

# Trust the LORD, Distrust Yourself

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 23 February 2020

Preacher: Shawn Woo

[ 0 : 00 ] In Proverbs, chapter 3, verses 1 to 12. My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments.

For length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you. Bind them around your neck.

Write them on the tablet of your heart, so you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes.

Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. Honor the Lord with your wealth, and with the firstfruits of all your produce.

[ 1 : 16 ] Then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine. My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline, or be weary of His reproof.

For the Lord reproves Him whom He loves, as a father, the son in whom He delights. This is God's holy and authoritative word. Most of you, like I do, probably know a health guru or two.

The person who keeps up with all the health fads, experimented with the alkaline diet, the gluten-free diet, the vegan diet, paleo diet, the Whole30 diet, the Mediterranean diet, Atkins diet, keto diet, I don't even know what half of these are.

The person who keeps up with all the exercise fads, I think this is probably before most of us, but Taibo, right? P90X, Insanity, Barefoot Running.

Remember those Vibrams? Zumba, Yoga, Spinning, or CrossFit. Most of you also probably know a productivity guru or two. The person that reads all the self-help books and eagerly applies all the productivity tips to ensure success and happiness in their life.

[ 2 : 35 ] Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking*. David Allen's *Getting Things Done*. Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Or Marie Kondo's *Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*.

Certainly not underselling it, right? Life-changing magic. I mention all these to show you that people are generally very interested in health and well-being, in happiness and success.

Now what if I told you that I have discovered something that will increase your length of days and years of life and fill your life with peace?

Something that will give you favor and good success with both God and man. And if you believed me when I told you that, you would do everything in your power to acquire that very thing.

And that's precisely what this passage of Scripture offers, although I will qualify and explain that as we go. It teaches us that we should trust the Lord fully and distrust ourselves.

[ 3 : 47 ] That's the main point of this passage. We should trust the Lord and distrust ourselves. First, in the first half, there's an exhortation to trust in the Lord. In the second half, it gives us specific examples of trust in the Lord, what that looks like.

It begins in verses 1 and 2 this way. These first two verses set the pattern that the rest of this passage will follow.

The odd number of verses contain the commands that we have to follow, the commands of God.

The even number of verses contain the consequences, the rewards that will follow if we obey God's commands.

And as I said two weeks ago, the son that is in view here, that's being addressed here, is not a specific individual, but a generic category that includes all of God's people.

In fact, in Exodus 4, verse 22, God explicitly calls the nation of Israel, his chosen people, my firstborn son. So God reveals himself to his people as father and calls his people his children.

[ 4 : 59 ] And so this is, and this is partly why God takes paternal relationships so seriously because our earthly fathers are meant to be representatives of our heavenly father to their children.

And so scripture repeatedly places a premium on the responsibility of parents to rear their children in the instruction and discipline of the Lord. And that's why Proverbs assumes this parental voice and perspective when it says, for example, in chapter 1, verse 8, hear my son, your father's instruction and forsake not your mother's teaching.

And if we do not forget our father's teaching but let our heart keep his commandments, that's the command, then our keeping of these commandments will lead to this. It will add to us length of days and years of life and peace.

That's the consequence. That's very similar to the fifth of the Ten Commandments which Paul quotes in Ephesians chapter 6, verses 1 to 4. Children, obey your parents and the Lord for this is right.

Honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with a promise that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

[ 6 : 14 ] Because God intended our parents to function as his representatives and messengers, he expected us to honor our parents and to heed their teaching, their words.

And when our parents bring us up in the instruction and discipline of the Lord and we honor them and heed their words, then it would go well with us because we'll be following God's words and we would live long in the land.

Verses 3 to 4 continue this exhortation. Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you. Bind them around your neck. Write them on the tablet of your heart so you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.

Steadfast love and faithfulness in verse 3. It's parallel to the Father's teaching and commandments in verse 1. So these two attributes, steadfast love and faithfulness, sum up the Father's ethical teaching.

This is what your life should look like. This is how you should live. And it's not a coincidence that steadfast love and faithfulness are frequently paired throughout Scripture to sum up the attributes of God.

[ 7 : 18 ] When God reveals himself to Moses in Exodus chapter 34, he describes himself as abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

His steadfast love means he is not fickle. His love for us doesn't fluctuate. He loves us with an unchanging, covenantal love.

