



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

In God We Trust

The Ultimate Trust Fall – Proverbs 3:5-10
Tim Badal | February 4, 2018

We're hitting the pause button on our series in Acts and we'll pick it up again on Easter Sunday. During this pause we're doing an eight-week series called "In God We Trust." Our church is now looking at what it means to be financially free from debt. This may seem to be more practical than spiritual, but as we'll see, getting out of debt bondage is also a spiritual matter, apparently a matter with which our entire culture is struggling.

So as a church, we're taking two months to hopefully put our personal finances in order. Our small groups are going through Financial Peace University, and others of us are also going through what is called the Legacy Journey. Both of these help us understand how to manage our money to the glory of God, properly using our resources, not only to serve our own needs, but also to serve and honor God with every penny spent.

Then during our time together as a congregation, we want to look at the issue from more of a spiritual side—not that the practical is bad. We're focusing on the idea of trusting God, because if we can't trust God—not only with our money, but with our time and our talents and our families and our relationships—then we don't see God as being wholly trustworthy in every aspect of our lives and we'll never give Him the things we should.

The Bible says when we keep things to ourselves, we are fighting against God, rather than walking with Him. We've been looking at Scriptures that remind us that God is completely trustworthy, and today we're going to ask, "How do I begin to trust God in all facets of my life?" Our Scripture today is a famous Old Testament passage—Proverbs 3:5-10:

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. ⁹ Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; ¹⁰ then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

One of the highlights of my elementary school experience was a two-day, one-night trip that all fifth graders in my local elementary school went to a retreat center about an hour from our school. Now, we had been on field trips before, but never did we get to take a pillow, sleeping bag, deodorant and all the other things we needed. It was something that meant fifth graders were at the top of the food chain at our school. It was an awesome opportunity to get away from parents and feel a sense of independence.

So 75 of us got on a couple buses with chaperones and teachers, and we embarked on the journey. The theme of our trip was, "We cannot do things on our own. We need help." Even though that memory is receding, I remember my great excitement because we were told it would be a retreat full of activities. For a rambunctious young fifth grader, anything besides the classroom was a thumbs-up for me.

After we got there, we learned that every activity was something we could not do by ourselves. No matter our IQ or size or shape or abilities or weaknesses, everybody had a part to play, because everything required a team. That retreat culminated in the great reminder we all need: we can't live this life on our own. We can't accomplish things on our own; we need help. In order for that help to be given, we have to learn to trust. This was my first acquaintance with a trust walk.

For the first activity, some of us were blindfolded, which was new to me. The blindfolded kid was put on a stage with six or seven of us lined up behind. He was then to lean backwards and just fall, trusting that his classmates would catch him. I'm just going to



be honest with you. I was not a svelte fifth grader and I remember some of my classmates were pretty small. I was thinking, “I may have all the trust in the world, but I don’t know about this. I hope they ate their breakfast this morning, because I know I did.”

As we did the exercise, someone inevitably was fearful. The kids who were ready to catch them would not yell, “You dummy; you imbecile,” or some other derogatory term. Rather, they would clearly announce to the person, “We can catch you. We’ve got enough strength. Just fall back. Trust us.” Then they would add, “We haven’t dropped anyone yet.” But Tim hadn’t gone yet.

As we come to this Scripture regarding trust, God is calling us to what I’m going to describe as “The Ultimate Trust Fall.” When we come into life, we are in a very real sense blindfolded. We have no idea what the future will bring or what the world is going to throw our way. We have no idea whether tomorrow will be a great day or a day of great sorrow and difficulty.

God is saying to us, “Trust Me. Fall into My arms.” There are some of you who are saying, “I don’t know, God. Have You seen the numbers on the scale? I don’t know if You’re strong enough. I’m not sure You have the strength to carry me.” And God, like my classmates, affirms to us, “I haven’t dropped anyone yet.” In fact, the Bible says we are safe in the hands of God, and literally, not even the devil can pluck us from His grasp (John 10:27–30). So we need to ask ourselves, “Am I willing to fall into the arms of the almighty, all-powerful God, or will I try to live this life on my own?”

The book of Proverbs was written by King Solomon. He became the wisest man because he had asked God for wisdom, which God granted to him. Proverbs is a collection of Solomon’s wise sayings, which he compiled as a gift to his son—and to us, his posterity.

