

In What Do You Trust ? (Part 2) – Reason.

1. Introduction

- a. In our first week on this subject, we did an overview about trust and we learned that trust is developed through a loving relationship with the one we are learning to believe in.
- b. We learned that the “trustworthiness” of the one we must believe in is vital, and that even if we have all the faith in the world, if the object of our trust is not worthy, our faith will do us no good.
- c. Some of the things we might trust in are:
 - i. Our money or possessions. (what we have or own will help us out)
 - ii. Our abilities. (our keenness, our athleticism, our negotiation skills, etc)
 - iii. Our reason. (our ability to figure it out)
 - iv. Other people. (leaders, friends, associates)
 - v. Our eyes. (what we can see)
 - vi. God.

2. This morning, we will look at “Reason” (or understanding) as one of those things we might be tempted to trust in.

- a. What is Reason? *It is the process by which we form conclusions, judgments, or inferences from facts or premises. It can mean to think logically.* It is how we “figure stuff out.”
- b. Now, many of us have been taught that reason and faith are opposed. We have been told that they have no common ground.
 - i. For some, faith means to believe in spite of or in opposition to evidence to the contrary.
 - ii. For others, reason means to accept the facts and make your conclusions based upon the facts.
 1. The inherent problem with reason as I have described is that it makes the assumption that it has all the facts.
 2. What if there is an unseen world out there, how does reason deal with that?
 - iii. Another question we ought to struggle with is, when I use faith do I not use reason as well? The answer is yes, of course you do.
 1. I believe that reason was given to us to inform our faith but not to govern it.

3. This morning we will look at a key and familiar passage of scripture that tells us that “reason” or “understanding” must not have the final say in how we make our decisions.

In Proverbs 3:5-8

- a. *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 your paths straight. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil. 8 It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones.* (NAS)
- b. *[5] Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. [6] Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you*

on track. [7] Don't assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil! [8] Your body will glow with health, your very bones will vibrate with life! (The Message)

4. Why does some folks' faith falter when life crushes them, while for others, their faith finds new life?
 - a. The answer is found in verse 5 of Proverbs 3:
 - i. **VERSE 5: *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding***
 - ii. I really like how the NAS and King James use the word "lean".
 1. Have you ever had to lean on something to support your weight? I know some of you use walkers. Others have had a knee replacement that required the use of crutches. Some of you have arthritis that requires you use a cane. You know what it is like to LEAN on something.
 2. Verse 5 of our passage tells us to "trust in the Lord with ALL our hearts" (positive) and warns us not to "LEAN on our own understanding."
 3. Last week we learned that "to trust someone" means to place yourself under their complete care and control. It means to give over to someone else. Like a doctor who will do surgery on you...at some point you have to just let go and trust the doctor to do the cutting.
 - a. *Can you imagine the absurdity of someone who doesn't give it over to the doctor...they refuse anesthesia, they stay awake during their surgery, they demand a mirror so they can watch the surgery, and they question and second guess everything that the physician is doing. What surgeon in his right mind would let a patient do that?
 - b. It is the same with God. He desires that we give it over to Him completely. Take the anesthesia and rest, let Him do what He says He will do. Take Him at His word that He knows what He is doing. Quit second guessing Him. Give it over to Him!
 4. **What causes us to move from trust to fear?**
 - a. When we SHIFT our weight from God to our own UNDERSTANDING!
 - b. Martin Luther said, "*Reason is the greatest enemy that faith has...*"
 - c. When we move from trust in god to trust in what we know or understand we have already abandoned faith.
 - b. We can see the problems that allowing our limited understanding to control our faith can have in a trip Jesus made to his hometown:
 - i. Mark 6:1-6 *Jesus went out from there and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him. 2 When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? 3 "Is*

not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him. 4 Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household." 5 And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And He wondered at their unbelief."