He's loyal to us. God's also faithful. The word behind faithfulness, the Hebrew word behind faithfulness is sometimes translated as truth. It's a reference to God's faithfulness to his character. He's true to himself. He does not deviate from who he is. He's not contingent on changing circumstances or moods. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever.

He's always faithful and true. That's what faithfulness means. As 2 Timothy 2.13 says, If we are faithless, he remains faithful for he cannot deny himself.

[ 8 : 23 ] That's who he is. It was God's steadfast love and faithfulness that assured God's people of his enduring commitment to them. And so then, when Proverbs 3.3 tells us, Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you, it's telling us that as objects of God's steadfast love and faithfulness, we should be characterized by steadfast love and faithfulness.

We should reciprocate what God has done for us, given to us. It's referring to keeping our end of our covenant relationship with God, our obligations, our responsibilities.

Psalms 26 describes it this way, To live with steadfast love and faithfulness, then it's to live trusting the Lord without wavering.

It's a life of faith. That's what it means to put on steadfast love and faithfulness. Like a wedding ring that you never take off, as God's people, we are to keep steadfast love and faithfulness near our hearts always.

Wear it always. Engrave it on the tablet of our hearts. And so then, steadfast love and faithfulness, they're not some generic, a-religious, moral qualities that anyone can follow.

[ 9 : 52 ] These are profoundly religious attributes. One cannot live with steadfast love and faithfulness without faith in God.

This is confirmed by verses 5 to 6. It says, Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways, acknowledge Him and He will make straight your paths. Notice the repetition of the word all. The command to trust in the Lord with all your heart requires exclusivity.

We are not to be divided in our allegiance to Him. We are not to serve other lords or to be devoted to other masters. Rather, we are to trust in God with all of our heart. And likewise, we are to acknowledge God in all our ways.

That implies not just that our commitment to God is exclusive, but that it's also exhaustive. It's comprehensive. There's nothing that it doesn't touch.

[10:57] Everything in life is supposed to be filtered through our devotion to God, our allegiance to Him. So do you trust in the Lord with all your heart or do you trust Him with half your heart?

Or do you not trust Him at all? Is there something or someone else that you trust? Do you lean on your own understanding? There's so many self-help tips out there along the lines of trust yourself, believe in yourself, bet on yourself.

But this is prideful and self-serving advice that's unbecoming of the Christian. We are commanded here to trust in the Lord and distrust ourselves.

There are too many people in the world that think they know exactly what they are doing and what everyone else should be doing. Leaning on our own understanding is like leaning on a broken crutch.

We should instead trust in the Lord with all of our heart. So let me ask you, what drives your decisions and actions? Is it the Word of God or is it your own will?

[12:16] Are you shaped by the teachings of God's Word or are you shaped more by your own desires, your impulses, your experiences, your past, and your feelings? What is the key or the legend that you use in your life to determine what is true or false, what is right or wrong, what is good or bad, what is beautiful or ugly?

What is the key that you use to determine those things? We can't assume that human reason or intuition or conscience can bring people together and be consistent and reliable.

They are not. All of those things are shaped by our personal and cultural context. People's reasoning is often very and demonstrably unreasonable.

People's intuitions and consciences frequently misfire. That means our reasoning needs to be sanctified by God's Word and our intuitions and consciences too must be calibrated according to the Word of God.

As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 10, 5, we destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

[13:39] So do you filter every thought, every idea through the Word of God? Do you dare to risk yourself, your life, to believe and obey everything that God's Word teaches in every area of your life?

I'd love for our church to get in the habit of asking ourselves, is this thought or is this idea corroborated or contradicted by a passage in Scripture?

And God's Word is bound to challenge us from time to time, perhaps more frequently for some of us than others. Why?

Because God is God and we are not. If God always agrees with us, as one preacher said, we probably created God in our own image.

He's just an idealization of our own desires, not God. And we should get in the habit of testing our decisions and actions by the Word of God as well.

[14:46] We should cultivate a functional dependence on God in our day-to-day life. And we can't assume that just because we've been a Christian for some time that this is something we're already doing.

There are people who have been Christians for decades who trust in the Lord theoretically but do not trust Him functionally. They rely on their own understanding in the way they actually live.

To illustrate, many of us, many of you are diligent in your life and perhaps not consciously but subconsciously you live with the mantra, God helps those who help themselves.

