



LOVE GOD TRUST GOD

The Pilot

A wealthy man lives in a large home next to his very own airstrip. Beside his house is a hanger with his private plane. The man is a licensed pilot, and with his resources and skills, at a moment's notice he can go virtually anywhere he wants. He could fly to New York City and catch a show on Broadway. He could fly to Colorado and spend few days skiing. He could fly to California and learn how to surf. All of this is available to him, but for some odd reason, he does none of it. The airplane rests in the hanger, collecting dust, while the wealthy man sits in his chair and watches television.

Why?

Numerous reasons could be suggested. Maybe he had a close call and developed a fear of flying. Maybe he likes the idea of flying, and the idea of the freedom associated with flying, more than he actually likes doing it. Or, maybe it's none of that. Maybe he's just lazy. It sounds adventuresome and exciting to dart all over the world, but it also takes a great deal of energy, and he'd really rather just be at home.

Countless other reasons could be suggested, but the bottomline remains the same: the man is squandering a golden opportunity.

Opportunity

Consider the opportunity available to those who follow Christ. Available to us, through Christ, is the presence of God in our lives. This is no small opportunity. This is the grandest of opportunities. The God who created us, knows us, and loves us, wants to do life with us. Without question, the opportunity is profound. The question, though, is are we taking full advantage of this opportunity?

We can have all the trappings of following Christ. We associate with a church. We read Scripture. We agree with the essential doctrines. We do good in the world. Put simply, we have the airplane and the airstrip. But the trappings of following Christ are not the same as authentically entrusting ourselves to Christ. The person who truly trusts Christ, is the person living an ever-increasing liberated life. These are the people who get up off the couch, get into the airplane, taxi to the runway, and entrust themselves to the power of that plane.

Scripture puts it like this: *"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder"* (James 2:19).

Belief in the existence of God, and agreement with the doctrines of Scripture, is important. A person must know the plane can fly. But belief in these doctrines is very different than trusting God. A person who trusts God will lead a very different life.

To best get after fanning the flame of our trust in God, let's consider four questions.

First, what is trust?

Second, what competes with our trust in God?

Third, what does trust empower us to do?

And fourth, what inhibits our trust?

What is Trust?

When a person sits in a chair, they *trust* in the chair for their safety and comfort. This simple example gives a clue to two aspects of trust: the object of the trust, and the promise made by that object. In this case...

The object of their trust: a chair

The promise: safety and comfort

Likewise, when a person buys a car, they are trusting in the car. The same two aspects of trust are seen.

The object of their trust: a car

The promise: reliable transportation

That to say, when we trust something, we must be clear about what we are trusting that something to do. It makes no sense to say, “I trust God,” but to not be clear about what we are trusting God to do. A person wouldn’t trust a chair to do what a car will do, and they wouldn’t trust a car to do what a chair will do. The chair will do chair-things, and the car will do car-things. We are counting on them for different things.

So what exactly do we mean when we say we must trust God? Trust God for what? Are we trusting God to be good and reliable transportation, as we would trust a car, or are we trusting him for more than this? Clearly, something far greater is at stake. What exactly is it?

Jesus made the following claim: “*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full*” (John 10:10).

Much more could be said to this, but let’s keep it simple. The promise this “chair” makes is that if we trust in him, he will give us *life*. We look to God, through Christ, for life. The word “object” may sound odd for God, but the meaning is clear.

The object of our trust: God

The promise: life

This leads to our second question.

Competition

What *competes* with our trust in God? This may sound like an odd question, but it’s importance is highlighted when we consider the above mentioned promise. We look to a chair for safety and comfort, we look to a car for reliable transportation, and we look to God for *life*. If *life* is the promise, what might we look to--other than God—to give us *life*? What do we look to and think, “If I only had _____ then I would have life.”?

The most obvious contender for God’s greatest competition for our trust might be money. There’s no question, money captures the imagination of hearts and dreams.



