

## Trust - The Path to Full Relationship with God

Glen Elliott - July 1, 2018

**Series Big Idea:** Trust is the only way to please God. To say to God, “I trust you” and really mean it, is a great gift to God. There is no better way to worship him. There is no better way to say, “I love you.” Trust is the only way we can learn to become selfless and move beyond self-pity. Trust is the only way to eliminate fear and anxiety. In this series we’ll explore what it means to selflessly trust God. We’ll explore what trust means, the benefits of trust and how we can actually stay on this journey of trust through all the things that attempt to crush trust.

**Message Big Idea:** The Bible says that without faith or trust it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). What does it mean that trust is essential to please God? Does this mean we must do religious things for God to like us? No. Not at all. God is pleased when we seek him! God wants us to trust him to direct our lives. He wants us to experience that he is worthy of our trust. He wants us to have that kind of deep authentic relationship with him. Trust goes beyond believing that God exists, as many many people do, to actually saying “yes” to God in the normal and challenging aspects of life. Trust is the only path to experience a full relationship with God. We trust God that he is for us, he will guide in the right ways, and that he has our best interests in mind all the time. So in trust we say “yes” to God. The more we say “yes” to God the more we’ll experience the depth of a relationship with God.

**Main Idea:** Trust is the only way to really experience and please God.

**Main Text:** Hebrews 11:1, 2, 6

### Reflection/Discussion Questions:

1. Share a time when you really needed to trust God. Maybe it was a time when you were at the “end of your rope.” How did you respond? In what ways did you need to trust God? Were you able to trust him? If not, what kept you from doing so?
2. When you struggle to trust God (and we all do at times), what causes you to hesitate or resist fully trusting him?
3. Hebrews 11:6 says: ***And without faith it is impossible to please God.*** How do you understand that statement? Why do you think it is impossible to please God without faith or trust? What does it mean to please God?
4. We often hear people suggest that faith is trusting God to fix a bad situation or relationship. Have you ever experienced faith as trusting God to change you through a bad situation or relationship? How is asking God to transform you also be an act of trust?
5. What are you currently facing that requires that you trust God? In what ways does God want you to trust him more? What will that look like? How will trusting God please him?

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### Message:

Hi everyone! I'm just coming off my vacation. Over the last 10 years I've learned I need a time every year where I just unplug from my work life. It doesn't matter what I do or where I go during that time, as long as I unplug. This break gives me new energy and focus. And I got to watch two of our services online. What a great experience. I'm so grateful and proud of our team who makes that possible! So I'm ready to go and today we are going to start a new series about trust.

Here's why we are going to dive deeper into the issue of trust. Every new year I encourage us to prayerfully pick one word to focus on for the entire year and invite God to help us grow however he wants to grow us in relation to that one word. We've done this now for 4 years. And here's what I've noticed. Trust is one of the most common "one words" selected. Why? We struggle to trust God. It is hard to trust someone we don't see and hear his verbal voice. It is much easier to trust our own plans and manage our own lives. It feels risky to trust God. So for the next few weeks we are going to look into what it means to selflessly trust God.

Daily life tests our trust. And there are certain seasons and circumstances that really test our trust. There was one experience that tested my trust probably more than any other. God had opened a door for me and my family to investigate doing mission work in the Soviet Union - a communist country in which we were considered enemies in what was then called the cold war. Very few people had tried to do something like this and there was very little information available. So we decided to live there for 10 months to see if this was even feasible.

So there I am, having just moved, an American in the Soviet Union. It was November and I was walking down a street in Ukraine. I still remember every detail all these years later. It was gray... the sky was gray with a light snow falling. The buildings were gray. It even seemed like the people were gray (the streets are dirty so folks don't wear clothes that have any bright colors). I remember actually stopping on the broken sidewalk trying to stay warm in my Russian hat. I asked myself: "What am I doing here? I have no business being here. I don't know the language. I don't know the culture. I've never done anything like this before. How stupid could I be to bring my young family here." At that time my kids were 5 and 7! Fear and doubt filled me!

But I was also sure that God had called us to be there. For 5 years prior we had prayed for God to open a door like this. He did. God wanted us to walk through the door he had opened and use our lives to honor him. Would we now trust him to use us to do what he had planned? Yes, it took trust to go. It would take even more trust to stay. Would I trust God in this?

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God is trustworthy! He showed up in ways beyond my imagination. God provided people to help us navigate the culture and a foreign way of life. He even used a grandma to bring us milk each week. He opened doors for me to teach the Bible in a university to students learning English in an atheist country! Many of those young people came to faith and helped us launch a ministry that is today reaching throughout the Muslim world. God called us to trust him to do something new and strange and he was faithful.

