



Trust

Exodus 14:31 NIV

And when the Israelites saw the great power the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

Are You Trusting?

When God made it clear to me and I mean perfectly clear that He wanted me to spend my life doing Christian work helping people, it was not so easy for me to go ahead and follow through. I could say that I trusted God with my future and could give inspiring speeches describing my decision to do as the Lord directed me and yet all of that meant nothing actually if I never did anything about my certainty that God wanted me to do something specifically. I had to register for a college that I believed God wanted me to attend. I had to quit my job. I had to pack my things. I had to arrange for a way to get to the airport. And then, I had to leave behind my family, friends, home, financial security and step aboard the plane that would take me to Missouri. There was no way around it. To actually trust God in this matter of entering full-time Christian ministry, I had to do something physical, something that meant trusting. I had to do something trusting.

If I were to ask you how God would know you trust Him, what would the physical evidence of that be? What could you point to when you are at school? As you sit in class or while you are hanging out with your friends, would there be any sort of behavior on your part that would clearly indicate you trust God? As you evaluate your spending habits, is there something in your budget that shows a definite trust in God or are you lacking in clear signs of trusting God with your paycheck? Does how you do your job and the way you interact with your co-workers make it clear you trust God? Do your actions at family gatherings provide a clear indication that you have really trusted God or

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would those there say it is just talk? If you are at a conference with your child's teacher, do you do things that show you really do trust God or would your trust in Him be mostly invisible? What about your normal routines reveals the level of trust you have in God? Is there something about how you drive or the way you handle things at the store that indicates you really do trust God fully? What is the evidence of your trust in God?

You cannot get very far in the Bible and not come up squarely against trust. Trust is one of the most important themes found in the Bible and it is the defining mark of many of the most important people described in it. Often people are put to the test by God to see if they really do trust Him and sometimes they don't make the grade. There is a long string of believers and unbelievers in the Bible and some we look like and others look nothing like us. Trust though is rarely a gray area but at times it can be unclear where the line is that indicates we have trusted God. When the nation of Israel was commanded by God to enter into the Promised Land there was only one way trust could be actualized. The people had to step down the bank of the Jordan River and bring their people with them and put themselves right where the water could come roaring through the valley and destroy them. God did hold back the river but they could have no way of knowing it was for certain God doing it or that He would protect them from the stacked up river until they walked through the v where the river had been. Until they went down the bank, they were not trusting people. Trust in God was a clear and certain place, not an intellectual or spiritual assessment. Of course the miracle of the missing Jordan River made it a perhaps easier to trust God but no less a physical act that had a certain amount of trepidation.

Gideon was told by God that He was sending the farm boy out to lead Israel in battle against the Midianites. The exact word was that he was going to "save" Israel from Midian's domination of them. Now after this declaration and command, God did give Gideon a miraculous sign to encourage him but to trust God in this, Gideon had to do something. He had to slaughter his father's choice ox, destroy the pagan altar his father had erected and build a new altar dedicated exclusively to the Lord. He risked by doing so the wrath of his father and the violent retribution of the people of the town who were ardent Baal worshippers. Gideon could say he trusted God all night and all day but until he wrecked the pagan altar and drained the blood out of his father's ox, he did not actually trust God. Trust was completely tied to specific actions. A clear and obvious miracle did precede the trust but nonetheless, Gideon did the thing and that was where the trust actually was in a real place and time...not just within an imaginative whimsy.

Ruth is a bit of a different case, much more like our own. Ruth as far as we can tell never experienced a miraculous sign, at least not one that moved completely outside of the realm of the natural world; nothing like an angel ascending in a flame or a rushing river piled up into the air. Ruth was a widow who lost her husband and decided to go with her mother-in-law to the land of Israel and settle with her there. She made a pledge to her mother-in-law that she would trust the God of her mother-in-law explicitly and be loyal to her for life. That was no small commitment when she found herself impoverished and far from home. Yet Ruth was determined and she worked hard to earn enough money to feed herself and Naomi. A wealthy landowner by the name of Boaz let her tag along behind the harvesters and pick up what the harvester dropped or missed and this went on for quite some time. But Naomi, wanting more for Ruth,

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hatched the plan to try to induce Boaz into choosing to marry Ruth. This involved Ruth sneaking into Boaz's barn after dark and then hiding there until Boaz came into the barn after feasting and drinking when she saw him and offering herself to Boaz for marriage. It was a risky plan. There was the possibility Boaz might reject her offer and even humiliate her for being so forward. Boaz might want nothing to do with a foreigner such as Ruth and she might, if Boaz betrayed her, be permanently marked as a loose and corrupted woman not short of a prostitute. It was indeed dicey for her and in its own way, the stakes were high.

