

TRUSTING MEANS LEANING

I. Proverbs 3:5-8

A. Proverbs 3:5-8 (ESV) was written by Solomon who the Scriptures say was as wise as they come. He wrote these words almost 3,000 years ago. In the midst of our present ordeals, challenges, and uncertain futures, and our own time of loss, I believe this is the Word of God for us: **5** *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.* **6** *In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths.* **7** *Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.* **8** *It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment (i.e. **medicine**) to your bones.*

B. Trust, at least in my vocabulary, is directing your soul to lean confidently and exclusively upon the LORD, Yahweh, I AM. It doesn't mean to abdicate or shirk your responsibility with respect to this life, but it does require a deep level of reverent humility as to *Who* God is, what He's about, and what He plans to do.

C. Therefore, this means I understand God is holy and sovereign. He is perfectly just, righteous, and good. Evil is what recoils against Him. God is all powerful (*omnipotent*); all knowing (*omniscient*); and everywhere present (*omnipresent*). He is sovereign over everything. He controls the whole Kit and the Kaboodle. If something awesome takes place, He's responsible. If something terrible takes place, He allowed it. Nothing takes Him by surprise, nothing ever knocks Him off course, nothing causes Him to alter His plans. Therefore, our God is to be feared and worshiped with a sense of reverence and awe. Fearing God with reverent hearts is where wisdom begins. Likewise, God and God alone has the power of life and death. *"Every man is appointed a time to die and then comes the judgment."*

D. Jesus said this in Matthew 10:28-31 (NLT) **28** *"Don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell.* **29** *What is the price of two sparrows--one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it.* **30** *And the very hairs on your head are all numbered.* **31** *So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.* (Fear God. Fear Him alone. And don't be afraid.)

E. In the Summer of 1974, I was on staff at Camp Otterbein. Me and another guy were tasked with painting the chainlink backstop at the camp's ball diamond. Our ladders were placed against the top of backstop on opposite sides of each other. My friend and I were at the top of our ladders when suddenly that rusty old relic broke and we fell to the ground. Once we realized we weren't injured, we laughed until we cried. But the lesson in our mishap was that it matters what your "ladder" is leaning on...

F. Does our opening text have any relevancy to the outcome of our Presidential election? Does that same text have anything to say about this worldwide pandemic? Does our text cast any meaningful light on our individual and collective futures? Does it speak truth to us in love, deliver wise counsel and direction to us, and impart words that taken to heart will comfort and console us with respect to Gail Miller's sudden and unexpected passing three days ago? Yes! It speaks volumes to every question!

G. So let me ask about your respective ladders: Are you carelessly leaning on your own understanding? You're liable to fall hard! Are you leaning on political leaders? You're liable to fall hard! Are you trusting in your mask and hand sanitizer while you wait for a vaccine? You may be operating with a false sense of security. Are you counting on a gun or a bank account or a bunker or entertainment or a change in geography to get you through all your trials and woe? Are you confident all your astutely made plans will happen precisely as you've planned, exactly like you've mapped them out?

H. Bottom line: How secure is that backstop your ladder is leaning upon? James 2:13-16 (NLT) is a good reminder for us when it says: **13 Look here, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit." **14** How do you know what your life will be like tomorrow? Your life is like the morning fog--it's here a little while, then it's gone. **15** What you ought to say is, "If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that." **16** Otherwise you are boasting about your own pretentious plans, and all such boasting is evil.**

I. Trusting means leaning. But it matters where we lean and in whom and in what we place our trust. Even with respect to our salvation and eternal destinies, it matters where we've placed our trust, upon Whom we are leaning. Let me leave you with Jesus' words to His disciples at the Last Supper: John 14:1-7 (NLT) happens on the eve of the Cross. Take this promise home, own it, lean upon it with confidence. Jesus' bright red letters: **1 "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in Me. **2** There is more than enough room in My Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? **3** When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with Me where I am. **4** And you know the way to where I am going." **5** "No, we don't know, Lord," Thomas said. "We have no idea where You are going, so how can we know the way?" **6** Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Me. **7** If you had really known Me, you would know who My Father is. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him!" (Let's make sure our "ladders" are leaning upon Christ--for all matters of life and all matters of death...)**

* Close with a Song...

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Proverbs 3:5-8 (ESV)

5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. **6** In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths. **7** Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. **8** It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.

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Video Clips & Important Articles

"Trust" - Sixpence None the Richer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCLK9P7kh6Y>

Trust God with All Your Heart - Tony Evans

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nILPFSB_Cw

Why Should I Pray If God Knows Everything? D.A. Carson

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=muiwzkFO-k0>

Bonus Stuff

The Theme of Proverbs

ESV Study Bible

Proverbs states its theme right at the book's beginning (1:1-7): its goal is to describe and instill "wisdom" in God's people, a wisdom that is founded in the "fear of the LORD" and that works out covenant life in the practical details of everyday situations and relationships.

- ESV Study Bible, Introduction to Proverbs, p. 1130.

