

Freedom from Fear

living by faith

Step 11

Welcome to Leg Two: Live Free

Jesus said, “You will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). Paul says, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1). In this second leg of Safar, we will learn to live in true freedom. In this step we’ll deal with one of the most common traps that hold us captive: fear.

Start Here

- What are some of the common fears we all face? Can you name at least seven?
- Which do you identify with the most? How does this fear affect your life?

Discuss

Fear cripples our lives. When we are fearful, it is very difficult to live by faith and follow God.

The challenge is that we all wrestle with fear. It creeps into our days, robbing us of strength and joy, keeping us from living fully.

- How has fear impacted you in the last two weeks?
- How have you made choices based on fear?
- How would the coming week be different if you were free of this fear?

Main Idea

Living in fear is not God’s plan for us. He offers us freedom. We believe in a God who is able to remove our fears through his power and love, and give us the strength to overcome them by faith.

God’s presence helps us overcome fear.

One of the names of Jesus is ‘Emmanuel’, that is, ‘God with us’. When God is with us, we have nothing to fear.

- If God is with us: then we are never alone. Everything we face, we face with God.
- If God is with us: then we have his strength and wisdom available in each moment.
- If God is with us: then our *Father* is in control of this moment. He has full authority and will work all things for our good.

Explore the Word

Reflect on the following passages. What does God say about fear?

- 2 Timothy 1:7
- Isaiah 41:10
- Jeremiah 29:11
- John 14:27
- Romans 8:37-39
- Hebrews 13:5-6

Which of these passages is meaningful in light of the fear you mentioned above?

Practice Together Now

We do not have to give in to fear. When fear intrudes:

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you overcome your fear.
2. Redirect your heart to Emmanuel, God with you.
3. Select a passage of Scripture to pray aloud (to start, use the ones listed earlier).
4. Choose to believe that God is with you and enough for you in this moment.

Work through this pattern together, applying it to the fear you identified above.

1. Holy Spirit, I ask you to help me overcome the fear of _____.
2. Jesus, I thank you that you are Emmanuel. You are with me right now.
3. Father, I thank you that you have told me in Isaiah 41:10 not to fear. You have promised you are with me, that I do not need to be dismayed, for you are my God. You will strengthen me and help me. You will uphold me with your righteous right hand.
4. Father, I choose to believe you now. I reject fear and choose faith in you in this moment.

Pray this again using different verses listed above.

Put it into Practice Daily

- Read Psalm 27 and reflect on every verse. Then answer the following three questions:
 - What fears has the writer of this Psalm experienced?
 - How has he managed to conquer these fears?
 - What does this Psalm teach us about God?
- Reflect on where fear is creeping in at the moment. Walk through the pattern you practiced together each time you notice fear this week.



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Thankfulness

the path of joy and peace

Step 12

Start Here

Recall a special gift you have received. Who was it from and when did you receive it? How did you feel? What did you do and say when you received it?

Discuss

Thankfulness is a powerful tool in our spiritual journey – one that doesn't always come naturally. We must practice.

- Why do we sometimes fail to give thanks?
- What are the benefits of being grateful?

Come up with seven things for which you are grateful to God.

Main Idea

Thankfulness reminds our hearts of who God is, the many benefits he pours out on us, and the work he is doing in our lives. As a result, we experience more of Christ's joy and peace.

Read Psalm 107:1-2

By actively giving thanks, we bring into focus that our God is good and loving.

We also see our own lives in perspective. Our wants and needs can often overwhelm us – intentional thanksgiving reminds us that our greatest needs have already been met, and that we serve a good Father whom we can trust for the rest. Whenever we express genuine gratitude, joy is stirred up in us whatever the circumstance.

Discuss

Read Philippians 4:4-7.

- Why do you think thanksgiving calms our anxiety and leads to peace?
- Come up with seven more things for which to be thankful – this time focus on who God is, not what he does.
- What are different ways we can express gratitude to God?

