

NO OTHER WAY

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Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, California, on Sunday, January 28, 2007

Proverbs 3:5; NLT **Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.** ⁶ *Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.* ⁷ *Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil.* ⁸ *Then you will have healing for your body and strength for your bones.*

These are the words most frequently quoted from the Book of Proverbs by Christian believers. These phrases are to Christ's disciples what the wedding ceremony is to newlyweds. They spell out what is and is not to be done within that relationship.

Do and Don't

Proverbs 3:5; NLT **Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding** (*perception*^{NJB});).

This verse sets the terms of what it means to live with God from its inception through every step of the journey. They are the "to have and to hold from this day forward" of our faith-covenant with God. They deserve our careful consideration and reflection.

It's been almost 34 years, and my wife, Martha, and I still remember the vows that signaled the beginning of what we determined would be a lifelong loyalty. The marriage ceremony is like our conversion—the initial pledge of truth (or fidelity). But that trust must continue, must grow. And we cannot assume that the growth will be automatic.

Those who are wise know that discipleship is neither a pole vault nor a long jump but a long "walk." Reaffirming, re-experiencing those first steps and then taking fresh ones day by day, year upon year, is what trust is about.

How long does it take to build a good marriage? A lifetime of walking arm in arm is the only accurate answer. Trusting God is like that.

It begins with commitment. Nothing less than "with all your heart" is sufficient. Choices, decisions, motives, intentions must all be directed to what *God* wants and what *God* can do. "Trust" steps onto the bridge of God's loving power and leaves the shoreline of our own abilities and ambitions behind. Such belief means literally to "bet your life" on God's truth and wisdom.

Jeremiah 9:23 *This is what the Lord says:*

*"Don't let the wise boast in their wisdom,
or the powerful boast in their power,
or the rich boast in their riches.*

²⁴ *But those who wish to boast*

should boast in this alone:

*that they truly know me and understand that I am the Lord
who demonstrates unfailing love
and who brings justice and righteousness to the earth,*

*and that I delight in these things.
I, the Lord, have spoken!*

God does what He chooses, everywhere and at all times. The art of prayer is not learning how to twist God's arm with words or emotion, but how to fully embrace what God *already* wants to do, letting go of our preconceptions and taking hold of His promises.

We are often moved to pray by our circumstances, but the circumstances of our world do not move God. "Wars and rumors of war" and "earthquakes in diverse places" do not worry Him. He actually tells us to *not let* them worry us either.

Our path is charted by God, not by politics or economies. Keep your eyes fixed on Him, do not grow weary in doing what is good and right, always give thanks, always love one another—these are our mandates. The most positive influence you can have on society is to be a godly person in thought, word, and deed. Do not be moved, or caught up, or swept away by what moves the world.

Romans 12:2 *Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

Priority One

⁶ Seek (to know, recognize, and obey) his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take (the smooth and straight).

"In all that you do" means... in *all* that you do.

Philippians 4:6 *Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*

This process, often repeated, has sure and significant results!

James 1:5 *If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.*

Genuine trust in God creates relationship, as this passage describes. "Seek" and "fear" are terms of personal bonding, which results in changes of behavior. They combine the senses of awe, intimacy, and obligation which mark good relationships. They suggest that God's people want to know Him so well that they do His bidding virtually without having to be reminded.

The path we walk is marked out (directed) by Him, and the power to walk is His gift.

Know Your Limitations

⁷ Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the Lord and turn away (*shun*^{NIV}) from evil.

Our trust in God begins with renunciation of our “own understanding” (v. 5), that which has not been tempered and molded by God’s will and guidance. Now, it continues by renouncing also our own wisdom, of which it is so easy and so foolish to be proud. Yet, when we are, we cancel any effectiveness it might have had and show it actually to be stupidity.

Romans 12:16 *Live in harmony with each other. Don’t be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don’t think you know it all!*

Proverbs 12:15 *Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to others.*

“Fear of the Lord” is the first building block of trust. This fear, however, is not a terror caused by threatening, but an awe and wonder that results from first glimpses of His greatness. The “fear of the Lord” recognizes that He is uncontainable and that our highest wisdom is ignorance in comparison to His. Once again, I recall the conversation of Lucy and Mr. Tumnus as they watch Aslan walk away. “He is not a safe lion,” Tumnus muses, with deep respect. “Yes,” agrees Lucy, “but he is good.”

Such great respect compels certain actions, the first of which may be to turn away from anything that would displease the respected person. In this case, it is “evil” in its many-headed manifestations, but especially, in this context, in its most dangerous form—arrogant self-reliance from which all fear of God has been drained.

Job was such a man, as God’s opening testimony of him reveals:

Job 1:1 *There once was a man named Job who lived in the land of Uz. He was blameless—a man of complete integrity. He feared God and stayed away from evil.*

What we discover in reading Job’s story is that God’s testimony of him foresaw his character in a completed state; he was not yet the man he would become by God’s molding process. At the end of his trial, Job had learned life’s most important lesson:

Job 28:28 *And this is what [God] says to all humanity:
“The fear of the Lord is true wisdom;
to forsake evil is real understanding.”*

Ahhhhh...

⁸ Then you will have healing for your body and strength (*refreshment*^{ESV}, *drink, medicine*) for your bones.

Such trust in God leads to well-being in the very depths of our persons. The whole structure and tissue of our bodies is described here, and more: our whole selves, body-spirit, tangible-intangible. This reward outstrips the promises of wealth and abundance offered a few verses later, as valued as those material blessings are. Health is a word that refers to more than the physical; it connotes thriving and radiant wellness—*shalom*.

Proverbs 4:20 *My child, pay attention to what I say.*

Listen carefully to my words.

²¹ *Don’t lose sight of them.*

Let them penetrate deep into your heart,

²² *for they bring life to those who find them,
and healing to their whole body.*

This concept makes frequent appearances in the Proverbs, where “health” and “healing” are code words for the total personal prosperity that is God’s gift to those who walk in wisdom’s way. It is rightly called refreshment, like a cool drink to a thirsty traveler, or a soothing medicinal potion to a sick person.

These ingredients of trust do sound like an outline of a wedding ceremony.

- *Commitment* is symbolized in the giving and receiving of rings and the endowing of one’s partner “with all my worldly goods.”
- *Renunciation* is clearly voiced in “forsaking all others, will you keep you only unto her so long as you both shall live?”
- *Relationship* is chimed not only in “to have and to hold from this day forward” but especially in “to love and to cherish.”
- *Well-being* is promised in the benediction where the Lord is invoked to “make His face to shine upon you, be gracious unto you, and give you peace” (*shalom*, total welfare).

Do we need special anniversary celebrations to renew our trust in God as we do our pledge of faith to our partners? Isn’t that what Sunday mornings is all about?