And from a certain vantage point, this is understandable. Money provides food, shelter, clothing, healthcare, and more, the very things we need for *life*. If God promises life, and money provides many of the things we need for life, it's no wonder Jesus compared a trust in money to a trust in God.

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.
(Matthew 6:24)

Scripture is not so naive as to belittle money. Contrary to popular opinion, Scripture reveals a great deal of street wisdom regarding money. Much more is addressed than just giving money away. We're told how to make it, spend it, save it, use it, and yes, give it. We're told that money will be involved in everything we do (Ecclesiastes 10:19). The most noble of causes involve a budget. Money is neither good nor bad. Like all tools it's a matter of how it's used.

But what happens when financial security is our ultimate security? What happens when it's the foundation of our lives? What happens when we trust money in a manner that only God must be trusted?

When we do this, money is effectively our god.

The result?

Something deep within us knows we're vulnerable. There's never enough money to bring impenetrable security. There's always something or someone that could cause us to lose it all. There are countless needs money can't meet. Money is trusted for the security it brings, but there are holes in that security that breed a great deal of insecurity.

Which has led many away from the money-god. "*Certainly not me,*" someone says, "*I'd never be so greedy as to make money my god. I saw previous generations do that. I'm not buying into it.*"

How about friends?

But friends are real. Friends are important. Friends give life meaning and purpose. Even more, the second greatest command is to love people.

True. Right. Good.

Dangerous.

What happens when ultimate security is wrapped up in finding the ideal spouse? Is our well-being resting in the hands of a strong relational world? Is life finally secure when we have friends down the street, a spouse in bed next to us, and kids in the back seat?

It's clear how money can effectively become our god; relationships hold the same potential. We've all experienced friends who cling to us in ways that doesn't feel healthy. We've witnessed parents whose identity is wrapped up in their children. Maybe we've been that friend or parent. Maybe we've looked to others for something they just weren't capable of giving. We hoped they'd satisfy something in us they just were not capable of satisfying.



What's that about?

Make a friend into a god and the friendship will be terribly disappointing. Turn a spouse into a god and the marriage will suffer, if it makes it at all. Squeeze prospective spouses too tight and they run for the hills.

Why?

Yes, we were made to be in relationship with others, but we instinctively know we're not qualified to do the god-thing.

A friend? Yes.

A god? No.

The list of God's competition could go on and on. When we simply ask, "What do I look to--trust to give me life?" we unearth a long list of potential replacements for God.

Many people believe in God, but far fewer actually trust him, which leads to our third question.

Empowered

What exactly does a trust in God *empower* us to do? To say we trust God for *life* is both good and important, but let's bring that down from an aerial view and put it at the street level. How will trust manifest itself in my daily living?

We could look at this from many angles. Let's consider two.

Trust empowers us to act.

Trust empowers us to rest.

Trust Empowers us to Act

Israel had been liberated from slavery. As they made their way to the promised land, they faced countless obstacles. One such obstacle was opposition from a people known as the Amalekites. Exodus briefly records the encounter.

The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands." So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

(Exodus 17:8-13)

The Israelites are attacked. They defend themselves with the sword, but their sword is empowered by something greater than the strength of their swing. As Moses stands with arms raised and the staff outstretched, the Israelite warriors are winning. As Moses lowers his hands and his staff, the Israelite warriors are losing. Moses quickly discovers this reality and labors to be fully submitted to God. He tires and his friends



surround him. He is given a place to sit. His arms are held high with the support of his friends. All the while, the Israelite warriors fight on the field of battle and ultimately defeat their enemy.

This story is a powerful example of the power of trust toward action. The Israelites took action, they stepped onto a battlefield. The effectiveness of this action, though, was not empowered by their swordsmanship, but by their trust in their God. This kind of faith was so ingrained in Israelite culture that it shows up in numerous passages.

His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of the warrior; the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.

