The Internet Dad With Millions of Kids

A father's YouTube channel went viral during the pandemic as he kindly taught adulting skills to the fatherless. Sue Bohlin just loves this sunny spot on the internet!

This Father's Day, millions of people worldwide will have a new dad to salute and appreciate. The "Internet Dad" is a warm, loving father-figure whose YouTube channel "Dad How Do I?" exploded during the Coronavirus quarantine.

Rob Kenney creates unfussy, easy-to-understand how-to videos on practical adulting tasks like how to change the tire on a car, how to iron a dress shirt, how to shave, and how to use tools like a stud finder, pliers and a wrench. He's a natural teacher, but what has captivated over two million subscribers in just a couple of months is his heart.

Every single video radiates *kindness.* You know, the fruit of the Spirit that seems to be in alarmingly short supply these days?



He starts his videos with a smiling, "Hi kids!" and always includes a dad joke. A perfect dad joke, even when he messes up. ("Did you hear the joke about the butter? . . . Oh, I just blew it. Did you hear the *rumor* about the butter? Well, I'm not gonna spread it . . .") As a response to the overwhelming number of views and heartfelt comments, Rob started creating simple messages from the heart; his "Thank You" (for people's

enthusiastic response) video has had over 1.6 million views in just under a month. His description for a video titled “I Am Proud of You” reads, “The internet can’t understand what you all just did! Apparently it doesn’t have an algorithm for kindness. :0) I am proud of all of you!” He has read a children’s book with the intention to read one a month.

He’s being the dad every heart longs for.

Viewers’ comments on Rob’s videos are the most eloquent expression of the worldwide father hunger I’ve ever seen.

One repeated sentiment Rob himself has responded to, which really touched *his* heart, was the sweetly defensive “Protect this man at all costs!”

In the comments on the “I Am Proud of You” video, I was moved to tears by a long thread of “kids” from different countries responding to one poster’s heartbreaking comment: “The words any Asian child dreams of hearing their whole life.” Then “amens” from around the globe: China. India. Eastern Europe. Arabia. Indonesia. And, of course, the United States.

Such heart hunger! Such pain from absent, or distant, or abusive, fathers!

- My dad.. Actually tried to kill me when I was little… He never loved me . . . Will you be my new dad?. . . My Internet dad?
- I’ve always been scared that when I grow up and if I become a father I won’t be able to teach my children “dad” things because no one taught me. Thank you this might change that.
- As someone who’s dad left behind 6 girls and a wife, i have NEVER ever appreciated a mans help before. ❤this makes my heart hurt in a good way❤
- “You got this and I’m proud of you.” I have a dad and I’m still crying
- Everytime he says hi kids i just wanna say hi dad.

- “I Love you, I’m proud of you, God bless you.” All of the internet crying

(OK, I’m gonna stop pasting in comments now. I can’t see for the tears.)

What delights me the most about this “Mister Rogers for Adults” is that Rob is a Christ follower. He allows Father God to love His hurting (and not-so-hurting) children through him. The millions of people who watch his videos, and especially the over 100,000 commenters, are experiencing the affection and warmth of the God who loves them more than they can imagine, and this God is using technology to reach millions of people around the world with His love—packaged in a way they can receive.

And It. Is. Glorious!

In the midst of a very hard time for us as a society, it seems that God the Father has bestowed a Father’s Day gift on people they didn’t know they needed.

God bless you, Internet Dad. I’m proud of you, too. And Happy Father’s Day, brother.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/the-internet-dad-with-millions-of-kids/ on June 16, 2020.

Two Sides to Every Story. Especially Now.

Sue exhorts us to make Proverbs 18:17 our filter to find the

balance in news stories, analyses, and opinion pieces by asking wise questions and finding trustworthy sources.

Please, please, please, make this powerful Proverb the filter through which you process information, especially during this Corona-Crazy time:

> ***The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.***
> *Proverbs 18:17*

We HAVE to remember that there are two sides to every story, particularly now when we have to navigate a slippery slope of opinion, and fake news, and deliberately skewed news, and trustworthy reporting of facts.

Many people are grabbing one compelling-sounding video or article or even just a meme on social media, and they stop thinking there. We need to be asking ourselves the power questions that help us think:

What do they mean by _____? We need to make sure that we understand what others mean by the words and terms they use. Politically- and idealogically-charged rhetoric often uses language that means something very different from what it appears on the surface. For example, the innocuous-sounding "Equality Act" is intended to severely restrict and punish those who hold to a biblical perspective on gender and sexuality—who, it is clear, are not considered equal to those who hold pro-LGBT values.

Where do they get their information? There are extreme-right and extreme-left sources that pump out nothing but slanted and unbalanced ideas. We need to be aware of the difference between reports from the very conservative Infowars and The Blaze, and the leftist MSNBC and CNN.

How can we know it's true? Much of what appears to be

journalism today is analysis and opinion pieces. How are your discernment skills? Can you tell the difference between factual reporting and spin? Probably not if you live in a bubble of only opinions and voices you agree with. "Confirmation bias" is a powerful dynamic that keeps us from considering anything from a different perspective. This is why it's essential to keep in mind, as Proverbs 18:17 reminds us, that there are two sides to every story, and we need to delay clamping down our minds on a position until we have more information and perspective. Do you know about allsides.com? That's a good place to find news from the left, from the center, and the right.