But that's the indifferent and really distant God of deism that's not speaking of the loving and personally present God of Christianity.

By this, I don't mean that God doesn't use means. I don't mean that we should passively resign ourselves to whatever happens. The book of Proverbs leaves no room for passivity or laziness on our part.

[ 15 : 54 ] But too many of us use our diligence and busyness to mask our lack of faith in God. We use the fact that God holds us humans responsible for our decisions and actions as an excuse for distrusting divine sovereignty.

I think that's why we love this often told parable. I'm sure you've heard it. I don't know if it's a joke or a parable. A fellow was apparently stuck on a stranded on a rooftop because there was a flood and he prayed to God for help.

God, please come and rescue me. I have faith. I'm relying on you. And so God sent or I already blew the joke. So a rowboat comes around and offers to give him a ride.

He says, hey, come, jump in. I'll help you. And then the guy goes, no, no, no, no. I've been praying to God. I have faith. I'll wait. And then later a motorboat comes by and says, hey, jump in. Let me get you out of the flood.

And he says, no, I've been praying to God. I'm just going to wait. I have faith. And then finally a helicopter comes. He's literally about to sink. And the helicopter comes and says, come on, climb onto this ladder and I'll rescue you.

[ 17 : 12 ] And then he says, I have faith. I'm not going to go. And of course, he dies. He drowns. And then he goes to heaven because he did have faith.

And he asks God, he brings God to task. God, I prayed with faith. Why did you not come to rescue me and leave me to die stranded in the flood?

And then God replied, I sent you a rowboat and a motorboat and a helicopter. What more did you expect? God does use means.

I'm not denying that. God often uses people. He often uses you. But this does not mean then that the man stranded in the flood should have swum frantically trying to save himself without any recourse to God without any reliance on God.

That's not what it looks like to live a life of faith. There is an important difference between trusting God to provide through people and trusting people in the place of God.

[ 18 : 21 ] God to trust to use you and trusting yourself. A big difference.

A telltale sign of whether or not you're trusting God is the vibrancy of your prayer life. Is prayer an optional thing that you tag on to the indispensable work that you do with your own hands?

Or is prayer an indispensable work that calls upon God's indispensable work to bear on your life? Do you have a habit of taking things into your own hands?

Verse 6 is in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths. It doesn't say pave your own way. It doesn't say forge your own path.

It says depend on God, acknowledge God, submit to his authority, align yourselves to his purposes and priorities and then he will smooth out, straighten your path.

[ 19 : 36 ] George Mueller was a 19th century Christian minister famous for his life of radical dependence on God. When God first put it in his heart to build orphanages, he had only two shillings, equivalent to have 50 cents in his pocket.

And he fundraised 400,000 pounds, 7 million dollar equivalent, without making his financial needs known to a single human being.

Only by praying to God. In response to his prayers of faith, people sent him money, left and right, God even though he never asked anyone, never told anyone of the need.

So he founded and directed the Ashley Down orphanage in Bristol, England and cared for over 10,000 orphans during his lifetime. He established 117 schools that offered Christian education to more than 120,000 people.

And in his autobiography, Mueller writes about how he learned to trust God so completely. Quote, when a trial of faith comes, we are naturally inclined to distrust God and to trust in ourselves, in our friends, or in circumstances.

[ 20 : 52 ] We would rather work a deliverance of our own than simply look to God and wait for his help. But if we do not patiently wait for God's help, or if we work a deliverance of our own, then at the next trial of our faith, we will have the same problem.

We will again be inclined to try and deliver ourselves. With every fresh trial, our faith will decrease. On the contrary, if we stand firm in order to see the salvation of God, trusting in him alone, our faith

will be increased.

I know this example makes some of you uncomfortable. It should. It should. I don't think all of us should live as George Mueller did.

I wish all of us could. But I don't think all of us should, because not all of us have George Mueller's faith. To do such things without faith is presumption.

A testing of God, not faith in God. But I do think all of us should push the envelope bit by bit every day to become more and more radically dependent on God.

[ 22 : 17 ] Is there a way you can be more dependent on God and less dependent on yourself today? I can assure you that God can get more things done without our help than you and I can imagine.

After the general exhortation to trust in the Lord, we are given specific examples of trust in the Lord in the rest of this passage. It says in verses 7 to 8, Later in Proverbs 26, 12, it says that a person who is wise in his own eyes is worse than a fool.

