

Loving God Through Trusting

Series: First Love: Forming Our Love for God

Brad Bailey – March 12, 2023

Intro

Do you remember when someone you consider yourself to love... spouse...parent... friend... when you said... **“I want to stagnate this love... ?”** “I want my love **to fade and fizzle**...so that it doesn't really grab my heart.”

I don't imagine any of us do... but we know that it can happen...that what once had taken a dominant place in us... has faded.

> And the same is true with God.

When I first heard... my soul was home... and my heart was stirred by my love for God.

That love was a first love... and knowing that we can loose that first love... **our focus during this Lenten season...** is that of restoring our love for God.

PRAYER

Today...the role of trust in our love for God.

In our earthly love... there is **a process of trust that is essential to forming a true connection...** and especially the process of deepening that connection.

If we think about **an initial season of dating**...there is a process of connecting....and **beneath it lies a process of trust.** And it can eventually **lead to a decision to commit one's life** to the other person. And then a common change often comes... **having declared their trust...** the process of growing to know the other...to share and **risk more deeply often slows down.**

This can happen with God.

And the truth is that **we can't just go back to the initial rush** of when we fist began a relationship... neither with another person...nor with God.

But trust is something that we can always deepen... something we can continue to develop. **Trust is not something we just have... it is something we develop.**

Trust is **not something we are often conscious of...** or **focused on...**but it is **at work beneath our lives** all the time.

> Every day you are exercising trust...in nature...in things and people.

Sun would rise....Gravity. Chair. People.

Every exchange... between people...involves trust...from a simple greeting...to major commitments. Some level of **trust is required to carry out basic roles** and functions within a society.

And the trust is about the role that someone is in.

- We need trust in those **we buy things** from to properly exchange money with.
- We need trust in **an employer** to treat us fairly.
- We need trust that **a driver or pilot** can get us where we're going safely.

We are extending something...and when we **extend our trust...** and in so doing, **we are honoring** that we believe another will be trustworthy. [1a]

And **so our trust in God...is that which honors that God is God.**

Our trust in God is what honors God as God.

Trust establishes the nature of a relationship...who one really is to us.

When people feel that someone doesn't trust them to fulfill the role they are to have in their life... they **naturally may come to that point where they stop and say... “Do you trust me?”** One is recognizing that **despite what we may claim someone is in our life... they really can't be that if we don't trust them.**

- A **coach**... I need to know if you trust me or I can't really be your coach.

- A **dentist** might say..." You won't open your mouth... if you don't trust me then I really can't be your dentist."

And in the most ultimate of all relationships... God is calling us to trust Him for who He actually is. When God calls us to trust Him as God... it is because that is who He is... ... **and what only He can actually be for us... God. [1b]**

"Trust is the very dynamic that reveals whether God is our God."

He seeks our trust because He seeks us to know Him as God... because He is God.

This is a vital opportunity for us to be honest with God... and ourselves.

We probably all recognize that **words can be easier than reality**...that it is easier to say what we believe...than to actually believe... and manifest that reality with our actions... our trust.

The Bible uses another word that refers to trust... **it is "faith."**

Now the word "faith" in our current culture is often used to speak of the **set of beliefs...or propositions associated with a religion**. in this sense people speak of "The Christian Faith." And as fitting as that use of the word may be... it's vital that we don't think that we can simply believe in some set of propositions as some form of academic agreement. We can form a way of **accepting such beliefs without actually exercising faith in any way.**

And we can use the word "faith" in **a very sentimental way.**

- **"Faith" is a nice word**... positive... popular... but it has no real meaning until it is given substance...until I am living in a dynamic dependence on God.
- We can claim him to be our God... but what does that mean if not actually given that place in our lives. [2]

What we see in Jesus...is a **loving dependence** on the Father in heaven.

Jesus was rooted in a relationship that defined him more than any other.

He could not have been clearer.

He did not operate merely to serve his own human nature... nor to serve the wills and whims around him.

He lived out of a deep trust in His Father's love.

When threatened... he expressed that nothing would happen apart from His Father's will.

In his humanity, Jesus grasped the Father's position.

And that is what he was calling us to know.

We can live out of a deep trust in God's love.

And this is why He calls us to be like children...not in our simplicity of mind...but in our position of trust.

Matthew 18:2-4

Calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them. Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

This would have been a young child.

Children are in a position of having to trust in one of greater capacity and understanding.

In this sense, **children are more human.**

Maturing into adult humans in itself is good...but in a world given over to human pride... it comes with a loss as well.

Children don't presume that they control the world. Children have a better sense of our limitations and dependency. [3]

That is the relationship which God seeks...because it is the nature of reality.

And if they have caring adults in their life... they rest in a position of natural trust....

My rest in God is my greatest expression of love. Your rest in God is your greatest expression of love.

And this **inherently involves trust in a world they can't fully understand...and don't presume to be in control of.**

Our trust in God will transcend our full understanding.