(Please see my article "Four Killer Questions: Power Tools for Great Question-Asking")

My extremely wise colleague at Probe Ministries, Steve Cable, offered this counsel in his article "Seeing Through News Media Bias: Exposing Deception and Proclaiming Truth in an Age of Misinformation":

> "[W]e need to be on the alert for the warning signs of misinformation. When we recognize the need for discernment, begin by asking God for wisdom in looking for and applying the truth:
>
> > But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him (James 1:5-6).
>
> "Then we need to ask ourselves some tough questions about the article or news report:
>
> 1. Does it begin with truth?
> 2. Is it logical?
> 3. Does it consider all of the evidence?
> 4. Does the conclusion make sense apart from the argument?
> 5. Does it stand up to close examination?"

These are great questions.

And we need to hang on tight to common sense, not being afraid to ask questions of what we're reading and hearing. Biological viruses will not be transmitted through cell towers. Washing our hands thoroughly will ALWAYS be a good idea. We were told not to wear masks, now we're told to wear masks; maybe there's not a one-size-fit-all rule?

Conspiracy theories abound; is anybody addressing the assertions in them? At this point in time, Google is still our friend in finding the answer to that question.

The bottom line is that we need to always remember that "the first to make his case *seems* right, until the other comes and examines him." If we've only heard the first side, we need to hold our thoughts and judgments loosely until we hear if there is another side.

And be kind the whole time.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/two-sides-to-every-story-especially-now/ on May 23, 2020.

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3 Truths to Feed Our Hope in a Pandemic

*When the world is upside down due to unforeseen circumstances, we need hope, but not just any hope. Sue explains that **biblical hope** is something different. Something better. Because it's about God.*

When pretty much the whole world is in stay-at-home mode . . . when pretty much the whole world is impacted by sudden unemployment because the whole world is in stay-at-home mode . . . when pretty much the whole world's economy might be affected by the crazy fall in oil prices . . .

We desperately need hope.

Hope that things will get better. Hope that we will be able to experience "normal" again. Hope that everyone's stress level will go down, especially health care heroes and first responders.

I've been thinking a lot about hope lately.

Your everyday kind of hope is a wish or expectation for the future. It's oxygen for the soul. An important part of mental health is being able to look forward to something good.

But *biblical hope* is something different. Something better. Because it's about God.

Where everyday hope is about wishing, biblical hope is a confident expectation that God will be good, and He will do good, toward us. It is faith in the future tense.

Everyday hope is horizontal, looking at circumstances, the world, and other people—which are all broken by the Fall, and they are guaranteed to disappoint. But biblical hope is vertical. It looks UP instead of out. Biblical hope is focused on a perfect, loving God who is all-knowing and all-powerful. He doesn't just *know* the future, He *holds* the future.

We can encourage one another daily, as Hebrews 3:13 urges us, by reminding ourselves and each other of what is true. Let me suggest three truths that will feed our hope.

God is good.

Probably the #1 lie of the enemy is that God ISN'T good. It's what was behind his temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden: that God was holding out on her because He's not good.

And when life is hard and we live in pain, it's easy to look through the filter of "God is not good, that's why He's letting me hurt."

But the truth is that our circumstances are not an accurate indicator of whether God is good or not. Our logic and thinking are not accurate judges of whether God is good or not.

Even if we don't say it out loud, we can sit in the self-pity puddle of the belief, "If God was good, He wouldn't let me hurt."

But our pain is achieving something eternally significant, an eternal weight of glory (2 Corinthians 4:17). When life is hard, God is doing something really big in us. And eventually, for those who have trusted Christ, God's goodness will mean He carries us to the place where there is no more pain, no more tears, no more sickness or weakness or even disappointment. That is our hope, that the future will hold nothing but GOOD for us.

We're not there yet. But it's coming!

God is faithful.

He is faithful in His character, He is faithful to His word, He is faithful to His promises.

Faithfulness means being a promise-keeper, even when it's hard. The Hebrew word for faithfulness means steadfastness, firmness.

On a trip to Colorado, my brother-in-law Phil learned that a cashier at Rocky Mountain National Park was also from Chicago. He said, “It must be cool to be here with these mountains all the time.”

“Let me tell you something about the mountains,” she responded. “They’re . . . always . . . THERE.” Meaning, they don’t move, they don’t change, and it takes a long time to get from A to B because those mountains are always THERE.

Like God’s faithfulness.

We can have hope that God will remain faithful to His promises, such as Jesus promising, “I will be with you always.”

Sports Illustrated covered a memorable incident at the 1992 Olympics when runner Derek Redmond tore his hamstring near the end of the race. He fell face first onto the track in agony.