- ii. What happened? Everywhere Jesus goes He heals people and performs miracles, but when he goes to his home town, the bible says that "he could do no miracle there" and "he wondered at their unbelief."
- iii. When we look at the Canaanite woman, the Centurion (foreigners) and then the people from Jesus home town...it is strange, but faith appears where it is least expected and falters where it should be thriving!
 1. Why do the people from Jesus home-town have trouble believing?
 2. The answer is found in the way that they talked about him:
 - a. *"Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?"*
 - b. They allowed their reasoning and limited understanding about what they **thought** that they knew about Jesus to keep them from believing in what He could do. *(reason doesn't have all the facts!)*
 - c. Just like us, their **understanding can be a barrier to faith**.
- c. Is it abnormal to struggle with trust and faith?
 - i. I don't know anyone who has not struggled with trusting God instead of themselves.
 - ii. It is natural, normal for physical beings (us) to struggle with trusting in an UNSEEN Spiritual Being.
 1. I struggle plenty with what I DO see.
 2. Martin Luther struggled against doubt and depression.
 3. A church once delayed Dwight L. Moody's application to join because his beliefs seemed so uncertain.
 4. Read almost any of the biographies of folks who became people of faith, look at the lives of the bible and you find that every one of them struggles with doubt.
 - iii. Theologian Frederick Buechner says that a relationship between an invisible God and visible humans will always involve an element of doubt.
 1. *"Without somehow destroying me in the process, how could God reveal himself in a way that would leave NO ROOM for doubt? If there were no room for doubt, there would be no room for me!"*
 - iv. If you are struggling with trusting God in the midst of a situation, you are in like company.

1. if you don't have any doubts you are either kidding yourself or asleep. Doubts are the ants in the pants of faith. They keep it awake and moving. - Frederick Buechner

d. Faith is trusting enough to risk:

- i. There is a story about a Donkey in a 14th century allegory who confronts 2 equally attractive, but distant bales of hay. The animal hesitates, stares, hesitates, stares some more because he can't decide which is best. So he starves to death without making up his mind.
- ii. An element of risk is at the root of trust.
- iii. Faith involves stepping out without a clear end in sight and maybe even no clear view of the next step. It means trusting, holding out a hand to an Invisible Guide.
- iv. *Faith is reason gone courageous.* (Thomas Graham) (WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?)
- v. **Faith is not the opposite of reason, but just is not satisfied by reason.**
 1. Flannery O'Connor says, "*When we get our spiritual house in order we'll be dead. Don't expect faith to clear things up for you. Faith is trust not certainty.*"

e. Has your faith been shaken lately? Are you struggling with trusting God when things don't make sense?

- i. What do we do when we suffer, when our prayers aren't answered the way we want them to be. What happens when God doesn't fit in the nice neat box we've made.
- ii. Christians get sick, live in poverty, lose their hair and teeth and wear glasses at the same rate as non-Christians. In fact, Christians die at the same rate: 100%.
- iii. We don't have a magical god, that we can manipulate to do our will. That is witchcraft.
- iv. We are here to do God's will, not the other way around.
- v. Jesus himself prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me, yet not my will but your will be done."
- vi. There are two kinds of adherents to the Christian faith in churches today:
 1. One says "if all goes well, if my life prospers, if I'm happy, if no one I love dies or gets sick, if I'm successful, THEN I will believe in God, say my prayers, and go to church and give what I can afford."
 - a. Ted Turner, Most of you have heard of Ted Turner. He is the founder of CNN, TNT, TBS, etc. He is a very successful businessman, a billionaire and a well-known critic of Christianity. In fact he has publicly stated, "Christianity is for losers."
 - b. What is not so well known is how Mr. Turner became so anti-Christian? According to numerous newspaper articles as a teenager, Mr. Turner aspired to become a missionary but lost his faith when his younger sister, Mary Jane, contracted an immune system disease that eventually killed her. "I was taught that God was love and God was powerful and I couldn't

understand how someone so innocent should be made or allowed to suffer so".