Even though our text was written over 2,500 years ago, this wisdom is still as true today as it was then. It is far better for us to trust God than to lean on our own understanding. But to live out this “ultimate trust fall” involves three things, which hopefully will help you better understand and apply this text.

Trusting God involves examining what this concept means.

In our English translations of the Bible, the word “trust” is found over 130 times. Do you think God desires us to know what it means? This is one of the most-used words in Scripture. God wants us to both understand and live out what trust means. Yet while we only have the one English word “trust,” there are seven words in Scripture that explain different kinds of trust. If we combined all of these, a literal translation might be “to throw one’s self down upon.”

How might we illustrate this? Well, as I look at you, there are hundreds of illustrations right here. You threw yourself down into the pew or the chairs. I don’t see any of you leaning on your own understanding. If that chair or pew broke, you would fall flat on your rear end—right? It would be ugly. Why? Because you’ve placed all your confidence in that pew holding you, plus all of you sitting in that same row. None of you are sitting up and lifting your back ends off the fabric. You’re resting in the idea that the pew or chair will hold you. You believe that piece of furniture is completely capable of holding you up.

But the Hebrew concept of this word covers more than this. Not only is there the idea of throwing one’s self down on something, but it also means to set one’s hope or confidence in something outside itself. It carries the idea of security. Trusting literally means fearing nothing. Putting this together, here’s a definition of trust: Trusting in God means abiding and resting in Him by discerning His goodness and greatness. It’s knowing that you are being protected, embraced and surrounded by His covenant love and compassion and favor, no matter the circumstances.

Trusting in God means you’re going to walk with Him. You can’t trust God one moment and then not trust Him the next, expecting good results. It means abiding and resting. “I’m going to throw myself onto the Lord. I’m going to trust Him with all my weight, with all my issues, with all my struggles. The reason I’m doing this is that I have discerned that God is altogether good and great, able to hold and uphold me. He will protect, embrace and surround me with His love.”

Not only do I trust that He will hold me up and protect, but He’ll do this in a loving, kind and gracious manner, which means I should have no fear of life—no matter the circumstances. This idea of trusting is closely connected to the idea of faith. In fact, trust and faith share many similarities, yet they are not the same. So trusting must be continual and based on knowing Who God is. Faith understands that God is going to respond in the right way.

In order to trust, three things are important:

Trust involves priority.

Here's a test to discover what it is that you trust. Where do you go when bad news comes? Who is the first phone call to? What's the first action? What's the first thing you run to? Whoever or whatever it is is what you're placing your trust in. If a bad situation happens and the first thing you do is get on your phone to check your bank account, you're trusting in your money to rescue you.

Maybe your first phone call is to another human, and you say, "I don't know what to do in this situation. I'm not sure where to go. I'm confused and scared. Help me, Mom. Help me, Dad. Help me, Spouse. Help me, Friend. Help me, Pastor." But that means you're running to them first. In an emergency, where do you go first? That person then is your priority.

Trust involves proximity.

Rewind back to my fifth-grade trust-fall experience. Let's say I'm going to do a trust fall and expect someone to catch me. But if there's nobody there, I'm going to be in trouble. If no one is close enough to catch me and I allow myself to fall, I will end up in peril. Trust requires that we be in close proximity to the people we are expecting to catch us. We have to be part of life with them. If there's a separation or distance, they won't be able to catch us in our time of need.

Trust involves history.

When we think of the one to whom we first turn, they have to be close and ready to take care of us in our moment of need. But we also need to know—and literally, to experience—that the one who is going to catch us has caught others in the past.

I was helping a family out of their car earlier. Mom and the kids were getting out, while Dad was parking the car. There was a baby in a car seat, so I said, "Let me help you out." I grabbed the car seat and started to carry it inside. Now, these people trust me, knowing I haven't taken a baby out of a car and then jumped into an unmarked cargo van and taken off with their child. They could trust that Pastor Tim would take their baby safely into the church. We have to have a history to know if someone is able to carry us in our hour of need.

Many of us here do not trust God the way He has called us to.