There's more hope for a fool than for a person who is wise in his own eyes. Why? Because a fool is ignorant, but the man who is wise in his own eyes is ignorant and prideful. Confident in his ignorance.

He's impervious to instruction and correction. And the antidote for that, being wise in one's own eyes, is fear of the Lord. Because fear of the Lord combines the knowledge of God with humility before God.

It deals with both our ignorance and our pride. To fear the Lord, as I've been saying over this series, is to live every waking moment before the presence of, under the authority of, and for the glory of God.

[ 23 : 42 ] That's what it means to live in the fear of God. It means to live with faith in God and with humility before Him. And the fear of God is evidenced in our turning away from evil, it says.

To turn away is the word that's often rendered, repent. Is there a sin in your life that you have not turned away from? Sin that you condone, that you hide, that you rationalize?

Is there a vice that God is calling you to renounce in your life right now, that you think God doesn't see or care enough about? If you fear the Lord, you would turn from it.

And that would be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. Whenever we see promises like this, we ask ourselves, is this promise true? Or is this just naivete?

Okay. Aren't there plenty of people who fear the Lord, that don't have health and healing? Proverbs is not unaware that, in some cases, wicked flourish and prosper.

[ 24 : 58 ] That's why Proverbs 23, 17 says, Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the Lord all the day. The fear of the Lord brings many temporal blessings, generally speaking.

But because we live in a sinful, upside-down world, sometimes fearing the Lord and living with the fear of God brings injustice and persecution. In such cases, we are not to envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the Lord, trusting that God's justice will ultimately prevail.

And that there will be eternal blessings. Verses 9 to 10 teach us about another way in which to trust God practically. It says, Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce.

Then your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will be bursting with wine. The Hebrew word behind the word honor literally means to count as heavy, to give weight to someone.

So then to honor the Lord with your wealth, then it's to give weight to God in the way you use your money. It's very helpful to think about it this way because that gets us away from this kind of minimum requirement mentality.

[ 26 : 15 ] God, how much must I give so that I can spend the rest of it for myself? What is the requirement? I'll do it. Just tell me where the line is so that I can have this under control and live the way I want.

This command doesn't allow for that. Honor the Lord with your wealth. God's concerned about the balance of it all, the weight of it all.

Is your budget weighted toward God or toward yourself? Will someone who looks at your budget say, God is counted heavily in this budget?

Or will the person not even know that you believe in God? We are to honor the Lord with the first fruits of all of our produce, he says.

First fruits refer to the first produce of the season and the first offspring of one's livestock that God's people were expected to bring as an offering. It's a form of tribute, an acknowledgement that we are

a people under God's authority and that all of our blessings ultimately come from God.

[ 27 : 30 ] And it's the first fruits, not leftovers, that are required. We're not to give God the worst things, but the best things.

We don't merely give what is expendable to us, we give what is expensive to us, costly to us. This is so countercultural because in our society, we live in a society that trusts in capital, not in God's worth, not in God.

The way we use our money will often reveal whether or not we actually trust God to provide for us or whether we're trusting ourselves to provide for ourselves.

Job 31 puts it this way, verses 24 to 28, If I have made gold my trust or called fine gold my confidence, if I have rejoiced because my wealth was abundant or because my hand had found much and my heart has been secretly enticed and my mouth has kissed my hand, this also would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges, for I would have been false to God above.

To trust in your wealth below is to be false to your God above, to distrust God. Proverbs 18, 10 to 11 mocks trusting in wealth this way, The name of the Lord is a strong tower.

[ 29 : 08 ] The righteous man runs into it and is safe. A rich man's wealth is his strong city and like a high wall in his imagination. Your wealth might make you feel safe and secure, but it's only an illusion because true safety and security is found in God alone.

At any given moment, there are billions of possibilities, things that can happen to you.

You think money will protect you from that? Certainly, it's possible to neglect responsible saving in a sinful, ungodly way.

Spending things we shouldn't be spending, indulging in ourselves, not being generous. But it's also possible to save more than we should, to compensate for our lack of faith in God through saving.

In the parable of the rich fool in Luke 12, 13 to 21, Jesus rebukes the rich fool who says to himself, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years.