But you don't have to go to a different far away place to be challenged to trust God. Everyday is a challenge to fully trust God. It is easy to trust God when life is going great and we have everything under control and we are able to work our plan. But will we trust God in the unknown, the obscure, the unsure, the undefined? Will we trust God when things are out of control or at least where we have little control? Will we trust God when there's a total lack of clarity and when the future is at best ambiguous? Will we trust God when all of a sudden we get news of cancer, or our company downsizes, or we just sense God is calling us to do something new that we've never tried before? We will trust God and his ways in how we approach our relationships, marriages and sex?

Trust is key to honoring God. Let me ask you a question. Don't answer it out loud. I'm not trying to manipulate a "right" answer. I want you to really think about this. Do you want to honor and please God? If so, the Bible tells us we can only please and honor God through trust. Turn to **Hebrews 11:6 (pg. 823 - NIV) - *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*** This is a profound verse. It is one you can spend days just reflecting and meditating on and I encourage you to do this. The statement of fact here is that it is impossible to please God without faith or trust. Just to be clear - faith and trust are the same thing. In the original language the New Testament was written there is one root word that gets translated into English as believe, faith and trust.

What does it mean that trust is essential to please God? Does this mean we must do religious things for God to like us? No. Not at all. God is pleased when we seek him and rely on him! That's how that verse ends - "*he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*" Trust is core to allowing God to direct our lives. He wants us to experience that he is worthy of our trust. He wants us to have that kind of deep authentic relationship with him. Trust goes beyond believing that God exists, as many many people do, to actually saying "yes" to God in the normal and challenging aspects of life. I want to live my life in such a way that pleases and honors God, and that is only possible as I trust him.

So here's my point today. **Trust is the only way to really experience and please God.** That's what Hebrews 11:6 is saying. We must trust God that he is for us, he will guide in the right ways, and that he has our best interests in mind all the time. Trust has confidence that God and his ways are the best. So in trust we say "yes" to God. The more we say "yes" to God the more we'll experience the depth of a relationship with

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God. The more we say “no” to God, the further we keep ourselves from experiencing the goodness and trustworthiness of God.

And when we trust him, there’s a promise. He rewards those who diligently seek him! When we seek God, trust him and say “yes” to whatever he asks us to do, we get to really know him and see him work in amazing ways. We get to experience the living active God. We will only get to see God do amazing things as we trust him. Fact is, if you haven’t experienced much of God lately, it is likely that you haven’t really been trusting him.

Trust says I have full confidence in you God. I know you are good. I know you love me. I know you want my best. I know you’ll do what is right. I know you are wise and powerful. Now what God actually does might be different than what you or I want! Unfortunately we tend to think of trust as trusting God to deliver...to do this for us or protect us from that. There are many TV preachers who preach a message that we are to trust God to give us what we want and deserve. They present God as a kind of genie who grants our wishes.

Now, there is nothing wrong with asking God to fix or change our situation. But trust takes us deeper. When we are facing a difficult situation - trust doesn’t just ask God to fix or change circumstances, but it also asks what God wants to fix or change in us. Trust learns to ask God to lovingly change us even before he changes the circumstances. Do I only trust God to give me what I want or will I trust that he is good and that he has something good that he wants for me? Is God trustworthy when we pray for a miracle and he says “no?” Real trust trusts in the “no” as well as for the “yes.” Sometimes before he’ll fix someone else or a relationship, he wants to change us first. **Trust is the only way to really experience and please God.**

Now, let me put this one verse we’ve been looking - Hebrews 11:6 into context of the whole 11th chapter of Hebrews. The whole story of the Old Testament was a long history of God asking Israel to trust him. God’s main message is: “Trust me!” We have stories of people who did trust God and those who did not. We get to look back and learn from them. In our New Testament, written long after the Old Testament, we find this book called Hebrews. And chapter 11 is a whole chapter devoted to the faith or trust of 20 some people in the Old Testament like Abraham, Moses and so on. Look at how this chapter on trust or faith starts out:

**Hebrews 11:1, 2 (pg. 822 - NIV) - <sup>1</sup>Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. <sup>2</sup>This is what the ancients were commended for.** Now it is really easy to miss this point. Most of the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11 didn’t get to actually see what God had promised! God promised Abraham he would be the father of a vast great nation we know as Israel. He never got to see that become a reality before he died. People of faith often don’t get to see the full results of trusting God. We trust in God, not in the exact outcome we want! We trust

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God because he and his ways will always be good. **Trust is the only way to really experience and please God.**

So how do we get trust? What's the source of trust? Please listen carefully to this. Trust isn't self-generated! We can't just make ourselves trust. Trust comes from experience. Trust grows as we experience Jesus and get to know him better and better. As we experience his love and faithfulness and goodness our trust grows. Learning to trust is intentional and it takes time! To build trust - we have to learn to watch and pay attention to what God is doing. We watch others trust God and learn from them.