(Psalm 147:10-11)

If we trust God, we will take on our own version of the Amalekites. We will step onto the battlefields of life, empowered not just by our swords, but by our uplifted arms to our God. Those who trust in their own strength will be limited by their own strength. Those who trust in God are trusting in a God of limitless power.

Trust that Empowers us to Rest

For many of us, taking action and stepping out onto the field of battle is not our problem. The real problem is stepping off the battlefield, letting things go, or taking much needed rest. Yes, trust in God inspires action, but it also inspires the exact opposite. Trust empowers rest.

This may first be seen in one of Scripture's earliest commands: "*Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy*" (Exodus 20:8).

The Israelites were commanded to rest. This command would be challenged when they were delivered from Egypt and had to rely on God for their food in ways they had never had to do so. God provided a bread-like substance called manna. The manna would appear in the morning, the Israelites would gather it, and if they attempted to gather more than they needed, the manna would spoil by the next morning.

The one exception to this was the day before the Sabbath. On this Sabbath-eve, they were to collect two days worth of manna. On this particular day, when they gathered a double-portion, the manna stayed fresh, and they ate their full on the Sabbath without having to labor for it. What happened, though, on that first Sabbath after receiving their manna was almost predictable.

Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none.

(Exodus 16:27)

Despite the command to rest, and despite the double-provision on the day before, some of the people couldn't sit still. Likely driven by anxiety for their wellbeing, they stepped out of their tents, jars in hands, and went on a hunt for more manna. This action, and this lack of rest, displayed a lack of trust.

Yes, God calls us to action, but he also calls us to pull away and rest. This rest may test our faith more than any other. In the name of being "responsible" we often deny the



trust we profess and scurry about in nonstop busyness. Authentic trust will lead us to take action, but it will equally lead us to lay our work down and rest.

What Inhibits our Trust?

Our final question is about what gets in the way of trusting God. It's one thing to intellectually know we should trust God, but it's quite another to actually do it. When we consider inhibitors to trust, we quickly come into a problem we might call *projection*.

Simply put, projection is when we project on God the untrustworthiness we have experienced by other authority figures. Yes, we may want to trust God, but Scripture describes God as a "Father," and maybe our earthly father failed our trust. Or maybe it wasn't a father or mother, but maybe we have been burned in other relationships. Wounds from trusts that have been violated no doubt show up in other relationships, including our relationship with God. Despite our earnest desire to trust God, we may be held back by these wounds and need to address them directly.

At a minimum, two things help us deal with these wounds and the problem of projection: awareness and truth.

Awareness is when we simply identify and acknowledge wounds from other relationships that inhibit our trust in God. This awareness is powerful. Hidden wounds impact us in ways we don't know, but once that wound is known, it loses much of its power.

Awareness is made complete when we take the identified wound to Scripture to discover truths about God that differentiate him from those who have hurt us. Scripture describes this as *taking thoughts captive*.

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.
(2 Corinthians 10:5)

Thoughts plague us, and they often lie to us. It's for this reason we must develop depth of insight into Scripture and depth of insight into God. When we do this, we discover truths that heal us by strengthening our trust in the God who genuinely loves us, and not only wants what is best for us, but has the power and authority to do what is best for us.

Trust

As mentioned above, many people believe in God, but far fewer actually trust him. May this not be true of us. Scripture tells us that "*we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved*" (Hebrews 10:39).

A life of shrinking back is no life at all. True life, the life God intends us to live, is a life entrusted to him, taking full advantage of the opportunity he has given us.

There's no gain in owning an airplane and keeping it hidden in a hanger. True faith gets into the cockpit, fires up the engine, pushes the throttle forward, and pulls back on the stick. When we do this, we will take full advantage of the opportunity given to us. God is available to us. He wants to do life with us.



Yes, this will take courage. This faith-inspired courage will lead us to action. And other times, it will take just as much courage when that faith leads us to rest.

Such is the adventure of a life of authentic trust.

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