[ 30 : 34 ] Relax, eat, drink, be merry. God says to him, Fool, this night your soul is required of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?

So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God. Are you rich toward yourself or are you rich toward God? Where is the balance of it all?

Where does the weight of it fall? This is not advice you'll hear from people in Wall Street. They're always talking about the risk of living too long, the unreliable investment returns, the unforeseen medical expenses, warning us that you can never possibly save enough.

But if our functional trust is in our own ability to provide for ourselves rather than in God's provision, we will never be rich toward God. But if we're rich toward God, God promises in verse 10, then your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will be bursting with wine.

That's literally new wine, which refers to the first drippings of, I guess, of juice from grapes before it's pressed, before they're trodden upon in the wine press.

[ 31 : 59 ] It's the most potent, the most delicious part of the wine, new wine. Your vats will overflow with this new wine. God's not saying, God's saying he's not going to be stingy with you.

He's going to give you the best affair. You're going to have plenty to eat and drink. Once again, Proverbs is not unaware that there are exceptions to this rule.

But exceptions do not disprove the rule. They actually, by their very existence, prove the rule, that it applies in all the other circumstances. But even if your situation is the exception, Proverbs 16.8 says, Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice.

Hold on. Continue to fear God and live faithfully for Him. Even when you don't have much, trust in God and not in your riches. And you will ultimately be rewarded.

Heavenly treasure will be yours. The sage gives us one more example of trusting God in verses 11-12. My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of His reproof.

[ 33 : 13 ] For the Lord reproofs Him whom He loves as a father, the son in whom He delights. If you don't trust in the Lord, you will despise His discipline and reproof.

Isn't this true? Isn't this how our parents raised us? Isn't this how we raised our parents? Raised our parents? Raised our children? Sorry. Please don't try to raise your parents.

This is how I treat my kids. It seems like nowadays, parenting is increasingly a kind of lazy affair.

Just let them be. Let them take the course of life. let them figure out things for themselves. Let them discover their true selves. I don't know where that idea came from.

My kids would be dead already if I let them do that. Kids, by definition, don't know what's best for them.

[ 34 : 31 ] That's why they have parents. And parents who don't discipline children and teach them right from wrong that parents don't correct their misbehaviors are not being good parents.

They're neglectful parents. Likewise, God says, if you want me to care about you, if you want me to invest in you as my child, as my son and daughter, beloved children of God, I am going to be in your life.

And there will be discipline. And that's not something to dread. It's not a sign of God's displeasure. It's not a sign of God's hatred.

It's a sign of God's love. God's love. But if you don't trust in God, when your life is miserable, when things are not going the way you want, when you're suffering, when you're sick, when you're not making as much money as you want, when people are not nice to you, when all of these things happen, you're going to start to get insecure.

You're going to start to resent God, be bitter toward Him, because your trust was not in the Lord, but in your circumstances. When we trust in the Lord and distrust ourselves, verse 4 promises, you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.

[ 36 : 11 ] If we are honest with ourselves in the ultimate sense, yeah, sure, in a relative sense, maybe we are behaving properly, we're living righteously, and we experience favor with God and man.

Relatively speaking, that may be true, but speaking absolutely, there's not a single person in this room, not a single person on earth that lives to deserve this favor and good success in the sight of God and man.

because we have all sinned. We have all failed to trust God. But there is one man that lived this way.

Luke 2, chapter 2, verse 52 describes Jesus this way. It says, Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.

Jesus trusted in God his Father perfectly and he increased in favor with God and man. He was the obedient Son of God that conducted himself always with steadfast love and faithfulness.

[ 37 : 28 ] He was the one that fulfills all of these promises. His life should have been characterized by longevity, health, eternal, endless riches.

But he dies in poverty, in suffering, unjustly persecuted on a cross.

What happened to your promises, God? What about these Proverbs? And here's where we find hope.

Jesus is the obedient Son that's characterized in this, described in this proverb, but in order to make all of us the rebels, the disobedient children of God, sons and daughters who have brought shame and reproach to the face of our Father in order to bring us and reconcile us to God, in order to give us these blessings that we have cut ourselves up from.

That's why God the Father sends His Son Jesus to die on the cross for us. That's why He hangs on that cross so that we might experience these promises.

[ 38 : 56 ] Have you trusted in Jesus who fulfills this word for you? Have you trusted in Jesus who fulfills this word for you?