down the hill. If I had fallen, I would have stood back up and continued down the hill, still trusting God, even if I had bloodied a knee. Because when we trust God, God lets us fall and fail, and that is okay. The main purpose of trust is to discover our resource in God for when we get bloody, for when life crashes in on us, for when we face heart-rending loss. If we haven't cultivated trust beforehand, then we'll be ill-prepared for when hardship comes our way.

Cultivating Trust

We can cultivate trust by starting each day by affirming to God and to ourselves that we trust God. As we choose to trust Him in every circumstance, we learn that God is trustworthy. As you trust God, pay attention to how He directs the outcomes in your life. How did things turn out? In what ways did He care for you? How did you grow from what you had to endure? Learn from His interventions. Remember them so that when you find yourself in similar circumstances, you can remind yourself of how God had taken care of you before. Read the Bible stories that showcase God's faithfulness to those who trust Him. You can build up your trust by doing these things.

When Our Trust is Tested

At some point in your life, your trust will be tested. After such tests, some people will shake their heads and conclude that God doesn't exist or that God isn't loving. They reason that if God were loving, then He wouldn't have let this

horrible thing happen to them. We misunderstand God's ways. God demonstrates His love to us when He makes Himself real during times of stress in response to our trust in Him. God uses times of stress and hardship as opportunities for us to trust Him. When we do so, then we give Him opportunity to show up and to reveal his loving nature, even as the hardship continues. When we fail to trust during these opportunities, then we miss out on relationship and trust-building. Keep in mind that opportunity is not a guarantee. God may not show up for us in the way we want if He intends to teach us something. Remember that God is more interested in relationship than in rescue. During times of stress, He wants us to encounter Him and He desires to engage us relationally so that our relationship with Him will deepen.

I admit that trusting God can be scary. By doing so, we are putting our future and well-being on the line. But that is exactly what God is asking us to do when He asks us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him (Mark 8:34). It took me a while to gather the courage to entrust my entire life to God, but with each level of surrender, I have gained deeper levels of peace. Not only that, but as my own trust has been tested, my relationship with God has become richer and more real.

Questions for Reflection:

1. What area of your life do you find most difficult to entrust to God?
2. What one thing might you do to cultivate most trust in God?
3. Name one person you know who exemplifies deep trust in God. How can you learn from their example?

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