Explore the Word

We've looked at **why** we give thanks, and considered different ways we can do so. Let's look at the '**when**' and the '**what.**'

Read Ephesians 5:20

When do we give thanks: _____

- Throughout our day, we can practice being aware of God's goodness to us and give thanks. Continual thanksgiving will keep our perspective clear.

For what do we give thanks: _____

- Paul teaches us to give thanks for everything. But what about all the difficult moments of our life? How do we give thanks even when we experience hardship and pain?

Read James 1:2-4.

Some experiences can be very painful indeed, but even in that, we can be thankful because God is using those moments to shape us and make us complete.

- What can someone going through a financial challenge be grateful for?
- What can someone in the middle of a difficult relationship be grateful for?
- What can someone suffering physically be grateful for?

Even the hard things in life are worked out for our good when we trust God. Yes, we can give thanks in everything and experience the joy of the Lord.

Practice Together Now

Let's keep going! Add at least seven more things for which you are grateful to God. Try to include one area for which you have never yet thanked God.

Together express your gratitude to God for all the things you've listed today, asking him to increase joy and to guard your heart with his peace.

Now, take a moment to consider each other. What are you thankful for? Take two minutes to share why you are grateful for each other.

Put it into Practice Daily

- Every morning in your personal time of devotion ask the Holy Spirit to give you a humble and grateful heart. Use these verses to guide your prayer:
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18
 - Colossians 3:15-17
 - Ephesians 5:15-21
- Is there a situation in which you struggle to be thankful? Tell your Father how

hard this is for you to be grateful. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you eyes to see how he is working this for your good. Then start by simply thanking God that he is trustworthy in this situation.

- Every day, thank God for at least three things.
- During this week, think of three people that you are grateful for, and then tell them why you are thankful for them.

Step 12

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Forgiveness

the key to freedom

Step 13

Start Here

A person called Pako in Spain got into a heated argument with his father and left home. His father looked for him everywhere, but couldn't find him. After 3 months, he commissioned this advertisement on the front page of a local newspaper: 'My dear son, Pako, I love you! I am sorry that we argued so intensely. I want you to know that I have forgiven you and I ask for your forgiveness, too. If you see this, please come to the news stand in the middle of the town tomorrow at 12 noon.'

The following day, hundreds of people by the name of Pako were waiting in front of the news stand!

Discuss

While humorous, this story highlights a common experience for many. Why do you think so many people responded to the ad?

Explore the Word

None of us gets through life without being hurt by others. We can be hurt by another's choices, through a disagreement, by a harmful action, or through a cruel word. The pains we receive at another's hands are among the deepest we ever experience, especially when it comes through a family member or someone close to us. The pain can be just as deep if someone we love has been harmed. Forgiveness is one of the hardest tasks we are called to do.

So, why might we even consider forgiving?

Read Matthew 18:21–35

- In this parable, why was the servant expected to look kindly on the one who owed him money?
- Where, like the servant, are you still holding onto an offence? Share with each other.

Main Idea

(Part 1)

Jesus wants us to be free. He teaches us that forgiveness is the path to

freedom.

He calls us to forgive for many reasons. Consider these two:

1. We forgive because God has forgiven us. The more we grasp the great mercy and grace of God towards us, the more we want to respond by extending it to others.
2. We forgive out of obedience. The one who has shown us such mercy commands us to offer mercy as well.
3. Though it is hard to forgive at times, unforgiveness will hurt us even more, causing more damage to our own hearts in the long run. Unforgiveness binds us to the offender and the offense. God wants us to be free and to be healed.

Before we look at how we can forgive, let's be sure we know what forgiveness is **not**.

- Forgiveness is **not** denying the offense. God asks us to live in truth – we don't pretend that we were not hurt. We must begin with absolute honesty about the offense.
- Forgiveness is **not** an instant change in our emotions. It may take time for our emotions to heal, but when we forgive, the process begins.