> As the medical attendants were approaching, Redmond fought to his feet. “It was animal instinct,” he would say later. He set out hopping, in a crazed attempt to finish the race. When he reached the stretch, a large man in a T-shirt came out of the stands, hurled aside a security guard and ran to Redmond, embracing him. It was Jim Redmond, Derek’s father. “You don’t have to do this,” he told his weeping son. “Yes, I do,” said Derek. “Well, then,” said Jim, “we’re going to finish this together.” And so they did.
>
> Fighting off security men, the son’s head sometimes buried in his father’s shoulder, they stayed in Derek’s lane all the way to the end, as the crowd gaped, then rose and howled and wept.{1}

Most people don’t remember who won the gold medal in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, but millions will never forget the faithful love of a father who left his seat in the stands to enable his son to finish his race.

What a picture of our faithful heavenly Father who sent His Son from His seat in glory to earth to rescue and redeem us! Jesus promises that He will be with us always, to the end of the age—just as Derek Redmond's father was with his son to the end of the race.

God is at work in my life.

Philippians 1:6 promises that He who began a good work in me will continue to complete it. Once God gets started on the process of making us like Jesus, He doesn't quit!

One of my pastors has said that if you don't like how things are, it means the story's not over and God's not finished.

How encouraging is that??!

Romans 8:28 teaches us, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose."

Since God is at work in us, then He has a plan to make us like Jesus, and He's using every situation and every circumstance in our lives as His tools.

When we open our hearts and minds to God's plans to make us like Jesus, and we cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the process, it strengthens our hope that our future will be different from the past or the present.

But to be like Jesus means we have to follow Him, which means denying ourselves, and taking up our cross. It means not fighting the tools of sanctification He is using to make us like Jesus. The best way to do that is to obey scripture, which says to give thanks IN everything, FOR everything. If God has allowed it, there must be a purpose in it. It means developing an attitude of gratitude by disciplining ourselves to say, "This stinks, Lord, but You have allowed it in my life so I will give You thanks for this crummy boss, or this

difficult roommate situation, or this physical challenge, or this thorn in my flesh."

When we realize we are not content with WHO we are or HOW we are, because we long to be better, it means God's not finished with us. We are still a work in progress. The story's not over.

It means there is hope. Biblical hope.

God is good, God is faithful, and God is at work in me. Those are the truths that will feed our hope and allow us to look at the future with confident expectation that it's going to be better than OK . . . it's going to be amazing. Either in this life, or on the other side, we can have hope.

A living hope. Hope has a name. His name is Jesus.

1. vault.si.com/vault/1992/08/17/track-and-field-ode-to-joy-carl-lewis-exulted-along-with-all-of-barcelonas-gold-medalists-many-of-whom-vanquished-giants-to-win-their-events. Accessed 4/21/2020.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/3-truths-to-feed-our-hope-in-a-pandemic/ on April 21, 2020.

Responding to COVID-19: God Already Had It Figured Out

As America grinds almost to a halt as we try to suppress the spread of the Corona Virus, governments are closing things up

and shutting things down. As we are instructed to stay in our homes and keep our distance from other people, we are also being encouraged about how to think about these restrictions. We're hearing pleas to younger people, especially, not to gather in bars and restaurants, because it speeds up the transmission of the virus. This will help protect the physically vulnerable—older folks [um, *wince*—somehow that now includes me] and those with compromised immunity.

What strikes me about the messages we are receiving is that God came up with them first.

These calls to citizens parallel God's calls to believers. Several of the "one anothers" of scripture are particularly salient to our needs right now to pull together to fight this invisible enemy: not merely as a nation, but as human beings facing a global pandemic together.

Love one another (John 15:12). It is loving to keep your distance from others and stay home in order to keep yourself from catching, and even worse become an unknowing carrier for, what is a serious and sometimes deadly virus. It is loving to wash our hands for 20 seconds because it kills the virus and helps us keep from spreading the virus to others.

Serve one another (Galatians 5:13). It just *delights* me to receive texts from friends asking if they can go to the store for us, and to read offers on my Next Door app from people offering to run errands and shop for the older and health-challenged people in our neighborhood.

Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2). Saying no to ourselves (such as wanting to hang out with friends in groups) in order to protect others is one way of bearing each other's burdens. Buying online gift cards from restaurants that now can't serve diners in order to provide a cash flow when they are strapped is another. Providing childcare, eldercare and respite care is yet another. Reaching out by phone, text and

other social media is how we can bear the burden of loneliness to people in isolation.

Be hospitable to one other (1 Peter 4:9). Leaving food gifts on a neighbor's door step. Sending/leaving notes to assure people they are remembered and they are important.

Pray for one another (James 5:16). We need to pray for protection, especially for health care workers who expose themselves to danger every minute of their working day. We need to pray for those struggling against the symptoms of the virus. Is there anything as scary as having trouble breathing? We need to pray for business owners and employees who have lost their ability to provide for themselves and their families.

I have a mental list that I pray through every time I wash my hands.

Finally, I especially love Philippians 2:3-4 in view of our current challenge:

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind **regard one another as more important than yourselves**; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

The entire country is being asked to put the risks and needs of other people ahead of our own. In a spectacular display of biblical thinking, Dallas County judge Clay Jenkins said we need to "turn from selfishness to sacrifice."

Yes we do. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). In big and small ways.

It's an exceptional opportunity for all of us to do things God's way. Because He knows what works best.

This blog post originally appeared at
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on March 17, 2020.

How Can I Make God Answer My Prayers My Way?

