TRUST - THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL LIVING

Proverbs 3:1-10

“Do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.”

In Proverbs 3:1-10, there are some marvelous words of wisdom for us in regard to our relationship with God. This morning, and for the next two Sundays, I want to talk to you about the key to successful Christian living. We are going to be talking about trusting God. What happens when our whole relationship with Him is based upon nothing but obedience and trust? That’s what we are going to be talking about today. Two of the most important questions that we can ever ask are:

1. "How can we know God’s will?"

2. "How can we be a success for God, others, and ourselves?"

Trust is the most important factor in answering both those questions. Knowing God and His will for your life involves trust. Growing His Kingdom and ourselves as His stewards requires trust. Why are we willing to trust strangers and not God? You go to a doctor whose name you cannot pronounce. They hold degrees you have never verified. They give you a prescription you cannot read. You take it to a pharmacist you have never met. They give you a chemical compound you do not understand. Then you go home and take the pill according to the instructions on the bottle. You do all those things with sincere faith.

I want to begin with two observations on Proverbs 3:1-10:

1. The commands found here are all-inclusive. Do not forget my teaching. Let your heart keep my commandments. There are no legitimate excuses when it comes to obedience to God. Centuries ago Thomas a’Kempis wrote: “Instant obedience is the only kind of obedience there is; delayed obedience is disobedience. Whoever strives to withdraw from obedience, withdraws from Grace.” There’re no exceptions when it comes to obedience.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “One act of obedience is better than 1 hundred sermons.”

We are not being told to partially obey our Lord’s teachings and instructions. Solomon didn’t say with most of our heart we were to trust in Him. He didn’t say that we were sometimes supposed to let Him lead us. These words are all inclusive. No exceptions. No ifs, ands or buts. He says, "I want you to understand that trust is a total affair of your heart and mind."

2. The commands precede a promise. God tells us that if we do these things, that is if we are obedient, God will be able to bless us in extraordinary ways. We do our part, and God does His part. If we trust Him completely, if we obey Him completely, then He has some wonderful provisions for us as children. The life of a steward is a life that can be wholeheartedly blessed by God. We experience “full life” when we practice stewardship. To practice stewardship we must understand that Stewardship is totally about relationships. It is about knowing God, who He is and what He is like. It is about a child believing unconditionally in their father.

Let me give you three Stewardship statements that are absolutely true:

1. God is trustworthy.

2. God has entrusted (placed within our care) the possessions, opportunities, talents, and time that we now experience.

3. We are trustees of everything God has given us.

Ask yourself: Do I trust God? Where do I place my faith? Where do I place my confidence? It’s easy to say, "I trust God." It’s easy to say, "Oh, yes. I obey God completely. I trust God completely." But do we trust God? Really! Is He truly our source for hope and peace? Do we trust Him in everything? Do we trust Him for some things? Do we trust Him in big things and not in small things? Do we trust Him not only in the small things but also with big things? What kind of control do we still want to cling too? This is an incredible question. Trust is the key to success. It’s not an easy thing to do in our self-reliant society. That’s what we are going to look at for the next three weeks. Can we trust God? Do you trust God?

When we’re through looking at that, we’re going to turn the tables around and ask another question. Can God trust you? Does He trust you? Have you proven to be a trustworthy person?
Can He give you what He wants to, knowing that you are trustworthy? Or are you one of those people who are trustworthy in some areas, but not in other areas? Do you need to hear God say to you: "I cannot touch this area in your life because you’re not yet trustworthy?"

We’ll wrap up our stewardship series by taking what I am going to call "the Trust Test." By going through the process of taking the "Trust Test" we will really begin to look at ourselves. We will ask ourselves, "Am I truly trusting Him?" Now, let’s talk about God for a moment. Let me give you some trustworthy thoughts about God:

1. God’s Care is Constant. When it comes to trusting God, you can rest assured that He gives you constant care. I love Hebrews 13:5-6, where, "God has said, ‘Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.’ So we can say with confidence, the Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" That’s a great promise. Literally, in the original language it reads this way: "I will not, no, not leave you, neither will I forsake you."