Main Idea

(Part 2)

As we begin to open ourselves to the idea of forgiving others, consider each step in the process:

- **Acknowledge the offense.** Be honest and clear about what has happened.
- **Ask God to heal the wound in you.** You may still be tender in heart, body or spirit – open that hurt place to God's touch.
- **Choose to forgive.** Speak this decision aloud before God, and if possible with another trusted friend.
- **Pray a blessing on the person you need to forgive.** This is another difficult step, but your ability to ask God's best for the offender will be an indicator for you as to how much you have truly released and forgiven this person.
- **Repeat!** Forgiveness begins with a decision but often involves a process to complete. You must decide, then continue to affirm that decision again each day as your emotions begin to heal and you progress into living in freedom.

Practice Together Now

Read Colossians 3:13.

Are you ready to forgive as the Lord has forgiven you?

Spend a few moments asking the Holy Spirit who you need to forgive.

Take the time for each of you to walk through the steps above regarding the one you need to forgive. Be a prayerful presence to one another as you each go through this process.

Agree to the following:

- As you share personal stories, maintain confidentiality and do not gossip.
- If what you share involves ongoing abuse, seek guidance from your church leadership or other professional help.

Put it into Practice Daily

- With regard to the person you chose to forgive, continue to review the steps of forgiveness in your quiet time each day. If you find the pain is still very deep, ask each other for more prayer. Also, bring this need for further prayer and ministry to your pastor.
- Throughout the week, notice how you think about or speak of this person. Choose blessing when they come to mind. When appropriate, take a step of reconciliation – call them, visit them, or simply pray God's best over them.
- Every morning in your personal time of devotion, examine your heart and forgive the people who have wronged you. Commit your feelings and emotions to God so he can heal them. Reflect on the following verses:
 - Colossians 3:12-15
 - Romans 12:19

Step 13

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Serving Others

true greatness

Step 14

Start Here

Think of someone that you highly respect. What are the qualities you admire in them? How do they show those qualities in daily life?

Think of someone that is publicly respected. What are the qualities that make them great in so many people's estimation?

Explore the Word

There's an impulse within us all to be respected and valued. We want others to think highly of us. But what are the things that make us honourable? What makes us great?

Read Mark 9:33-35

- The disciples did not want Jesus to know what they were discussing. Why?
- How do you become 'first' according to Jesus?
- Was Jesus upset with them for the desire to be great?

Apparently, the disciples still struggled with this idea. Shortly after this passage, we find them arguing again.

Read Mark 10:42-44

- What marks the difference between 'rulers' and those who want to be great in Jesus' kingdom?
- What are the reasons this text might be hard for us to hear, just as it was for the disciples?

Discuss

The tasks of a servant aren't usually very fun – often they are boring. They certainly aren't glamorous – often they are quite dirty. And doing them does not usually solicit immediate praise. The chef at a meal gets lots of praise, but the one washing the dishes rarely is even noticed. We, too, like the disciples, can struggle with serving others. Yet Jesus says this is the path to greatness.

- Think of four or more jobs we usually assign to 'servants.'
- Why do we resist serving?
- What is your instinctive evaluation of the person who cleans the toilets?

- How would you feel if you were asked to do a 'servant's job'?

Main Idea

Jesus shows us that we are great when we are servants.

Jesus wants us to be great! He invites us to pursue greatness in his kingdom.

And he not only instructs us how, he shows us. The greatest person himself, Jesus, served in the way he asks us to serve (Matthew 20:28). He engaged in some of the most menial tasks – tasks so low that sometimes his disciples were embarrassed that their master was caring for them in this way! But Jesus did not hesitate.

And in choosing this downward path of humility, the Father honored Jesus. The Father glorified him.

Jesus asks us to follow his example. He invites us to take the path of the servant and let the Father be the one who lifts us up.

Greatness through serving doesn't come naturally – we have to pursue it. It does not require money, it does not require skill. But it does require intentionally taking action. And it requires on-going practice. Believers in all stages of life are called to continue serving. We never outgrow serving, we only grow into serving more, becoming more and more like Jesus.

Practice Together Now

You will never grow as a servant without serving.