2. The other says, "though evil may prosper, though I sweat in the garden of Gethsemane, even if I must drink the cup of Calvary, I will trust the Lord who made me and gave Himself for me. Job cries, "Tho He slay me, yet will I trust Him!"
 3. Affluent Christians pray for relief from their trials, but persecuted Christians (in China) do not pray for relief but for strength to bear the trial!"
- f. Faith boils down to a choice to trust God as a part of a relationship with Him
- i. Abraham climbs a hill with his son
 - ii. Job scratches boils
 - iii. David hides in a cave
 - iv. Elijah mopes in the desert
 - v. Moses cries for a new job description
 - vi. They all made a choice. To endure and trust or turn away.
 1. There are many who failed this test: Cain, Samson, Judas –
 2. Don't give up even when IT doesn't make sense.
 3. Faith that cannot withstand testing, cannot be trusted.
 4. An old black preacher put it this way: "If your faith fizzles before the finish, it was faulty from the first" (Author Unknown).
 - vii. **Faith like Job's, like David's, like Elijah's, like Moses', it cannot be shaken because it is the result of having been shaken.**
- g. The great theologian Soren Keirkegaard, noted "God would not contradict Himself, even when He APPEARS to be doing so." He concluded that the purest faith emerges from such ordeals. "Even though I do not understand, I will trust God regardless."
- i. Doesn't God seem to frustrate us?
 1. A tire goes flat on the way to the hospital, the sink backs up just before company arrives, a friend lets you down when you need him the most, you get laryngitis just before a big presentation. Did God arrange all of those frustrations in the same way He arranged our blessings?
 - ii. Do we make the conclusion, God doesn't love me or God is not fair!
 1. Do we wonder why a loving God doesn't intervene more often on my behalf?
 2. Who is this ABOUT anyway? (sounds like its about Me)
 3. -- Warren Wiersbe - Beware of cut-and-dried theologies that reduce the ways of God to a manageable formula that keeps life safe. God often does the unexplainable just to keep us on our toes -- and also on our knees.
- h. **True faith REASSEMBLES the events of life around TRUST in a loving God** (not around ourselves or our own understanding or perspective)

- i. Trust – you wait for a friend and he is late. Do you cuss and moan and groan, or do you know from years of friendship that he is normally reliable.
 - ii. Phillip Yancey said, “*Those I love, I credit for good things and try not to blame for bad, assuming other forces are at work. Together we develop a trust and love.*”
 - iii. Learn to take everything, without exception, as God’s action; and ask Him to show you what you can learn from it and how it may glorify HIM (its about Him, not you).
 - iv. Use nothing to judge God’s character, because we are creatures and have a “puny point of view!”

- 5. **Verse 6:** He tells us to “*Listen for God’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go, He’s the one who will keep you on track.*”
 - a. Listening to God instead of our own selves requires a great degree of trust.
 - i. We rely on instinct, our smarts, our experience, but this passage tells us that **Trust is evidenced by waiting and listening to God.**
 - b. Lily Tomlin, the comedian, is not usually quoted from pulpits, but she once quipped, “*why is it when we talk to God, we call it prayer... but when God talks to us, we call it schizophrenia?*”
 - c. Trusting God involves letting Him guide us even when we don’t know where we are going.
 - i. I mentioned last week that we all need to spend more time listening to God. It is one of the key components to learning to trust Him. Turn off the TV, stop DOING stuff for an hour and talk to Him, Listen to Him, and journal.
 - d. If you aren’t sure how to hear God, we had “Hearing God” classes here a few years ago. I would be happy to have another one for you. If you need help hearing God, I encourage you to take the tear off from your bulletin and write on it, “I would like to learn how to hear God.” Drop it in the offering basket. We will have a bible study if you need it to learn how to hear Him. We will even hold it in someone’s home if you don’t want to go out at night.
 - i. Folks, don’t make excuses for not hearing God.

- 6. **Verse 7-8:** *Don’t assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil! [8] Your body will glow with health, your very bones will vibrate with life!*
 - a. We humans.....no matter what time period we’re discussing.....always think that we know all that there is to know. We just know the world is HOTTER now than at any time in its past (even though thermometers were only invented 300 years ago).
 - i. Is understanding a crutch or a cane? People often describe religion as a crutch that people lean on, but this passage makes it sound like reason and understanding are the crutch that keeps us from finding wholeness and healing.
 - b. This passage has a wonderful promise. *Run to God. Run from evil Your body will glow with health and your very bones will vibrate with life!*
 - i. I don’t know about health food but this sounds much better. Take the exhortation to lean on God and not on your own understanding. Run to God. Stop thinking you can figure it out. Stop trying to figure it out.

- ii. When you stop all the running in place, you will find God and you will find physical health to match your spiritual health. The Bible promises us in James 4:8, "*Come near to God and He will come near to you.*" He is waiting for you! Don't rush. The objective is to spend relaxed uninterrupted time with God, not to go through a format.
- iii. I'm not going to say you will never get sick again. But I can positively say that seeking God with your whole heart is the prescription to health.

What will you do today? Will you stand stubbornly and keep trying to figure it out. Will you second guess God like the person who refuses the anesthesia? Or will you rest in Him, knowing His character and letting Him be God?

I urge you to let Him lead you, like a shepherd today. Let's pray.