1 Kings 3:10-14 (ESV)

10 It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. **11** And God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, **12** behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. **13** I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. **14** And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.”

1 Kings 4:29-34 (ESV)

29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, **30** so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. **31** For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. **32** He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. **33** He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. **34** And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 (ESV)

7 Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the LORD. **8** He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.

Trust Him

Author Unknown

Trust Him when dark doubts assail thee,
Trust Him when thy strength is small,
Trust Him when to simply trust Him
Seems the hardest thing of all.
Trust Him, He is ever faithful,
Trust Him, for His will is best,
Trust Him, for the heart of Jesus
Is the only place of rest.

Quote by Samuel Rutherford

"Duties are ours, events are God's; When our faith goes to meddle with events, and to hold account upon God's Providence, and beginneth to say, 'How wilt Thou do this or that?' we lose ground; we have nothing to do there; it is our part to let the Almighty exercise His own office, and steer His own helm; there is nothing left for us, but to see

how we may be approved of Him, and how we roll the weight of our weak souls upon Him who is God omnipotent, and when we thus essay miscarrieth, it shall be neither our sin nor our cross."

- Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661) was a Scottish Presbyterian Pastor and the author of Lex, Rex, (a.k.a. *The Law and the Prince*) published in 1644.

For a free download of Lex, Rex, go to: <http://www.portagepub.com/products/caa/sr-lexrex17.html>

Quote from Unknown Author

"It's hard to see what God is doing in your life if you're wrapped up in what He's not doing."

A Great Story About Trust (By Tim Hansel, "Holy Sweat")

One day, while my son Zac and I were out in the country, climbing around in some cliffs, I heard a voice from above me yell, "Hey Dad! Catch me!" I turned around to see Zac joyfully jumping off a rock straight at me. He had jumped and then yelled "Hey Dad!" I became an instant circus act, catching him. We both fell to the ground. For a moment after I caught him I could hardly talk. When I found my voice again I gasped in exasperation: "Zac! Can you give me one good reason why you did that???" He responded with remarkable calmness: "Sure... because you're my Dad." His whole assurance was based in the fact that his father was trustworthy. He could live life to the hilt because I could be trusted. Isn't this even more true for a Christian?

A Sad Story About Trust (By Bernie May, "Learning To Trust")

There is an old story of a father who took his young son out and stood him on the railing of the back porch. He then went down, stood on the lawn, and encouraged the little fellow to jump into his arms. "I'll catch you," the father said confidently. After a lot of coaxing, the little boy finally made the leap. When he did, the father stepped back and let the child fall to the ground. He then picked his son up, dusted him off, and dried his tears. "Let that be a lesson," he said sternly. "Don't ever trust anyone."

Trusting God in Times of Trouble and Perplexity

by J.I. Packer

Grace is God drawing sinners closer and closer to Him. How does God in grace prosecute this purpose? Not by shielding us from assault by the world, the flesh, and the devil, nor by protecting us from burdensome and frustrating circumstance, not yet by shielding us from troubles created by our own temperament and psychology, but rather by exposing us to all these things, so as to overwhelm us with a sense of our own inadequacy, and to drive us to cling to Him more closely.

This is the ultimate reason, from our standpoint, why God fills our lives with troubles and perplexities of one sort and another -- it is to ensure that we shall learn to hold Him fast. The reason why the Bible spends so much of its time reiterating that God is a strong rock, a firm defense, and a sure refuge and help for the weak is that God spends so

much of His time showing us that we are weak, both mentally and morally, and dare not trust ourselves to find or follow the right road. When we walk along a clear road feeling fine, and someone takes our arm to help us, likely we would impatiently shake him off; but when we are caught in rough country in the dark, with a storm brewing and our strength spent, and someone takes our arm to help us, we would thankfully lean on him.

And God wants us to feel that our way through life is rough and perplexing, so that we may learn to lean on Him thankfully. Therefore He takes steps to drive us out of self-confidence to trust in Himself, to -- in the classic scriptural phrase for the secret of the godly man's life -- "wait on the Lord."

- James Packer, Your Father Loves You, Harold Shaw Publishers, 1986.

Trust Illustration by Haddon Robinson

Years ago, Monroe Parker was traveling through South Alabama on one of those hot, sultry Alabama days. He stopped at a watermelon stand, picked out a watermelon, and asked the proprietor how much it cost. *"It's \$1.10,"* he replied. Parker dug into his pocket, found only a bill and said, *"All I have is a dollar."* *"That's ok,"* the proprietor said, *"I'll trust you for it."* *"Well, that's mighty nice of you,"* Parker responded, and picking up the watermelon, started to leave. *"Hey, where are you going?"* the man behind the counter demanded. *"I'm going outside to eat my watermelon."* *"But you forgot to give me the dollar!"* *"You said you would trust me for it,"* Parker called back. *"Yeah, but I meant I would trust you for the dime!"* *"Mack,"* Parker replied, *"You weren't going to trust me at all. You were just going to take a ten-cent gamble on my integrity!"*