1. Brainstorm: Think about the many different ways that you can serve others. Come up with two ideas for each category.
 - Your family
 - Someone in your church
 - Someone you don't know
2. Choose one: Commit to one of your ideas.
3. Plan it: How and when you will do this act of service this week?

Pray for one another to grow in the greatness of serving.

Put it into Practice Daily

- Do the act of service you committed to doing. Call each other afterwards and debrief the experience.
- Read John 13
 - Honor Jesus for his example of greatness.
 - As you think on Jesus's life, what motivates you to serve in the same way as he did?



Step 14

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Truth and Honesty

always and everywhere

Step 15

Start Here

- Have you ever experienced someone lying to you?
- How did you feel when you discovered the deception?
- What happened to your relationship with that person?

Discuss

We all would say we value the truth. And yet often we find ourselves in situations where we are tempted to lie.

- Perhaps we hide the truth to protect someone's feelings?
- Perhaps we portray an image that is not our authentic selves?
- Perhaps we lie in order to cover up a mistake?

What are some other reasons that we are tempted to lie?

Lying is often easier than telling the truth. Sometimes it even appears that it might be the best choice for all involved. When we are tempted to lie, why might we choose to speak the truth and act honestly?

Explore the Word

Let's look at three reasons to choose truth:

Reason 1: Truth is a Characteristic of God

Read these verses:

- John 1:14
- John 14:6
- John 8:31-32
- 1 John 1:5-7

Based on these verses, why is truth important?

Truth is key to who God is. God will always be honest with you. He will always tell you the truth. This is one of the reasons you can trust him. And he calls us to be like him – he calls us to live in truth. He wants us to value and honor the truth like he does.

Reason 2: Satan is the father of lies

Read this verse:

- John 8:44

While truth is a characteristic of God, falsehood and deception are characteristics of Satan. In Genesis 3, Satan used deception with Adam and Eve to cause them to sin. He has been lying ever since and bringing destruction in every generation. That's why Jesus calls him the father of lies. When we engage in deception, we open the door to evil.

Reason 3: God hates lies because they hurt people

Read these verses. What is God's attitude towards dishonesty?

- Proverbs 12:22
- Proverbs 25:18
- Colossians 3:9-10

Lies are destructive. They break relationships, they manipulate people,

Main Idea

The three reasons we have explored in the Word show us that truth and honesty are always the right choice.

When we choose the truth and live in honesty, there are many benefits, including:

- We look more like Jesus
- We show our trust in God
 - We don't manipulate people or situations to our advantage, but trust God to work.
- We bring light to the situation instead of darkness.
- We become trustworthy to others
 - Our relationships are strengthened. Though in the moment it may feel painful to tell the truth, in the long run it creates the possibility of authentic relationship.
- We live in freedom
 - We do not need to manage the false realities we have created. We don't even have to manage our own reputations. Living in the truth releases us from the exhaustion of maintaining lies.

Practice Together Now

Proverbs 10:9 teaches us that those who walk in truth and integrity walk securely. But to live like this, we must keep practicing and choosing to live in the truth.

- What are the circumstances in which you are most tempted to be dishonest?
- Why are you tempted to lie in this situation? Why would you choose the truth instead?
- Is there a situation this week where you feel God is asking you to tell the truth even though it may be hard?
- Pray together that God would increase your love for the truth and give you

courage to be honest this we

Put it into Practice Daily

- Write down Proverbs 10:9 on a piece of paper and put it where you will read it every morning.
- Read the following verses in your personal time of devotion and note why God loves truthfulness and honesty:
 - Psalms 25:5
 - Ephesians 4:25
 - Ephesians 6:14
- As you face a choice this week to lie or tell the truth, recall Proverbs 10:9, asking God's help, then take a deep breath and speak the truth in love.
- Call each other and debrief the experience of choosing the truth.

Step 15

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Walking in the Light

staying close to God

Step 16

Start Here

What causes relationships to break?

What causes broken relationships to be restored?

Discuss

We all mess up. We say what we shouldn't say, we do what we shouldn't do, we think what we shouldn't think. And sometimes we don't do what we should do!

