

# 5-Day Devotional: Trusting Beyond Appearances

## Day 1: God's Timing Is Perfect

**Scripture:** John 7:6-8 - "Jesus said to them, 'My time has not yet come, but your time is always here.'"

**Reflection:** Jesus' brothers wanted him to go public immediately, to make a splash in Jerusalem. They judged success by visibility and numbers. But Jesus operated on a different timeline—God's timeline. He had six months left before the cross, and every moment mattered.

We live in a culture obsessed with now. Instant results. Viral success. But God's timing rarely matches our urgency. That relationship you're praying for, that financial breakthrough, that healing you desperately need—God sees the whole picture while we see only today.

Jesus wasn't losing when the crowds left him in chapter 6. He wasn't failing by staying in Galilee. He was exactly where God wanted him, doing exactly what God called him to do.

**Application:** What situation are you trying to control instead of trusting God's timing? Write it down. Now write this truth over it: "God's timing is perfect, even when I can't see it."

**Prayer:** *Lord, help me trust your timing even when it doesn't make sense. Give me patience to wait and faith to believe you're working even when I can't see it. Amen.*

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## Day 2: The Authority of God's Word

**Scripture:** John 7:16-17 - "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God."

**Reflection:** The religious leaders questioned Jesus' credentials. Where did he study? Which rabbis taught him? But Jesus didn't quote human authorities—he spoke with divine authority. His teaching came directly from God.

Today, we face the same temptation those leaders did: running Scripture through the filter of culture instead of running culture through the filter of Scripture. We ask, "What does society say?" before asking, "What does God say?"

Jesus makes a stunning claim: if you're willing to do God's will, you'll recognize his teaching as true. The issue isn't lack of evidence—it's lack of willingness to submit.

**Application:** Is there a biblical teaching you've been softening or avoiding because it conflicts with cultural norms? Ask God for the courage to submit to his Word, even when it's countercultural.

**Prayer:** *Father, your Word is truth. Help me receive your teaching with humility, even when it challenges me. Give me a heart that wants to obey, not just understand. Amen.*

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## Day 3: When Truth Gets Personal

**Scripture:** John 7:19-20 - "Why do you seek to kill me? The crowd answered, 'You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?'"

**Reflection:** Jesus confronted them with truth: "You claim to follow the law, yet you want to kill me." Their response? Denial and deflection. "You're crazy! Nobody's trying to kill you!"

But they were. And they knew it.

When truth gets personal, unbelief gets defensive. We make excuses. We blame others. We minimize our sin. Like Adam saying, "The woman you gave me," we point fingers anywhere but at ourselves.

Jesus didn't let them off the hook, and the Holy Spirit won't let us off the hook either. He lovingly confronts us because he wants us free, not comfortable in our sin.

**Application:** Is the Holy Spirit confronting you about something today? Don't dismiss it. Don't defend it. Confess it. God's truth confronts us because he loves us too much to leave us where we are.

**Prayer:** *Lord, I don't want to be defensive when your truth confronts me. Give me a soft heart that receives correction. I confess my sin and ask for your forgiveness and transformation. Amen.*

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## Day 4: Don't Judge by Appearances

**Scripture:** John 7:24 - "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

**Reflection:** On the surface, Jesus looked like he was losing. Crowds abandoned him. Religious leaders opposed him. Even his own brothers didn't believe. If you judged by

appearances, you'd think his ministry was failing.

But Jesus was in complete control, operating in perfect obedience to the Father's will.

We do the same thing in our lives. We look at our circumstances and judge by appearances: "This will never change." "God can't work here." "I'm too far gone." But righteous judgment sees beyond the surface to God's sovereign hand.

That difficult season? God is working. That unanswered prayer? God's timing is perfect. That impossible situation? Nothing is impossible with God.

**Application:** What circumstance are you judging by appearances? Ask God to help you see it through the lens of faith, not sight. Write down one truth about God's character that applies to your situation.

**Prayer:** *Father, help me walk by faith, not by sight. When circumstances look hopeless, remind me that you are sovereign and good. I choose to trust you. Amen.*

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## Day 5: Trust and Obey

**Scripture:** John 7:17 - "If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God."

**Reflection:** The sermon ended with the old hymn: "'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus, just to take him at his Word." That's the invitation today—to trust Jesus fully.

Not trust with conditions. Not trust when it makes sense. Not trust if we can see the outcome. Just trust.

Jesus' brothers wanted him to operate on their timeline, follow their strategy, and build success their way. But Jesus trusted the Father completely, even when it led to a cross.

The question isn't whether we have enough information. It's whether we're willing to submit. Are we willing to trust God's timing when it doesn't match ours? Accept his teaching when it contradicts culture? Submit to his truth when it confronts our sin?

**Application:** Complete these sentences:

- I will trust God's timing with...
- I will accept God's teaching about...
- I will submit to God's truth regarding...

**Prayer:** *Jesus, I want to trust you more. Help my unbelief. Give me grace to surrender every*

*area of my life to you—my timing, my understanding, my will. I trust you. Amen.*

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# Blog Post: When God's Timing Doesn't Make Sense

## Subtitle: Learning to Trust Beyond Appearances

Have you ever felt like God's timing was completely off?