How can I get God to give me what I want? That's often at the root of our interest in prayer. If we're honest, that's the question we want answered when we read books on prayer, listen to a message or podcast on prayer, or talk to people known as prayer warriors.

Instead of New Year's Resolutions

Fill in the blank: New Year's _____.

You probably either supplied "Eve" or "Resolutions," right?

Resolutions are intentions that may last days or weeks, but so often they peter out before we even get used to using the new year in our dates. May I suggest that instead of forming resolutions, we spend time asking some powerfully insightful questions that will help us evaluate ourselves truthfully and helpfully?

Here are three questions that many community/accountability groups ask each other regularly (as in, weekly):

What am I doing to feed myself (spiritually)? *How am I spending time in God's word and other sources of spiritual truth and wisdom such as books?*

What am I doing to feed my flesh? *How am I indulging my appetites and desires in ways that glorify myself instead of God?*

What am I doing to feed others? *How am I pointing others to Christ and helping them grow spiritually?*

My pastor at Watermark Community Church-Plano, Kyle Kaigler, is especially good at pointed questions. Every morning, as he thinks back on the previous day, he examines himself in four areas:

Where was I hooked? (caught in a bad habit that controls me)

Where was I cold? (being so self-focused that I failed to be loving and kind to those around me)

Where was I scared? (allowing my fear of man to keep me from saying and doing the things I should be)

Where was I proud? (taking credit for what God did)

(Pastor Tim Keller asks these same questions: https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/erik-raymond/help-with-prayer-simple-clear-gospel-devotion-from-tim-keller/)

Kyle also offers these questions:

John Piper says that "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." So, looking back over the last 12 months:

What are the most God-glorifying occasions over this past year that came from finding satisfaction in Him? *When was I moved*

to erupt in gratitude and praise for what God did in my life? Were there sweet moments of deep connection with others, or a "lightbulb moment" when He revealed truth to me in a way that zapped lies and wrong beliefs? Were there moments of realizing I was just immersed *in His goodness?*

What was a distraction to the glory of God? *In what areas of my life is my stubborn affinity for my flesh, getting my way, insisting on staying in my comfort zone, serving like mud that covers up "Christ in me, the hope of glory"? Where did my entrenched habits (such as continually checking my phone) function like a stop sign, keeping God at a distance? How have I tuned Him out so that I miss the ways He wants to nudge me, direct me, lead me through the day?*

Here are some helpful spiritual assessment questions:

What has God been teaching me in His word? We should be recording the things the Holy Spirit is showing us in our time in His word so we can remind ourselves of His lessons and insights. Otherwise we are the guy from James 1 who looks in a mirror and then turns away, thoughtlessly unaware of what he looks like.

How's my time with the Lord?

a. Consistent and meaningful (It's ok to choose this option)
b. Consistent but not so meaningful (I am faithful to go before the Lord but I leave the time unfulfilled)
c. Inconsistent but meaningful (I don't do it very often but when I do, He is faithful to meet me there)
d. Inconsistent and not meaningful (it's just not happening)

(If a or c) **How is God transforming my life?** What is God revealing about Himself and His desire for my life? How is my heart being changed to more faithfully follow where He is leading? What have I surrendered (or still working on surrendering) to Jesus' control? How is my life changing so He is increasing, and I am decreasing?

(If b or d) **What are the barriers to consistent and meaningful time with God?** (Busyness, worldliness, selfishness, sin—lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, sinful pride of life)

Am I sharing my story of how Jesus Christ changed my life?

Am I being a good steward of the body God gave me?

Am I being a good steward of the resources He has given me?

And finally, again thanks to Kyle, here are some interesting survey questions for family members:

Spouse survey

1. What were the best memories that we made together this year as a *couple*?
2. What were the best memories that we made together this year as a *family*?
3. What would you consider the key challenges we faced as a family this past year? What about in our marriage?
4. If someone were to ask you, "Describe your current marriage relationship." What would you say and why?
5. If you could change anything about last year, what would it be and why?
6. Based on the experiences that we have had as a couple and as a family, what have you learned about God and His work in
   our lives?
7. What are 3 trips or activities that you would enjoy doing together this next year?
8. What do I do that really ministers to you and you would love it if I did it more?
9. What are your top fears/concerns for each of our children?

Kid Survey

1. What have been some of the best times you have had with

me this past year?
2. If you had to give me some advice on being a better parent, what would it be and why?
3. What are some things that you would like to talk with me about and why?
4. What are some of your fears that you would like me to pray for you about?
5. What is something that you would like to do with me?
6. How can I help you grow as a Christian?
7. As you consider conversations and time together as a family over the past year, what new things have you learned or understood more about God?

I think these powerful questions, answered thoughtfully and truthfully, will serve us better than any New Years Resolution we've ever made.

This blog post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/instead-of-new-years-resolutions/ on December 31, 2019.

Why I Won't Apologize For Watching Hallmark Christmas Movies

I've decided to take the "guilty" out of "guilty pleasure" when it comes to watching Hallmark Christmas movies.

This cultural icon has become fodder for endless jokes and even sermon illustrations. Yes, they are completely formulaic and the always-happy endings are entirely predictable. What

keeps us watching are the “getting there” details of maneuvering the journey through falling in love and overcoming obstacles and the inevitable misunderstandings that are shortly and inevitably resolved. (“Whew! That was a close one!” said no one ever.)