When this happens, we sin against God and other people.

- When you know you have wronged someone else, how do you handle it?
- What do you find most difficult in making amends?
- In what way does your action or inaction in that broken relationship affect your relationship with God?

Explore the Word

Read together 1 John 1:5-10

- How is God described here?
- What are the benefits of walking in the light?
- What are the implications of claiming we have not sinned? Who loses out when we claim to be without sin?
- How do you keep yourself walking in the light and not in the darkness?
- What promise do you see in verse 9?

Main Idea

If we don't address our wrongdoing, it will affect the closeness of our fellowship with God and other people. Thankfully, the wonderful promise of God is that we can remain in close fellowship with him through honesty, confession and repentance.

This is not a one-time event, but a lifestyle where we seek to remain in the light with God and in fellowship with him by regularly examining our hearts and confessing where we have fallen short.

Practice Together Now

Walk through these three simple steps to remain in the light and in close fellowship with God and others: Ask God to examine your heart, confess your sins, and remember your identity in Christ.

1. Ask God to examine your heart

Psalm 139:23–24 says ‘Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.’

David asked God to examine him. One reason is because it is not always obvious to us when we have sinned. That’s why it is important to take time to follow David’s example.

Use this verse to pray now and ask God to highlight an area in your life that you must deal with.

Be prepared to share with each other those things God points out to you.

2. Confess your sins

1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

If you become aware of a sin in your life, humbly confess it and repent.

Take time to do this now. Remember there is no shame in confessing. We all mess up.

Ask him to give you the power to overcome those sins. Accept the divine forgiveness and declare it as yours.

3. Remember your identity in Christ

Romans 8:1 says, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Constantly remind yourself: You have already been saved and are a precious child of God.

When we mess up, our heavenly Father does not condemn us, but rather he washes us clean again as we confess.

There is joy, peace, blessing and security in remaining in the light and enjoying your position as a child of God.

Put it into Practice Daily

1. Repeat the steps above every day.
2. Read and meditate on these verses in your quiet time.
 - Proverbs 28:13
 - Psalms 32:5
3. Send each other a short message of how you have applied this step this week, and how God has helped you.
4. Ask God to help you continue to walk in the light.

Victory over Temptation

it can be done

Step 17

Start Here

The largest turtle in the world, found in Latin America, can weigh up to 115 kilos. This turtle uses an interesting method to hunt its prey: it lies motionless on the sea bed with its mouth wide open. The turtle's tongue has pink threads that look like worms moving in the water. Fish see these, and thinking they have found food, move towards the jaws of the turtle, and then, suddenly...SNAP.

Temptation also works like that in our lives. At first it looks very pleasant and inviting, but eventually it leads to our destruction.

Discuss

Do you have an example of something that was tempting that later caused regret?

What first enticed you?

What caused regret later?

Explore the Word

No one is immune to temptation – all of us face and will continue to face temptations on a daily basis. We are tempted in how we use our money, how we use our time, what we let our eyes watch, what we choose to eat, how we use our words. Around every corner there is bait that lures us towards destruction. Temptation itself is not sin, even Jesus faced temptation. The key is to learn to handle temptation.

Read Matthew 4:1-11

- Where did the words come from that Jesus used to combat the devil's temptation?

Read Hebrews 2:18

- Who helps you when you are tempted?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13

- What does this verse teach about the power of temptation over us?

Main Idea

God has made a way for us to overcome temptation. It is possible for each of us to be victorious.