- First, it's because He's not first in our priorities. We turn to all kinds of other places—including to ourselves.
- Second, we can't trust God because we haven't kept close to Him. We haven't been abiding and resting in Him. Rather, we've pushed Him aside, thinking we don't need Him. Then when we do need Him, it seems He's too far away to catch us.
- Third, the reason we don't trust God is we're so busy reading our own history that we've not picked up our Bibles, which contain the history of God's faithfulness. Story upon story reveal that when people call on God, He has been unfailing in His love and faithfulness to His people.

Some of you may say, "I want to trust God." Well, how close are you to Him? How often do you turn to Him? How often are you reading the record of how He has taken care of those who have trusted Him?

Trusting God involves exercising a certain mindset.

Now that we understand something about the definition of trust and how we begin to trust, Proverbs 3 takes us to a certain mindset we need to have. Solomon says, "*Trust in the Lord.*" Some of us may not be spending enough time with the Lord to trust Him. Others of us may not know He's altogether trustworthy, so we turn to other things. But how do we trust in the Lord?

We are called to trust Him entirely.

Remember, trust means to throw one's self on to something or someone else. You can't say, "God, I trust You with my spiritual life, but I don't trust You with my physical life. I trust You with part of my income, but not all of it. God, I trust You with my house, but not my car. I trust You with my marriage, but not my children. God, I trust You with a project, but not my job." You cannot separate these.

Some of us trust God on certain days of the week, but then on other days we lean on our own understanding. Solomon says, "Trust the Lord with all your heart..." The word "heart" refers to our entire being—the "command center" of all we do. The Hebrew people spoke of it as the source of every thought and action. We're being told to throw our entire being on Him. So we are to trust God with all we are and in all we do—physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. We are to trust Him with both the easy and the hard parts of our lives. In matters both large and small, we are to throw ourselves into His hands, saying, "God, catch me."

We are called to trust Him exclusively.

Nowhere are we told that we should trust in ourselves, other people, possessions, products or programs. Rather, it says, *“Trust in the Lord...”* The psalmist reminds us of this truth when he says, *“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God”* (Psalm 20:7). Trusting is a conscious decision. We have the ability to trust in worldly things, like chariots and horses. But as followers of Christ who have been saved by His grace, we are to choose to trust in the name of the Lord our God.

The greatest enemy to trusting in the Lord with all our hearts is ourselves. Solomon says we must throw ourselves on the Lord with all we are and with all facets of our lives. Then he adds, *“Lean not on your own understanding...”* Yes, God has given us a brain and common sense. So what does this refer to? He is speaking of the pattern of the world which says there is no God, so we view ourselves as god for ourselves.

The pattern of trusting in ourselves essentially says, “There is no God, but if there is, He has no impact on my life. I’m in charge, therefore I’ll put faith and hope in myself—in my thinking, plans, desires and dreams.” You might say, “Well, Tim, I don’t do that.” Notice the phrase, “Do not lean.” We’ve spoken of how we must throw or thrust ourselves into the hands of the Lord. But now it speaks of leaning, which is sort of half-trusting.

When Noah was about seven, my family was in a shopping center. He was an independent little boy and said, “Dad, I want to go look at this game.” I told him no, he needed to stay with me. But it wasn’t long before he began inching farther and farther toward that game. Being the wise father—to the chagrin of his mother—I let him go farther and farther away. He didn’t know that I was keeping a watchful eye on him.

I wish I’d had a camera to capture the look on his face. As he wandered farther away from me, he was filled with glee. “I am on my own. I’ve got no parents to lead me. I can buy anything I want (even though I don’t have any money). I can go to whatever aisles I want, spend as much time as I want.” He was filled with an independent joy he hadn’t known before, until...

You see, some of us love that feeling of independence. We say we trust in the Lord, but in reality we’re leaning on our own understanding. We love that sense of freedom to do what we want whenever and however we want. We love the ability to spend our money and time on the things we desire. It gives us joy, until...