The book of Hebrews reminds us - without faith or trust "it is impossible to please God." Trust is the defining aspect of authentic discipleship. Will I allow him to be the Lord of my life and let him have his way? Do I believe that he is good? Do I experience that he loves me? Is he true? Will I trust him.....no matter what? **Trust is the only way to really experience and please God.**

Where do you struggle to trust God right now? Maybe you are struggling in a relationship, maybe it is marriage. Will you trust God and ask him to change you first? Will you trust God and apply his ways in how you treat or respond to the person? Maybe it is with finances. God asks us to trust him and give to him first before we pay our other bills. That requires trust. Maybe God has been asking you to do something that requires trust like sharing your faith, serving in some way or joining or starting a group? Maybe God has been nudging you to visit a new neighbor. Seek God, trust him and move close to him as you engage in that something that you know God has wanted you to do.

I want us to honor someone who has learned to trust God. Almost all of us know her. Robin Blumenthal has worked here for almost 14 years. She is our Family Pastor. Through Robin's leadership she has developed so many amazing programs for families. She developed our amazing Children's ministry program. She's responsible for our Feed My Starving Children event where we've packed and sent 1.4 million meals to children around the world. She started our Christmas December Nights and Easter New Life Celebration. She has taught Love and Logic to almost 2,000 parents. And folks, that is just the surface.

But that's not even what's most impressive about Robin. Many of you know her heart. She has worked with a lot of you and you know how she loves people. She has walked with many a family through difficult times providing amazing care and service. She has the gift of hospitality. She has a pastor's heart.

Just over two years ago Robin shared with me that she sensed God wanted her to move to something new. She was not unhappy here at Pantano and was very comfortable in her work. But there are seasons that in our comfort, God is ready to take us to a new challenge. So for these last couple of years Robin has been praying and seeking. Nothing was coming clear as she investigated where God might be leading her. This winter she told me that she was ending her work here the end of June.

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Frankly, I was in a bit of panic - but tried to hide it. It didn't seem wise and even her relatives thought she should not resign until she had a job to go to. But let me read Hebrews 11: 1-2 again: ***<sup>1</sup>Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. <sup>2</sup>This is what the ancients were commended for.*** She had confidence in her God who she can't see. She had assurance in God for the right outcome. She trusted God would not do her harm! So she resigned without having a ministry to move to. Some might say that was foolish. But it was in fact trust. Her relationship with God was so real that she was sure God had something for her that would be her next challenge. I am so grateful for Robin's trust in God. Robin, come on out!

Robin, you finished your last day here at Pantano yesterday. You are no longer on staff. You no longer will get a paycheck from Pantano. You stepped out on faith, trusting God to lead you where he wanted you. Tell us about your journey...

ROBIN: Thank you for letting me share Glen! I have to tell you that this has been a bit of a roller coaster ride. Kind of like the long, clankity trip to the top of the coaster. You know that the real ride is about to start - but you aren't sure which direction things are heading or exactly what is in store when you reach the top. As a bit of a "behind the scenes" look, for this past year I only knew for certain, that God was preparing me for something else. From about October through about March, I thought God was leading me in one direction with an organization in town. You and I spent hours talking, planning for a transition from here to there. Then, things changed and that door closed. Roger (my husband), you, our Executive Team walked the journey with me as I wondered "wait a minute God - I am not sure what you are doing." Apparently God isn't required to fill me in on all the details of his plans. If he did - then faith would be easy, right? During those couple months, I really had to lean into God. I still felt that he was preparing something; I still felt this sense of release from my time here. Setting an end date on my time here was my way of showing God "I trust you. I am stepping out of the boat and onto the water."

Within the next few weeks, God started to reveal his plan. It seemed like everywhere I turned, God was pointing me to 2 organizations - 4Tucson and CarePortal. In the beginning, I didn't even know if either had jobs or positions available. It was a bit like when you have reached the top of the roller coaster and the car just sits there a few seconds before descending. While you are up there (if you dare), you can look around and see the view. As I began talks with these organizations, I was like "this is awesome!" The job offer finally came - Education Domain Director with 4Tucson which includes serving as the Pastoral Ambassador for CarePortal. This sounded like EXACTLY what God had called and prepared me for! It was like putting your hands up in the air at the top of the roller coaster and saying "I am ready!"