In every situation we face, even when temptation feels overwhelmingly strong, God has made a way for us to escape (1 Cor 10:13). When temptation creeps up on us, we can take action by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- **Bring it into the light**
 - Immediately bring that temptation to the Father. Instead of hiding, ask your Father for help. (Proverbs 28:13)
 - Bring a trusted friend into the conversation. Ask for support and accountability. (James 5:16)
 - Follow Jesus' example; shine Scripture on the situation. Remind yourself of the truth that you have learned through the Bible.
- **Run Away!** Running away from temptation is not weak, running away is wise. The earlier and sooner you flee temptation, the easier it will be to overcome it. If something causes temptations, remove it: Put your computer in shared space, clear alcohol from your home, cut up your credit cards, delete apps off your phone. Actively cut yourself off from situations that make sin easy.
- *Think of three common temptations. What are specific ways to remove ourselves from those temptations?*
- **Invest in the good.** Overcoming temptation is not just about resisting evil, it's about choosing good. Starve what you want to kill, feed what you want to grow. (2 Timothy 2:22)
- **Don't give up.** Everyone is on a journey. We all are learning every day to be more like Jesus. When you fail, do not lose heart! Repent quickly and commit to starting again. (1 John 1:9)

Practice Together Now

Spend a few moments together in the presence of the Holy Spirit and ask what he wants to address in your life this week.

Tell each other what particular temptation you want to resist this week. In prayer together, confess this before the Father.

Pick one action you can do this week to remove yourself from temptation's path in this area.

Pick one action you can do this week to invest in the good.

Pray together for strength to be humble in accountability and strong in resisting temptation.

Put it into Practice Daily

- Read Genesis 39. What do you learn from how Joseph handled repeated temptation?
- Read these verses. Pick one to memorize
 - 1 John 1:9
 - Matthew 26:41
 - Colossians 3:1-2

- When you feel tempted this week (and you will!), immediately walk through the four steps provided.
- With the specific temptation you identified, call your friend daily, simply to check in on this day for resisting temptation and investing in the good.

Step 17

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Money and Possessions

more blessed to give than receive

Step 18

Start Here

- How has your background and upbringing shaped your attitude towards money and your use of money?
- Do you think money has anything to do with your faith and relationship with God? Why?

Main Idea

(Part 1)

Did you know that Jesus talked more about issues related to money and possessions than he did about heaven and hell combined?

He told parables about money. He challenged a rich young man about money. When Zacchaeus repented and said "if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will restore it fourfold," Jesus said, "Today, salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19:8-9).

Why did Jesus talk so much about money? Because he doesn't want money to control our lives here on earth.

Explore the Word

Read Matthew 6:19-21

From this passage, answer these questions:

- Is Jesus against people having treasure?
- What is the reason Jesus focuses on heaven?
- Why do think Jesus says "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" instead of saying, "For where your heart is, there your treasure will be also"?

Discuss

Imagine you are in this situation: You are hoping to move to a new city where you will live for the rest of your life. You currently have a job and are living in a temporary place until you can move, perhaps a hotel room or a small apartment.

How much of your money would you invest on redecorating, furnishing and buying things for your hotel room or apartment, and how much would you invest for your future life in the new city?

Main Idea

(Part 2)

If we spend all our money for possessions in this world, we are like the person who buys furniture and redecorates a hotel room they will leave in a short time.

Instead, Jesus wants us to be focused on eternity. One key way we do this is by being generous with the money we have and investing in the Kingdom of God. Jesus wants us to trust God for this life and to be givers.

It's more blessed to give than receive.

Jesus also knows that being a giver is the route to being increasingly blessed. In fact, he says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

He also says, "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap" (Luke 6:38).

Explore the Word

Read Luke 21:1-4

- Why was Jesus impressed with the widow?
- If Jesus saw how you use money, what do you think he would say?
- Why do you think it is more blessed to give than receive?

Practice Together Now

How to invest in treasure in heaven and be generous

It's vitally important to know that the joy of giving is not the privilege of the rich. Everyone, no matter how poor, can be generous.

Do you want to start investing in treasures in heaven? Do you want to experience the joy and blessing of being a generous giver? If so here are three simple steps to help you start:

1. **Remember, don't wait till you are rich.** Consider what you have that you can be generous with.
2. **Pray about a monthly gift you would like to give to the Lord.** This can be given to your local church.
3. **Look for opportunities to be even more generous.** In addition to money, what else do you have that you can be generous with? As we live life, we see

needs and opportunities to be generous to others. There are many different kinds of valuable projects and ministries we can support with our giving, including feeding the poor, and helping the suffering.