By faith... when God called Abraham...he left everything... even though he did not know where he was going.

God had made Himself known to them in many ways... but they had to move from what they knew into what they didn't yet know.

We can trust what we can't understand...by what we do understand.

This is inherent to being finite creatures.

We have only existed in a temporal world... defined by time and space.

God sees infinitely more than we do.

Illust- Planning trip... I can see what the end of the day offers... that requires starting early... without that larger perspective... only faced with the hardship of getting up early.

> We are in different positions... I see the end connected to the morning.

In a far far greater way...**God is in a different position** than we are.

I am bound within time and space... and my thoughts can only think in the smallest most temporary terms.

God declared through the prophet Isaiah,

Isaiah 55:8-9

**"For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,"**

declares the Lord.

**"As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

God is in a different position...an infinitely different position.

You and I are bound within time... with only faint ideas of the infinite good of heaven.

When we experience the painful elements of life in this state... we naturally **just want to change the temporary circumstances.**

But God sees the length of human history as we know it... in relationship to eternity.

I am bound within the brevity of time... the brevity of my life.

I must realize that **if God brought an end to all that is bad** in this world to serve those in the past...I **would not exist.**

As the Apostle Peter wrote in the Scriptures,

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

So my trust transcends my full understanding.

And this leads to recognizing that...

Our trust is in God's presence with us and His ultimate good purpose for us.

Jesus knew that his disciples had wanted to see a change in their nation of Israel restored. Israel was now under Roman occupation. The people had become focused on their national identity. It deflated them.

Jesus wanted to make clear that what he brought would not be the end of trouble... and hardship.

John 16:33

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Jesus said in this world you will have troubles.

Jesus spoke extensively about what was about to unfold to his disciples...and **he tells them why... it's because he doesn't want them to become confused about what is happening...and what it means.**

As I shared as we began the year... I imagine many of us may feel like the pandemic brought changes we haven't recovered from...that the world is more a mess than ever... that the state of politics has been disheartening.

Jesus' disciples faced such times. And Jesus would say to us

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

You are expecting that God is going to show His reign through a simple takeover.

You will soon be grieving...when you don't see me...because I have been killed...but it is the process by which God is redeeming the world.

I have to confront the powers that rule this world... the powers of hate... the powers of death... to show the power of God's mercy.

It is through sacrifice that God is revealed.

There in his death we saw the love of God... defeat the powers of hate.

And something new began.

First, Jesus said God would now be present in all who receive them.

The Spirit of God would come...

John 14:1,16-17, 23, 27 (AMP)

"Do not let your heart be troubled (afraid, cowardly). Believe [confidently] in God and trust in Him....¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengthener), to be with you forever.... because He (the Holy Spirit) remains with you continually and will be in you.....²³ "If anyone [really] loves Me, he will keep My word (teaching); and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our dwelling place with him.

²⁷ Peace I leave with you; My [perfect] peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. [Let My perfect peace calm you in every circumstance and give you courage and strength for every challenge.]

God with us. First in the incarnate Christ...who saves...and now the Spirit who indwells.

He is with us in everything we face.

And secondly, God has revealed that he is working in all things to bring a greater good.

As we read in the Scriptures,
Romans 8:28 (NLT)

God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

God is able to work good amidst all things... even bad things... even hard things.

There is a distinction here than can be deeply helpful. It is between what is good and what is easy. **Good is not the same as easy.**

God cares intimately...and He is working amidst the bad to bring the good.

God is not here to simply provide for the temporary ease of this life.

And If you are trusting God to make life's current challenges easy... you will be entirely confused and disappointed.

Jesus calls us to trust God... **to see nothing as beyond the supernatural power of God.**

But Jesus is calling us into a trust of God to love us and bring a new kingdom to bear... **not to make this world our home.**

God **never promises that he will remove all the troubles** in this current age... that He will make life easy in this current age.

God promises to be with us... and to work all things together for our good.

And he is **showing what home is like**... with signs to that end when there is no suffering and separation.

Is Jesus my Provider and Healer? Yes. But in the most ultimate ways.

He comforts me with his presence amidst a world where suffering is still normal.

He provides for temporal needs...but He is **providing a home in Him... not trying to make this our home by making everything more comfortable.**

And so our trust is in God's presence with us and His ultimate good purpose for us.

What does this mean for how we trust God?

If we go shopping... and pray for a parking spot ... and if we get one...we think: "My how faithful is God"...and **if it's at Costco**...we think the heavens have opened and shined down on us.

The problem is that if we don't get a parking spot. If we think God has promised us to make life easier... **we will think He is not being God when he doesn't save us from troubles**...even earthly tragedy.

When in fact... God is being God... He is with us amidst it all...and working a greater good.

Even in that moment...I can know His presence... and discover something far more powerful than just comfortable circumstances.

And patience...and even pain can serve us in this world.... To help us know it is not our home.