But there is such a deeply satisfying resolution in every movie that makes the obligatory happy ending seem not obligatory at all. Just . . . *right*.

I found myself thinking about the sweet satisfaction of every movie that makes my spirit hum with joy, looking for the “something deeper” that I sensed was waiting to be discovered.

Then I remembered the Really Big Picture about the true nature of reality that God has presented to us in His word. The story of God rescuing man winds its way from Genesis to Revelation with lots of plot twists along the way, but there is an unimaginably Ultimate Happy Ending in the final book. The true story of the battle of good and evil ends with justice and rightness. Evil is finally contained and punished in the Lake of Fire, and True Love—God’s love for His beloved people—Wins.

There’s even a wedding! The Lamb of God, Jesus, takes His bride, the Church, as His wife.

The reason Hallmark Christmas movies are so satisfying is that they resonate with the Big Story where there is such a happy ending we can’t even begin to imagine it.

Here’s the ending, from Revelation 21:

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people,

and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!”

The real Happy Ending means no more death or mourning or crying or pain. One final wiping away of our tears, and then an eternity in new bodies where tear ducts will only be useful for tears of overwhelming joy.

It’s always a secular Christmas in Hallmark movies, where Jesus is never mentioned. It’s always about “the Christmas spirit” and “Christmas magic.” But the happy endings are still legitimate because, like all good stories, they point to ultimate reality where Jesus is King and He will make all things right.

And now, if you’ll excuse me, there are more movies to watch.

This post originally appeared at blogs.bible.org/why-i-wont-apologize-for-watching-hallmark-christmas-movies/ on December 17, 2019

What Does Trusting God Look Like?

When friends are frozen by fear and anxiety, I often suggest they recite Psalm 56:3 over and over: “When I am afraid, I

will trust in You."

But what does it mean to trust God? What does it look like in real life? How do we understand *how* to trust Him?

I recently asked this question on Facebook and was deeply blessed by the wisdom and experience of friends who have learned how to trust God in the refining fires of life in a fallen world.

One scripture reference was cited again and again, probably the best go-to verse on trusting God, Proverbs 3:5-6:

> Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
> And do not lean on your own understanding.
> In all your ways acknowledge Him,
> And He will direct your paths.

Verse 3 is a parallelism, a Hebrew form of idea rhyming, where two ideas are complementary sides of the same coin, so to speak. *Trusting in the Lord with all your heart* means *not leaning on our own understanding.* If we're not leaning on our own understanding, that means leaning on God's understanding—and His character, and His goodness, and His love. *Acknowledging Him in all our ways* means continually orienting ourselves toward Him the way a plant turns to the light. And choosing, DELIBERATELY choosing, to refuse to lean on our own understanding, leaning hard into Him instead.

So trust is a kind of leaning, transferring our weight onto someone or something else.

I get leaning.

30 years ago I started using a cane because my weak polio leg was only going to get weaker. It was amazing how much more instant stability I had. Which is what happens when we lean on God.

So trusting means CHOOSING.

We make one initial choice to lean into God instead of ourselves, especially when life doesn't make sense, and then we continue to practice making that choice over and over.

I think there are three aspects of trusting God: Making the initial choice to trust Him, reminding ourselves of what is true, and continuing to choose to trust.

Choosing to Trust

Trust starts with a definitive, intentional decision to "step over the line" by turning from doing things our way, trusting in ourselves and our own understanding, to transfer our dependence to God. Here's a word of wisdom concerning not relying on ourselves and our own understanding [read: manipulating]: "Trust is living without scheming."

One wise friend shared, "Trust is the expectation of good based on the character of God. I remind myself in the middle of the muddle: 'This story is not over yet.'"

Have you ever seen scared little children pressing hard into their parents? It's what they do to their mommies and daddies because it's the nature of emotionally healthy children to trust their parents, especially when they're scared.

Pressing hard is a picture of trust.

Trusting happens when we realize, "I am not in control. I release my illusion of control and give the reins over to the Lord."

One friend wrote, "There's usually a point where you have to admit you no longer have the reins. For me, I can recall specific instances where I have said, 'Lord, whatever will bring You the most glory . . . [do it.]' It's like something in the spiritual realm is released when we allow God to be God in our lives."

I love that she used the word "released." That is such a

powerful concept. I'm taken to Matthew 11:28-30—"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Releasing the weariness and burden of trying to run our own lives in our own strength onto Jesus is how we enter His rest, which we only get on the other side of trusting.

Along the same lines, trusting God looks like relinquishing worries and anxieties, rolling them over into Jesus' more-than-capable hands, and then choosing to leave them there. ("No, I'm not going to worry about that, I gave it to Jesus on Tuesday at 3:14 p.m.")

One of my fellow Bible study leaders shared this gem:

"I learned to swing dance about a year before becoming a believer and one of the ways my partner and I would practice was for me to be blindfolded. I had a tendency to anticipate the moves that he would lead as opposed to letting him lead me and I was unintentionally hijacking his lead—very often. The blind fold made me wait, listen, and not anticipate. He was able to lead me through combinations I would have never been able to imagine (he was a much more experienced dancer than me). In my early walk, as I disciplined myself to walk with the Lord, I would reflect on my experience with dancing blindfolded and it gave me great courage to trust Him through things unseen."