Put it into Practice Daily

- Read and meditate on these passages:
 - Luke 12:13-21
 - Matthew 25:31-46
 - 2 Corinthians 9:6-15
- As you notice needs around you, pray together about how you could be involved.

Step 18

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Trusting God

with all your heart

Step 19

Start Here

We all demonstrate a measure of trust in someone or something every day of our lives. When we sit on a chair, we trust the chair will hold us. When we get into a vehicle, we trust the driver. When we eat a meal, we trust the cook. The list of daily activities that require trust is endless.

In this past week, what or who have you had to trust? Describe this situation.

Discuss

(Part 1)

It is impossible to live without trust.

This is certainly true when it comes to the big issues of life. We all trust someone or something as we make the decisions that determine the course of our lives. So, the question is this: In whom or what are we ultimately trusting, especially when things are tough?

Here are a few people in whom we often trust:

- Family and friends
- Respected leaders
- Ourselves

Discuss

(Part 2)

Here are a few things we regularly trust in:

- Wealth
- Intelligence
- Pleasure

1. What else can you think of that we trust in?
2. Which of these do you most often find yourself trusting, especially when you're under pressure?
3. Why are none of these completely trustworthy?

Main Idea

Trust in the Lord

Journeys are full of twists and turns. Life doesn't turn out as expected. At times we are tempted to take matters into our own hands or change course.

The Bible says in Proverbs 3:5-6:

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight."

There is only one person who is always trustworthy – God alone. There are numerous reasons why, but let's consider three characteristics of God that give us confidence in him.

1. God is completely good – there is no shadow in him, no selfish motivation, he only acts from a place of purity, justice, and love. We can trust him because he is completely good.
2. God is completely wise. Nothing surprises him, nothing puzzles him, he never wonders how he should respond. We can trust him because he is completely wise.
3. God is completely powerful. There is nothing stronger in the universe, he has total ability to do whatever he chooses, he has the power to follow through with every commitment he makes. We can trust him because he is completely powerful.

Only God will never fail us. He is good, wise, and powerful. He is fully worthy of our trust. He is the one who can guide us in the journey.

Explore the Word

Why is it important that God has all three of these characteristics?

Read the following verses and identify which aspect of God – his goodness, wisdom, or power - this verse assures us of:

- James 1:17
- Psalm 147:5
- Matthew 19:26
- Romans 8:31-39

Which verse stands out to you? Why?

What other characteristics about God help us to trust him?

Practice Together Now

Does your heart doubt either God's goodness, wisdom, or power? Confess your disbelief, choosing in faith to believe God is completely trustworthy.

Read Proverbs 3:5-6 again.

- What area are you in need of trusting God fully? Perhaps he has asked you to do something difficult or surprising. Perhaps you have a relationship causing you concern. Perhaps there is a financial situation that has you worried.
- How can you actively choose to trust God in that area this week?

In prayer together, choose to:

- Trust the Lord with all your heart
- Acknowledge him in all your ways
- Expect him to make your path straight

Here's a prayer you can use.

Dear Father, I choose anew right now to trust you. You are a good, wise, and powerful God. I believe and therefore entrust all to you.

I bring my difficult situations to you. I am tempted to trust _____, but instead I choose to trust you. I ask that you pour out your goodness, wisdom, and power into that situation.

I believe you when you say you will direct me. No matter what the outcome, I thank you for your guidance, care and attention. Thank you for loving me in this and for being so trustworthy.

Put it into Practice Daily

- If possible, speak to another believer and ask them what they have learned about trusting God.
- Reflect on a way God has been faithful to you recently. Thank him for being trustworthy.
- Where do you need guidance? What decision must you make in the coming weeks? Do you believe God cares about this decision?
 - This week, commit to trust and obey the Lord in this decision.
 - Take a few moments in silence to listen to the Holy Spirit.
 - Reflect on one of these verses:
 - Psalm 62:8
 - Isaiah 26:3-4
 - Romans 15:13
 - Phil 4:6

Step 19

Obedience

because of love

Step 20

Start Here

God has blessed us with free will and the ability to act on our personal choices. We love to do what we want! But there are times when what we want conflicts with what others want.