So back at the store, 15 minutes had elapsed, and Noah was going wherever the wind took him. But then it dawned on him, “Where are my parents?” His game was done. I watched as he spun in circles; his face turned from joy to dread. “Is Dad watching?” Again to the chagrin of his mother, I left him there. I wanted Noah at his young age to realize that in this world there will be a lot of temptations—a lot of things to draw his attention. But he needed to stay connected to someone trustworthy—a friend or parent or, most of all, a trusted God. As terror struck Noah, he began to cry. “Dad? Dad? Dad!” So I came to him slowly and said, “Son, where did you go? I’ve been looking for you.” He said, “Dad, I went to that aisle, then I saw this, then I saw that...and then I got lost.” I said, “Son, you were lost way before you got to that aisle.”

Some of us here today find ourselves in a place we did not expect. Yes, we enjoyed the wind in our hair, the thrill of independence, the opportunity to do whatever we desired. Then a consequence arose, our shoulders slumped, and we cried out, “God? Where are You?” And like a good father, God sometimes lets us stay in those places in order for us to learn how much we need to trust Him rather than ourselves. So perhaps you can see that you’ve been leaning far too much on your own understanding rather than trusting and leaning on God.

We are called to trust Him exactly.

We are to trust God entirely, exclusively and exactly. The text goes on to say, *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways...”* In all your ways. You can’t just trust God at this moment and think you’re good for the week. Whether at home or in the workplace or in your community, whether you are surrounded by believers or non-believers, in everything you do, you are to be trusting Him. God is exact on that. He doesn’t say, “Give Me 50% of your trust.” That’s a misnomer. God doesn’t say, “Give Me trust for half the week. Trust Me with half your paycheck.” He says, “Trust Me with everything.” We are to trust Him with everything we do and everything we say.

Someone has said the best prayer for trusting the Lord is this: “Lord, I trust You in any place, at any time, no matter the cost.” But we might pray, “God, I’ll trust You, as long as You don’t change the direction of my life.” “Lord, I’ll trust You, as long as You let me serve in my cushy middle-class life.” “God, I’ll trust You if You allow me to do what I want when I want.”

But God says, “No, you’re going to do it My way or you can keep leaning on your own understanding.” I will tell you, though, when you trust in yourself, the Bible calls you a fool. We read in Proverbs 11:28, *“Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.”*

You have a choice to make. I have a choice to make. Am I going to wake up tomorrow morning with an “open hand” approach which says, “God, I am Yours. Use me, mold me, help me serve You in whatever way You want. I am secondary—You are primary.” We have to trust Him exactly.

We are called to trust Him explicitly.

Sometimes our trust is broad, yet we fail to narrow it down to a specific step. To say we trust Him in all things is a little vague. So Solomon gives us a very simple and practical way we can trust. In Proverbs 3:9, he says, *“Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce.”* In other words, start with your pocketbook.

Jesus tells us our treasure is where our heart is (Matthew 6:21). If we treasure money, that’s where our hearts will go. If we treasure possessions, our hearts will go there. God is seeking our hearts. Remember, it says, *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart...”* As we saw last week, our heart is directly connected to our pocketbook by some nerve that can’t be detected on an MRI. The way we use our money reveals what we trust in. Do we trust in the Lord or do we trust in our stuff? Do we trust in the Lord or do we trust in our portfolio?

Solomon says, *“Honor the Lord with your wealth.”* Respect and esteem Him. Show Him that you trust Him and you’re willing to follow that trust with your finances. Proverbs 28 says whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish. We must be open-handed with our wealth and with our entire lives.

In Matthew 19:16–30, Jesus met a man who wanted to trust Him. This man, who was young and wealthy, asked Jesus, “What must I do to follow You?” Jesus asked him, “What are the great commandments?” The man responded, “I’ve followed all those commandments—to love God and to love my neighbor.” Jesus then said, “Go and sell all you have and come follow Me.” The Bible makes it clear that the man went away disappointed.

There is a connection between our money and our trust in God. I love living in a country where our money actually says, “In God We Trust.” We have no excuse! Yet how often do we trust those bills in our wallets more than the God Who gives them to us? Solomon explicitly tells us, “Trust the Lord with your finances.”

To do this we must elevate God.

Solomon makes this clear. *“In all your ways acknowledge Him...”* We are to revere Him. Proverbs 3:7 says we are to fear Him. We are to respect, honor, worship and esteem Him above ourselves, above our spouse, above our stuff. He is to become our all in all. Which means we should see Him for Who He is.