So trusting means choosing with the heart and mind, "I will follow YOU, Lord!"

One more picture of what trusting God looks like. Several friends responding to my Facebook post invoked the idea of *clinging* to Him, "even when it's scary and life doesn't appear to make sense. Knowing that, even in the hard times, He is working to perfect us, to grow us, to give us hope, and to

bring glory, through us, to Himself. It means the assurance that He has the big picture of His plan in sight and everything He allows/ordains for me is a piece of that."

Maybe nobody understands the concept of "clinging" like the tourist who discovered his harness wasn't attached to the frame of his hang glider. He literally had to hang on to the frame for dear life for his harrowing two-minute flight.



What a picture of trust as clinging!

Trust is a lovely "holy stubbornness" in clinging to God's goodness and sovereignty no matter how we feel, just as the hang glider stubbornly clung to the frame of his glider.

Reminding Ourselves of What is True

Once we've made the choice to trust God, we need to keep on trusting. The way we build our trust is to remind ourselves, over and over and over, of trustworthy truths about God:

- God is good.
- He will never leave us.
- He loves us.
- He is in control.
- He never makes mistakes.
- He can be trusted.

The continual process of trusting God is not only speaking the

truth to ourselves, but reminding ourselves of His faithfulness in the past. That's why it's good to keep a journal—one friend keeps what she calls her "brag book" about God. I call mine a "God Sightings Book." We can also build an "altar" (something physical that serves as a reminder of what God did, such as planting a tree).

I love what one friend said: "Trusting God means that I actively, willfully refuse to worry and instead I fix my gaze on Christ and recite to myself Who Scripture reveals Him to be, His promises, and everything He has already done."

Another friend has been faithfully slogging through a long period of not seeing what God is doing: "Trusting God means trying to keep a posture of 'open hands, eyes up' and a curiosity that has us constantly wondering aloud, 'What are you up to, God? We can't wait to see.'"

I love how she and her husband live out their trust: *OK, Lord, we can trust You or we can freak out and make things happen on our own. That would be stupid. So let's go back to thanking You for the details of how You are proving Yourself faithful day after day. We trust You by NOT taking matters into our own hands. We trust You by continuing to wait.*

Another friend drew on two different ways for her husband and her to make it through a particularly tough challenge: "One was to say out loud and mean it: 'Lord, we choose to trust in You through this.'" They would also repeat 2 Chronicles 20:12—"Lord, we don't know what to do, but our eyes are on You."

Continuing to Choose to Trust

So trust starts out as a choice to lean into God instead of ourselves, and it continues as we remind ourselves of WHAT is true, and that HE is true.

But trust sinks its roots down deep into our hearts and souls

as we continue to choose dependence on the Lord instead of ourselves. There has to be an “on-goingness” to real trust, because it’s not a one-time decision, but an ongoing position built by continual choices to keep on trusting.

One mama friend was shocked and rocked to learn her baby would be born with Down Syndrome. She wrote,

“Since having [my daughter], God has grown my trust in Him immensely. For me, trusting God means to really know His heart, His goodness, His love for me and my children, and knowing He has a perfect plan . . . even when He doesn’t swoop in and make things easier. Trusting God is a daily relationship talking, listening, and praying with Him. Even when circumstances don’t change and life is and will be difficult. Even when you see your child suffer—trusting Him looks like having an eternal focus, not an earthly one.

“Trusting Him looks like your 6-month old having heart surgery and meditating on worship music to remind you of His goodness and love. It’s choosing him over and over again no matter if His plan aligns with yours.”

I responded to her, “My takeaway from your absolutely precious post is that trust can look like a kind of ‘holy stubbornness’ of choosing, over and over, to lash ourselves to a good and loving God who has proven His faithfulness over and over. Despite circumstances which only tend to obscure, not define, ultimate reality.” I love to see evidences of that “holy stubbornness” in people!

Another friend pointed out that wavering trust can mean going off-track into the weeds of feelings. (Which are valuable as indicators of what’s going on in our hearts, but are terrible indicators of truth! Feelings are like the warning lights on the dashboards of our cars, but they make awful compasses…)

“When my trust in God wavers even the least little bit, I have a tendency to lean toward my emotions. Not that emotions

aren't valid and valuable, but when they begin to lead my thoughts, it can throw everything haywire. I start believing lies. The only antidote is seeking and speaking His Truth over every feeling—I suppose it's what the Scripture calls "taking every thought captive." I love the vivid language there: I can picture this tall strong person (the statement of Truth) coming up to one of my gone-wild feelings with a pair of handcuffs and shouting, 'You're under arrest!' I'm a visual person and sometimes this is what grappling in prayer looks like for me."

There is no passivity in trusting God. It's a very active way of choosing to think and remember and maintain our position of dependence on Him. In the book *Surrender to Love,* David Benner writes about teaching a group of non-swimmers how to snorkel. Because they had learned to trust him as a spiritual teacher, and they had learned the spiritual principle of surrender, they were willing to enter the water and let go of the side of the boat. They trusted him when he told them they would float. They trusted him when he told them they could breathe through the snorkel without having to lift their heads out of the water.