Ruth though could not say she trusted Naomi or the God she loved if she stayed outside the barn. The circumstance might have been complicated and the possibilities of her action perhaps countless but it was a quite simple matter when it came to trust. Either Ruth did the act, went into the barn and showed herself privately to Boaz there in the dark, or she didn't, and that would decide whether or not she trusted Naomi or God. No miracles were available to push her along, no certainties in it to make the decision easier. Ruth could either trust God and do the thing, or not trust Him and walk away from the matter. The outcome at this point is irrelevant. Trust had to come before she could find out what God might do with her. There was no other way in this. Trust was meaningless without the act.

One more example and we will have made our point clearly. Stephen, the first of the Church's deacons was arrested by the Jewish authorities for His bold preaching and persuasive ability to bring people to follow Christ and was forced to testify before the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the Jews. Now he could quite easily have toned down his comments or even promised to cut back on his evangelistic efforts. But he trusted God and was determined to follow him whatever the cost. He believed and trusted in a heaven prepared for him and all those who gave their lives to Jesus. He had staked his life on it but not completely, at least not yet. As he continued to press his case for Christ as the promised Messiah foretold in Scripture, he could see the change in the room. Fuming with rage at his words, the members of the Sanhedrin grew increasingly hostile and for Stephen, dangerous. There came a point, and where that point was, we do not know from this side of it but Stephen had to know when it was, that Stephen was risking his life by saying more. Trust became the issue for him. Did he trust God not only with his life but also with his death? Was he willing to stake it all on Jesus Christ? There were no angels there to rescue him; no miracles brewing to sweep him out of danger. It was just hard and cold certainty that if he kept going, he would lose his life and then he would have to trust Christ with death. Trust was not a philosophical concept at that point, it was a physical determination of a real thing, keep preaching to the end.

The Kingdom of God is not made up of those who merely say the trust or think the trust; it is comprised of those who do the trust. They act. The rich young ruler went away sorrowfully because at the point of trust, he could only think of the trust; not do it. The hard and cold truth of this is that God is not going to give you a miracle or deliver you from the hardship or even the heartache when it is time to trust, you will simply be called to trust Him. The point of trust is not the thought, it is the act, the stepping into the Jordan River, the killing of the ox and the destruction of the altar, the entering into the darkened barn, the refusal to step down to save your life. Trust is the line crossed when

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you follow God into the darkened place where the outcome is unknown but you do what He tells you to do anyway.

Many say they trust God with their lives; far fewer actually do so. Is it possible that God wants you to do something but you haven't done it...or maybe you won't do it? Have you lost the chance of seeing what God might do with you and through you because you won't cross the line? Are you standing at the edge, waiting for some sort of sign or easing of the risk and God will do neither? He demands you trust Him by doing what He has already told you. Maybe he has told you to go to a Christian college. Maybe he has told you to break off a relationship. Maybe he is telling you to switch careers. Maybe He has given you an assignment like making it clear to someone how to become a Christian. Maybe He is telling you to start a cell group, train someone to be a strong Christian or strike up a friendship with someone who scares you a bit. It could be that God has told you to quit a job and trust Him with your finances or keep your mouth shut and trust God to deal directly with a person who irritates you or is making bad decisions. God might be telling you to forgive someone and trust Him to heal your hurt. The line you must cross if you are to trust Christ is not the line I must cross to trust Christ but it is an unbending line and we must do it if we are to know God fully, live with Him closely and do things that are great and wonderful and will be remembered eternally and celebrated forever. Why waste your life sitting at the edge when you can do the thing and see God, know Him and be a part of what He is doing? Imagine that. We can join God and be a part of His great and mighty work and be called partners with Him in the making of the Kingdom of God! But we must do the thing; we must cross the line and join Him there. Why be small and meaningless when you can join Him and be glorious! Trust God...by what you do!

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