The point is that our trust is in God...in His love for the whole world... in His sovereign work to redeem the world. He suffers with this world...even as His redemption is at work.

God has chosen to bring His presence and mercy into the suffering of this world... before judging it's defiance. His ultimate promise is to never leave us or forsake us. Jesus called those who follow him to know that he is now with us amidst the storms of life. Are storms comfortable scenarios? No. But he is there.

Our trust is in the reality that God is with us...and working all things together for good.... Including things which are not good in themselves.

Our trust in God is the means to our deepest peace.

As Jesus said...

John 14:27 (AMP)

Peace I leave with you; My perfect peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. Let My perfect peace calm you in every circumstance and give you courage and strength for every challenge.

He is now with us.

And he has brought the peace of his risen and reconciling life.

Jesus' first words to His disciples after His Resurrection were

"Peace be with you!"

- He did not say, "The **conflicts of this world** be with you." He said, "Peace be with you."
- He did not say, "The **secure comfortable** and risk-free life be with you." He said, "Peace be with you."

When we trust that God's goodness and presence is with us...we find rest... peace.

As the prophet Isaiah says,

"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You." -

Isaiah 26:3 (ESV)

Closing:

Psalm 143:8

"Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life."

PRAY

Week 3 - Personal Spiritual Exercise

Create some time and space to explore your trust in God. This week there are three exercises, from which you may choose any one or do each on different days. This will be served well by setting aside various times through the week ...times long enough to listen deeply. Take a couple minutes to get centered... to become mindfully present with yourself and God... by taking a few long slow deep breathes.

First Focus – Begin with asking God to show the source of fears that may be within you.

Pray the heart of the Psalmist. "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts." - Psalm 139:23

Our "anxious thoughts" are not bad in themselves...but they help us become aware of the area of life that we need to develop trust in God with. Listen to what you become aware of. Share this with God. Allow God to speak to you.

Second Focus - Using a journal for writing...or a digital device... simply consider and respond to the preface: "I trust in You because..."

Third Focus – Ask God to help you see your "next steps." Take a moment to focus on these words from the Psalms.

"Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life." - Psalm 143:8

"The LORD directs the steps of the godly. He delights in every detail of their lives." – Psalm 37:23.

A step is a movement forward. Ask God to show you what direction you need to take and what step he may be calling you to.

Resources

For Further Reflection:

Becoming Like Children: Trusting And Loving God by Scott Rogers - [here](#)

Notes:

1a. Faith flows from love.

1 Corinthians 13:13

"Now faith, hope, and love remain—these three things—and the greatest of these is love."

Faith, hope, and love are three key virtues of those united with Christ. But without love, faith and hope are empty.

There are several times in which both love and faith are bound together.

So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, - Ephesians 3:17 (NASB)

But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. - 1 Thessalonians 5:8 (NASB)

or we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints - Colossians 1:4(HCSB)

Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. - Proverbs 3:3-4 (NIV)

The apostle Paul wrote that there are some matters in life that are indifferent in regard to the Christian life; he was talking specifically about taking on ritual matters in the law of Moses. But then he says: "the only thing that counts is faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6).

So faith and trust are speaking of the same thing.... Trust (faith) is what God seeks...because it is what defines the relationship.

There is where love and faith are bound together.

In fact... there is nothing God seeks more.

It is the very core meaning of the word "faith."

Faith is an extension of our love for God.

The Bible is so filled with a call to have faith.

We are told that "without faith we cannot please God."

1b..It is a trust that is **distinct from our trust in other people.**

I see most people as worthy of basic trust...and potentially of deeper trust...but nobody can be trusted without limits.

Even if my wife might experience me as a faithful man... any such faithfulness is relative...

I am finite...flawed... forgetful...I get distracted... self-absorbed.

I saw a wall piece that said: "**When you love someone wholly, you trust them entirely.**"

> WRONG on human level...

No where does the Bible speak of trust in people in the same way.

Jesus explicitly notes there is a difference in the degree in which we can trust earthly fathers verses God our Father. Matthew 7:11 – "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"

2. Many of us may want to describe where our hearts lie, and assume we give to that; but Jesus turns it around,

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." - Luke 12:34

'Where our treasure is... what you are trusting in most...what we're most invested in for security...is where our heart lies.'

3. We hear this beautifully in David's Psalm:

Psalm 131:1-2 (GNT)

Lord, I have given up my pride
and turned away from my arrogance.

I am not concerned with great matters
or with subjects too difficult for me.

² Instead, I am content and at peace.

As a child lies quietly in its mother's arms,
so my heart is quiet within me.

Note: I had originally developed these points drawing from the text of Hebrews in which faith is described. The following portions connect to this subject and these points.

Hebrews 11:1-3, 6, 8-10, 13-16

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. ² This is what the ancients were commended for.

³ By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.

... ⁶ 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.

... ⁸ By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹ By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

... ¹³ All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. ¹⁴ People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.