Trusting God is like getting out of the boat, donning the snorkel, and trusting that the water will hold you up while you breathe with your face in the water.

It's leaning,

It's clinging.

It's releasing and relinquishing into God's hands.

And, at its core, trusting God is saying, "Thy will be done." Enjoy.

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blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/what_does_trusting_god_look_

like on November 19, 2019.

God Questions From Little Kids

Recently I asked some of the mamas of littles in our church, “What God questions are your kids asking?” While not definitive, here are some answers I trust you’ll find helpful.

Who made God?

God has always existed. No one made God. Everything that has been made, has been made by someone or something else. Eventually, when we go back far enough, there has to be a Someone or a Something that is eternal—that was not created. Smart thinkers called philosophers call this an “uncaused cause.”

How do we know this? Because there are some things we can’t figure out on our own, so God tells us in His word. Especially where Jesus is talking to His Father:

> “So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.” (John 17:5, 24).

How do we know the Bible is true?

The biggest way we can know is fulfilled prophecy. (Prophecies are a special kind of promise.) That means that God gave prophets information about the future that only He could know

because He knows everything, and then the prophecies came true in even the smallest detail. This means that the Bible is a supernatural book because it is from God, who had human helpers to write down what He wanted written down.

We also have evidence supporting our belief that the Bible is a supernatural book:

Unity: The Bible's books were written over 1500 years, by 40 different authors, on three different continents. But there is one consistent, big message from beginning to end: God loves us and has a big plan and purpose for His creation.

Bibliographical Evidence: The reason we have a Bible at all is that the original texts were copied many times over. There are 25,000+ handwritten copies of New Testament documents, with many variations. These variations allow us to see where errors and changes (such as spelling which does not change the meaning of a word) crept into the copying. There are no variations that question essential Christian beliefs.

Concerning the Old Testament: the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered between 1949 and 1956—thousands of fragments from every book of the Old Testament except Esther, including a complete copy of Isaiah. These fragments had been stored since 300-100 B.C. The book of Isaiah had not been changed in that entire time except for a few spelling changes. The scribes were exceedingly careful in copying God's word.

Archeological Evidence: Archeology, which is the study of old buried stuff, also supports details in the Bible. Not everything in the Bible has archeological support, but no archaeological findings have ever contradicted biblical details.

The evidence for both the Old and New Testaments shows that what we hold in our hands today is the same as what was written by the original authors.

How can Jesus be God but also God's Son? (In other words, how does this Trinity thing work?)

First of all, it's a hard idea that nobody fully understands because our minds are just too puny and small. It's okay not to get it. This truth is called a mystery, and nobody will understand it until heaven.

Here are three very important truths about God:

1. There is one God.
2. God is three distinct Persons.
3. Each Person is fully God.

The three equal Persons are the Father; the Son, Jesus; and the Holy Spirit. The Father is not the Son or the Spirit, the Son is not the Father or the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Father or the Son. But all three Persons are still one God. Yes, it's confusing! Here's a hint: often when people refer to God they mean the Father. For example, when considering the question, "How can Jesus be God but also God's Son," we can say that Jesus is divine, meaning He is God, but He is the Father's Son. He's not the same as the Father.

So when we're talking about God it is helpful to refer to either the Father, and Son or the Spirit.

We can see all three Persons of the Trinity at the baptism of Jesus. (Matthew 3:13-17)

Why can't we see God?

We can't see God the Father because He is spirit. That's like invisible energy, like sunlight. Or wind. And the Holy Spirit is, well, spirit. Jesus became a human being just like us when He left heaven to live on earth, but we can't see Him because He's back in heaven now. God is still on earth because God is everywhere, but He's invisible.

I know you'd like to see God, and you know what? So would I!

Jesus knew we'd feel that way, which is why He said, "Blessed are those who believe without seeing Me." (John 20:29) But if you trust in Jesus, one day you will see Him very plainly in heaven.

Where is heaven?

Heaven is a spirit place. It's not like our house or our church or the park where we go, that you can find on a map or by walking there. I *can* tell you that when Jesus left the earth and went back to heaven, He went UP, and the Bible talks about Him coming back DOWN to earth. But it's not in the sky like the moon. When astronauts went up into space they didn't find heaven because heaven's not a place we can touch or see.

Why can't I hear God's voice? When I say, "Hello, God," why doesn't He talk back?

God doesn't speak to us the same way people do. That's because He is spirit. But Jesus taught us, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27) So hearing His voice is different from hearing Mommy or Daddy's voice. You hear His voice with your heart. (Matthew 13)

We recognize God's voice from reading and hearing His word in the Bible. Everything God says lines up with what He tells us in His word, so we can learn to tell the difference between His true voice and our imagination. We have to practice listening. It's not easy, and we have to know what He says in His word in order to know what His voice sounds like.

If everything God makes is good, why did He make Satan?

Satan did not start out as an evil creature. God made him a beautiful, powerful, good angel. The good angel decided to become a bad angel by trying to become like God instead of being content with how God made him as a good angel.