Maybe you've been praying for years about something that seems like it should have happened by now. That job. That relationship. That healing. That breakthrough. And you look around at others who seem to get their prayers answered immediately, and you wonder: *What am I doing wrong?*

I recently preached through John 7, and this passage confronts our impatience head-on. Jesus is in Galilee, laying low, while his brothers pressure him to go to Jerusalem and make a name for himself. "Leave here and go to Judea," they demand. "If you do these things, show yourself to the world!"

They're essentially saying: *Jesus, you're not big enough yet. You need to go where the action is. You need more visibility, more followers, more success.*

Sound familiar?

## The Tyranny of "Now"

We live in a culture obsessed with instant results. We measure success by size, speed, and visibility. If it's not growing, it's dying. If it's not viral, it's irrelevant. If it's not happening now, it's not happening.

But Jesus operates on a completely different timeline.

"My time has not yet come," he tells his brothers. He's not interested in their strategy for success. He's not worried about optics or momentum. He's exactly where God wants him to be, doing exactly what God called him to do.

And here's what blows my mind: Jesus had six months to live at this point. Six months until the cross. You'd think he'd be in a hurry, right? You'd think he'd be maximizing every opportunity, going viral, building the biggest platform possible.

But no. He's in Galilee. Teaching small groups. Discipling his disciples. Waiting for God's

perfect timing.

## When Appearances Lie

If you judged Jesus' ministry by appearances in John 6 and 7, you'd think he was losing. The crowds left him. The religious leaders wanted him dead. Even his own brothers didn't believe in him.

But Jesus wasn't losing at all. He was in complete control, sovereignly working out God's plan for the salvation of the world.

And that's the challenge for us: **Don't judge by appearances. Judge rightly.**

That circumstance that looks hopeless? God is working.

That prayer that seems unanswered? God's timing is perfect.

That situation that appears to be falling apart? God is sovereign.

## Three Lies Unbelief Tells Us

As I studied this passage, I noticed three specific ways unbelief distorts our perspective:

### 1. Unbelief disregards God's timing

Jesus' brothers wanted results now. They wanted visibility, success, and recognition on their timeline. But Jesus trusted the Father's schedule completely.

We do the same thing. We tell God how things should go and when they should happen. We boss him around with our prayers: "God, you need to fix this by Friday." "Lord, I need an answer by the end of the month." "Father, if you don't come through soon, I'm going to lose faith."

But God's timing is perfect, even when it doesn't match our urgency.

### 2. Unbelief discredits God's teaching

When Jesus taught in the temple, the religious leaders questioned his credentials. "How does this man know his letters when he hasn't studied?" They evaluated Jesus based on cultural standards rather than divine truth.

We do this too. We run Scripture through the filter of culture instead of running culture through the filter of Scripture. We soften biblical teachings that don't align with modern sensibilities. We pick and choose which parts of God's Word we'll accept based on what's

socially acceptable.

But Jesus says his teaching comes directly from God. And if we're willing to do God's will, we'll recognize his teaching as true. The issue isn't lack of evidence—it's lack of willingness to submit.

### **3. Unbelief dismisses God's truth**

When Jesus confronted the religious leaders about their hypocrisy, they got defensive. "You have a demon! Who's trying to kill you?" They knew they were plotting against him, but when truth got personal, they lied and deflected.

When God's truth confronts our sin, we have two choices: confess it or cover it up. Unbelief always chooses to cover up. It makes excuses. It blames others. It minimizes the problem.

But faith confesses. Faith says, "You're right, God. I need you. I fall short. Forgive me."

## **The Real Issue**

Here's what Jesus makes clear in this passage: The problem isn't lack of information. It's lack of willingness.

"If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God" (John 7:17).

The religious leaders had all the evidence they needed. They saw the miracles. They heard the teaching. They knew the Scriptures. But they were unwilling to submit.

And that's often our problem too. We say we're waiting for more clarity, more confirmation, more certainty. But really, we're just unwilling to surrender control.

## **Three Questions to Ask Yourself**

As I closed the sermon, I offered three reflection questions. Let me offer them to you:

### **1. What situation do I desire control over instead of trusting God's timing?**

Is there an area of your life where you're white-knuckling it, trying to force things to happen on your schedule? What would it look like to release that to God and trust his perfect timing?

### **2. Do I trust the authority of God's teaching, or do I think my way is better?**

Are there biblical teachings you've been avoiding or softening because they don't align with cultural norms or your personal preferences? What would it look like to fully submit to God's

Word?

### **3. Do I submit to God, or do I downplay my sin when his truth confronts me?**

Is the Holy Spirit convicting you about something right now? Are you confessing it or covering it up? Are you defensive or receptive?

## **The Sweetness of Trust**

I ended the sermon by having our congregation sing an old hymn my mama taught me: "'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus."

*'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,  
Just to take Him at His Word;  
Just to rest upon His promise,  
Just to know, "Thus saith the Lord!"*

That's the invitation today. Not to understand everything. Not to see the whole picture. Not to have all your questions answered.

Just to trust.

To trust his timing when it doesn't make sense.  
To trust his teaching when it contradicts culture.  
To trust his truth when it confronts your sin.

Because here's what I know: God's timing is perfect. His Word is true. And his grace is sufficient.

Even when appearances suggest otherwise.

## **Your Turn**

What situation in your life are you judging by appearances right now? What would change if you chose to trust God's sovereignty instead?

I'd love to hear from you in the comments. And if this post encouraged you, would you share it with someone who needs to hear that God's timing is perfect today?

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