Acknowledging God is to acknowledge His existence and attributes. He is the Creator Who created all that is seen and unseen. He created you and me for His purposes and His glory. We need to remember we are way less than He is. The One Who calls us to throw ourselves into His hands already has us there. He chooses when we’re born. He chooses when we die. He orders the events of every human being. Not a single thing happens without His direct written consent.

He’s telling us, “You can either fight Me on this or you can walk in lock step with Me all the way.” We have to acknowledge Him by elevating Him. Therefore we are to ask, “God, what do You want me to do today? Regarding this purchase, should I be making it? Regarding this relationship, what is Your will? Regarding my plans and dreams, are You in them? I will wait until I hear from You, because You have veto power in my life. You are the God of the universe and I want to acknowledge Your authority.”

To do this we must eliminate sin.

Our Scripture tells us that not only are we to acknowledge God in all our ways, but we are also to fear Him by turning away from evil. Proverbs 3:7 says, *“Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.”* Our problem is that instead of acknowledging God, we become wise in our own eyes. Instead of honoring Him, we honor self. Instead of saying, “You are the all true and all wise God” we say we are wise. But we must turn from these evil ways.

We cannot trust God and pursue the sins of the flesh. We cannot trust God and have a haughty mindset. We cannot trust God and then simply do what we want to do. Those things are mutually exclusive. We must elevate God and eliminate sin. Then and only then can we trust Him for Who He is.

Trusting God involves embracing God's clear motivation

Our proverb today finishes with a clear motivation for trusting God and we need to embrace this. God doesn't tell us to simply trust Him without knowing the result. Rather, He says this is some of what we will receive from Him. Remember though, this isn't called the Book of Promises. It's the Book of Proverbs. These are not guarantees in the sense that if we do A, B will automatically follow.

Trusting God positions us well for a life of clarity.

The first benefit of our trust is that we are given clarity. God will make our paths straight. This means He will lead and guide us. Like a Good Shepherd, He knows our needs. He will lead us to green pastures and by still waters. He will give us everything we need for the restoration of our souls (Psalm 23).

Some of us need clarity right now. The reason we don't have it may well be that we're trying to live this life on our own. We are finite, and with our limited abilities and understandings, we can't always see how our world operates. Instead, we should turn to the God Who oversees the entire game plan, Who is telling us, "I can lead you through this." God brings clarity.

Trusting God positions us well for a life of vitality.

In Proverbs 3:8, we are told that God gives us vitality. When we trust and honor the Lord, *"It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones."* There is a physical benefit that comes to us. "Healing to your flesh" is literally "health to your navel." What does that mean? Our navel is in our mid-section and every one of us has one. Our belly-button once had an important purpose—to nourish us from our mothers when we were still *in utero*. The implication is that God will nourish us as we trust Him. He won't lead us into a desert and leave us there. He will provide all the nourishment we need for the journey. He will sustain and care for us, giving us all we need.

Not only will we be nourished, there will be *"refreshment to our bones."* That can also be translated, "marrow to our bones." Marrow is that which keeps our bones from becoming brittle. God promises not only to feed and care for us, He will also strengthen us. We have seen people walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet they fear no evil. How can they have that peace? It's because God is nourishing them. Even though their physical bones may be failing, their spiritual bones are strengthened through their trust in the Lord. So when difficult situations come to us, our trust allows God to minister to us and strengthen us in that hour of need.

Trusting God positions us well for a life of plenty.

Changing images from the body to our possessions, Solomon says when you honor the Lord with your wealth, *"then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine"* (verse ten). Before you think this is a prosperity theology, remember that when God gives us plenty, it is always because He expects us to live generously. Don't think, "My barns are full. My vats are bursting. It's a good day for me and I get to keep it all." No, God has blessed you—just as He did Israel—to be a blessing to others.

It's really great when we learn to say, "I've trusted God in my hour of need and He has taken wonderful care of me. He has given me all I need and so much more. I want to testify to you that trusting God is key, therefore I'm giving you the very thing that might cause my trust in Him to erode. Here are some of my resources. I pray that this causes you to realize the blessing that comes when you also learn to trust in God."

Who needs clarity today? Who needs vitality? Who is in a place of lack, needing plenty? Turn to God. Throw yourself on Him. The Bible says He will make your paths straight.