Some people have asked why God made angels and people who could choose to disobey. That's because God wanted angels to CHOOSE to obey Him, and He wanted people to CHOOSE to love Him. Without the ability to choose, it wouldn't be real obedience or real love.

How will I know how to get to heaven when I die?

Getting to heaven from earth is like stepping from one room into a hallway or another room. Very simple, right? And you will probably have angels with you as well. Jesus will make sure to bring you to Himself, so you don't need to worry about it.

Before I was in your tummy was I in heaven with God?

No, you didn't exist before you were in my tummy. God knew you in His mind and in His heart, but He didn't create you until just the right time to form you inside my body. The only person who was in heaven with God the Father before He became a tiny baby was Jesus.

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Back Infections and Heart Infections

My husband Ray knew something was wrong as soon as he got out of bed.

His lower back, where he'd had back surgery six weeks before, was wet. His t-shirt was wet. The sheet was wet. His fingers glistening with a strange wetness from reaching back to investigate, he asked me to check what was going on. I saw a rivulet of fluid pouring out of the top of his surgical incision. Something was really, really wrong.



As I gently pressed the skin around the incision, pus kept flowing out. He had a serious infection under the incision. It had been hidden, but it literally rose to the surface of his body and forced its way out. His problem wasn't that pus was being discharged from the inside to the outside—that was just the symptom, the manifestation of the true problem: a deep and serious infection.

He'd had the infection before he was forced to be aware of it. There were indications: fever, and just not feeling right.

The Lord is quite adept at using the physical to show us truths about the spiritual and emotional. I started seeing parallels between the two worlds.

The undealt-with, unhealed spiritual and emotional hurts in our souls don't just sit there under the surface—our awareness—forever. It's like emotional pus. Eventually it starts leaking out sideways: addictions, anger, isolation, rebellion, self-destruction. These are the presenting problems that drive people to seek help through recovery programs such as Re:generation and Celebrate Recovery, or counseling.

Just as a rivulet of pus wasn't Ray's true problem but merely a symptom, our heart issues are the true problem that Jesus

wants to point to and say, “Let Me heal them. You can’t do it on your own.”

Ray’s infection was so large that he needed “wash out” surgery. He needed a skilled surgeon, in the sterile, controlled environment of the operating room, to open up his incision and clean out the infection. Before he even got to the OR, the doctor ordered IV antibiotics to attack and disarm the destructive power of the multiplying bacteria. By the time the surgeon got to the washing-out stage, Ray’s infection had been disarmed, turned into “clean gunk.” No bacteria was left, just the debris of the now-dead bacteria.

In the spiritual realm, it’s truth that functions like powerful antibiotics. Truth attacks the destructive power of lies and decision. There is still leftover debris of lies—bad thinking habits and bad behavior habits—but when the lies are disarmed, it’s a lot easier to replace the old habits with new, healthy, godly habits.

This was a serious infection. The day after surgery, they put in a PICC line that threaded a tube from his upper arm into a vein, ending just above his heart. This is a very effective way to infuse health-building antibiotics into his body, medicine that can’t be taken orally—it has to be pumped directly into his bloodstream. He gets five antibiotic infusions a day, which we can do at home instead of needing to be hospitalized or having to go a doctor’s office (which would be hard to do at 6 a.m. and 9 p.m.!).

The PICC line allows us to keep a constant level of antibiotic in his blood. He needs this constant flow to attack the infection over a long period of time. We also need a constant infusion of truth into our souls, into our minds, to counteract the destructive power of lies and deceptions and schemes. In fact, one study revealed the it takes a minimum of four infusions of truth weekly through time in the Word for spiritual growth and healthiness.

I like thinking about the infusion of truth through God's Word as I connect the tubing to Ray's PICC line catheter. God is so good to give us physical lessons to show us spiritual truths!

Ray sure couldn't heal himself on his own. He pointed out that he had to surrender control over this entire "adventure" (to use my dad's word to describe his cancer journey). There was absolutely nothing he could do to fix the spinal stenosis that squeezed nerves, causing shooting pains down the backs of his legs, and he couldn't heal the infection that came later. He had to place himself in the hands of the surgeon both times. He had to place himself in the hands of the anesthesiologists to put him to sleep and wake him up. He had to place himself in the hands of the nurses to administer his pain meds and the IV antibiotics. He had to surrender control to those who knew how to help him.

At any point, he could have shut down the process—not having the surgery, or walking out of the hospital, or refusing the home infusions of IV antibiotics. He could have refused to wear the back brace after the spine surgery; he could have refused to submit to the BLT restrictions (no bending, lifting or twisting).

But that would have also shut down the healing.

When we have soul sickness—a heart infection, if you will—we need to entrust ourselves into the hands of people more educated in the healing process than we are. We need to surrender our false sense of control and invite others to lead us from sickness into health. And we need to not shut down the process by thinking we know better, or thinking we're fixed or even just "good enough." We need to not push back against restrictions suggested by those who know better than we do what it will take to help us climb of our pits to get to the place of spiritual and emotional health.

God provides help for physical challenges like infections, and

through the “one anothers” of scripture He provides help for spiritual and emotional challenges as well. And He lets us connect the dots to learn transferable concepts from each.

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