If you have ever been on a roller coaster, maybe, like me, as you begin to gain speed going down - you think "was this really a good idea???" And you put your hands down and hold tight!" I remember a couple key moments when I had to grab a little tighter to

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my faith. Glen, you probably recall the discussion. We were in an Executive Team meeting and I was sharing that I felt God was calling me to 4Tucson and this unique partnership. And then I shared that I was scared and unsure because I now knew that this position would require me to raise my salary. I remember Chris Hamlin saying "You already did the hard part of faith - you stepped out of the boat." I said, "I stepped out of the boat with 2 months of a paycheck still coming and several weeks of unused vacation pay after that!" I figured if I didn't have a job at the end of that I could work in Fast Food at least - I know all the menus and I know how to move fast."

I was trusting God to provide...but I assumed it would be through a job that had funding attached to it. After I shared my worries and concern in this meeting, Roger says, "Did you just see Glen roll his eyes at you?" I remember turning to you and saying "Did you really just roll your eyes at me?" "YES, because if God is going to call you to something, he is going to give you the resources to do the thing he has called you too." I think I replied flippantly to you that it was easy for you to say that as you sit there collecting a paycheck :). BUT, your statement and proclamation really helped me. When 4Tucson called with the job offer a couple of weeks later, I accepted the position. I am so excited, but if I am honest, I am still scared. For me, stepping out of the boat was fairly easy. The challenging part will be to keep my eyes and focus on Jesus to provide for my needs. To place my hands in the air, in trust, for the ride and not be tempted to grab hold of the bar and close my eyes and say "tell me when it is over." I am over the top of the coaster and starting next week, the twists and turns of the ride will really begin. And my role is to let God lead the way and to be about my father's work. I recently heard someone say "Faith doesn't require anything but a 'YES'."

GLEN: So, tell us a bit more about what you will be doing with 4Tucson and this new partnership with CarePortal.

ROBIN: As the Education Domain Director, I will specifically work with schools and churches - forming unique partnerships, building bridges and creating opportunities to improve education and support healthier families within Tucson. This position will allow me to expand further with programs that Pantano has already been doing - like offering Love and Logic classes, hosting Good News School clubs, expanding the Feed My Starving Children Field trips, etc. Our Tucson schools are so important. As the schools and education go, so goes our children and our families and our city and our future. Right now, our city and schools have given us unprecedented favor as "God's Church with a capital "C." Schools are seeing that we, as God's people, can bring love, support and resources into our schools. I believe that this opportunity, these open doors, will not last forever and I believe that if we, as Christians, must rise up and show God's love by our presence, by our support and by our partnership.

As an additional part of my role with 4Tucson, I will also be serving as the Pima County Pastoral Ambassador for CarePortal. CarePortal exists to connect churches to local children and families in crisis. The Greater Tucson area churches are doing an amazing job helping children through CarePortal. Tucson has helped to meet 10% of all the

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CarePortal needs in the entire country! Pantano was the first church in Arizona to launch this amazing program and it has grown exponentially since then with 39 churches in Pima County. Because of the work and leadership of organizations like these, Tucson is being recognized as one of the **100 LEADING CITIES IN THE WORLD where God is working through Christians for Biblical city transformation** – and I am so excited to be a part of this movement! I can hardly wait to see what God will do in the coming months and years!!! I would LOVE to invite you to partner with me and be a part of what God is doing!

GLEN: You've been on staff here just short of 14 years. We are so grateful for all you've done to serve us. Thank you for all the sacrifices you've made and how you've loved us so well. Thank you. There is no way to fully express our gratitude. But lots of folks here wanted to express that so we've put together a collection of comments, letters, emails and cards from those whose lives you've touched. And we have a few gifts as a church we want to give to honor you.

ROBIN: I can't even begin to put my time here at Pantano into just a few words. It is most definitely bitter/sweet! I have loved my time here. I love coming to work every day and doing what I do. Pantano and you, Glen, as an "employer" has been a place that has allowed me to grow and develop. It has been a place of abundant grace and love and support. As a church home (it will still be my church home of course!) it has been a place that truly loves people to Jesus. A place that empowers and encourages all of us to live that out in our daily lives. Pantano is authentic. It is Real. It is full of people trying to follow Jesus. The staff, the Elders, the volunteers, the families, the seniors....every part of my time here has been amazing (and sometimes tiring - but that is mostly my fault because I am always like : "OH, that sounds fun....let's do it!"). I love this staff. I love our volunteers and I love this church!!

One of the things that I am most excited about is that God will be able to build on all the relationships I have made (both at Pantano and in the community) and the programs I have been a part of for this next season of work he has called me to. God won't waste any of the experiences I have had here. They will serve as a springboard for a quick transition and to build even more momentum. As a church, Pantano knows that there is much work to be done in our City. We have been leading the way in many arenas for years. We were early adopters for both 4Tucson and CarePortal, so while I am sad to leave, it really feels more like it was just time for me to move out of the house - but we are all still one family!

GLEN: Thank you. Close in prayer.