In those moments, the nature of the relationship with the other person or people will often determine what we choose to do, and the attitude with which we do it. Read the next three short stories and discuss the questions at the end:

1. Ali's mother asked him to come straight home from school to help clean the house to be ready for guests that evening. But his friends have invited him to play. "Come just for an hour, we'll have great fun!" Ali knows if he's late, his mother's face will be absolutely red with anger and the punishment from his father will be severe. But anger is all he seems to experience at home anyway, so he decides he deserves an hour of fun with his friends. He grabs the ball and runs to the field.
 2. The new local government imposed a drastic change in the speed limit in Leila's neighborhood. Now, for seemingly no good reason, she must all but crawl down the road from her house to her sister's place. Leila assesses the situation – there is no one else on the road, she knows every pot hole to avoid, she's driven at the "normal" speed for years with no problem. She may have voted for this mayor, but this new rule makes no sense. She decides to get to her sister's on time – driving the old speed.
 3. At work, Jacob's boss suddenly pulled him from the high-profile project he's been leading for the last year, and instead scheduled him for meetings the rest of this week. Jacob is disappointed, as his team had been performing well and the project is close to completion. Further, Jacob notices his top rival has been moved on to his project while he must attend this all-day meeting tomorrow for who-knows-what. He begins to wonder what his boss is doing – in the past this boss has always supported his career, guiding him well and giving him opportunities to grow and to shine. Did his boss even mean the kind things he said in front of everyone last week at the staff meeting? Though frustrated, Jacob decides to honor his boss and give his best efforts at the meeting tomorrow – which turns out to be an interview for a vice president position that his boss has recommended him for.
- Consider these stories. What is the nature of the relationship in each? How does that influence the motivation to obey/comply?
 - How does the nature of a relationship influence our motivation to obey?
 - What kind of relationship makes you more willing to obey?
 - What thoughts and feelings do you have when you think of the word 'obedience'? When you were a child, what happened when you disobeyed your parents or authority figures?

Discuss

Similar to the stories above, there are times when what God wants us to do conflicts with what we want to do. When that happens, we face a choice: Do what God wants or do what we want.

In moments like that, some reasons we might choose God's way over our way are:

- We fear the consequences or punishment.
- We look forward to the reward.
- We recognize that God's ways are better.
- We enjoy pleasing him.
- We trust that he is good even when we don't understand.
- Any other reasons?

All of these are reasons we might choose to obey. But some reasons are better than others.

Which of the motivations above do you most relate to?

Give an example from your own life when you chose God's way over your own way. What motivated you to obey?

Explore the Word

Read John 15:9-11

- What motivated Jesus' obedience to the Father?
- What is the most prominent word in this passage?
- What is the result of obedience?

Main Idea

While there are many reasons to obey, Jesus shows us that true obedience is ultimately born out of love. He knew the Father loved him, and his loving response was to obey.

This gives us a new picture of obedience. We don't obey to earn favor and love from God. His love is unfailing. We obey to express our love for him in return.

The result is great joy.

Practice Together Now

Pause for a moment and consider one thing you can do now or this week to be obedient to the Lord.

Here are some areas where God may be asking us to obey him:

- How we spend our time or money
- How we use our words
- Our relationships

- Our willingness to tell other people about Jesus
- Serving other people or our church
- Caring for our body (eating, sleeping, exercising)

In what attitude do you want to take this step of obedience?
What practical steps can you take to put your obedience into action?
Pray together and commit to obeying this week.

Put it into Practice Daily

- This week, start walking out the obedience you committed to. Speak to each other during the week about the progress you are making in your new area of obedience.
- If possible, do a specific action of obedience together this week.
- During your devotions this week, read Romans 8:28-39
 - List three things in this passage that give you courage to obey.
 - Of those three, pick one to meditate on. How does that specifically apply to the new area of obedience God has called you to?

Step 20

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