Five times God wants to assure us that He is never going to leave us. God constantly cares for us. That’s why St. Peter could write, “Cast all your care on Him because He cares for you.”

2. We can trust God in Adversity. We are responsible to trust him in times of adversity. But we are dependent upon the Holy Spirit to enable us to do so.

King David said in Psalm 56:4, "For in God I trust, I will not be afraid." And in Ps. 34, "I sought the Lord, and He answered me. He delivered me from all of my fears."

What’s David saying? You and I are responsible to obey and trust God. That’s our part.

Here’s where the conflict comes. Here’s our problem. God asks us to obey or to trust Him in an area of our life that’s bigger than what we can reason or understand by ourselves. Instead of doing our part, which is total trust and obedience, we want to get over on His side. We want to say, "Now God, if I do this, how are you going to work? If I really give you my life can I really trust what you will do with it? If I surrender this financial issue to you, God, I’m not sure you understand how bad my finances are. I’m not really sure, God, you understand how great my problems are. God, if I give up ownership of my life to you, and obediently follow you in all things, will I experience the fruit of your presence in my life?
Martin Luther said "There is no justification without sanctification, no forgiveness without renewal of life, no real faith from which the fruits of new obedience do not grow."

**It’s all about trust.** This is why our Lord said, "We have to be like children to get into heaven." We are just to say yes to God and trust Him. Even in adversity, when we don’t have answers. Even if we have to say like the Psalmist, "I trust in the Lord, and Lord, I give you my fears." That’s not conflict. That’s not a double standard of statements. What he’s really saying is, "God I believe you, and God, help my unbelief." We have all been there before. Our tendency forever is to say, "I’m willing to obey you, God, but there’s something within me that wants to pull back." We’re to reach the point where we say, "God, I don’t understand, but I’m willing to trust you."

2. **Trusting in Plenty.** The extent to which we genuinely thank God for the blessings he provides us is an indicator of our trust in Him. When we are blessed, there’s a tendency for us to either trust in ourselves or trust in our blessings. We run to God fast when we have problems, but we kind of ignore God when we’re being blessed. There’s tendency for us just to kind of think "You know, I’m doing pretty good here." We become self-reliant. We begin to believe we are sufficient unto ourselves. We don’t want to obey God we consider ourselves to be like God. There’s a story about a husband and wife who were extremely poor. They were given the opportunity to make four wishes. All four of the wishes were guaranteed to come true. They could ask for whatever they wanted and they would have it! They were rather modest at first. They asked for some good clothes and when they looked in their wardrobe their wish had been granted. It was filled with fine coats, suits and dresses!

This encouraged them to wish for something better than their broken down cottage. When they returned home they found it had turned into a mansion! This was so wonderful that they asked to be really wealthy. Instantly they had untold riches. They wondered how they could top this. Then they thought, "Well, let’s ask to be like God!" Their wish was granted but not as they expected! All their possessions disappeared, clothes, mansion & wealth. Nothing was left. Nothing that is except a manger with some straw in it! They became like God. They became like Jesus.
We fail or succeed in our stewardship of life in proportion to how convinced we are that life belongs to God. Too often for us it is ‘to live is Christ, plus other things like work, leisure, wealth, relationships. The truth be told is that all too often the ‘plus factor’ has become our primary passion. We have fallen in love with the gifts and not the giver.

In Leadership magazine, John Cheever wrote, "The main emotion of the adult American who has had all the advantages of wealth, education, and culture is disappointment."

There are some people who are so poor that the only thing they have is money. That’s true. You can have everything and yet have nothing. Life is not about what we have. It is about whose we are. It is not about what you possess. It’s about who possesses you.

Henry Ward Beecher, in the middle of the 19th century, wrote, "He is rich or poor according to what he is, not according to what he has." To whom do you belong? Where are you placing your trust?

The closer to trusting God for all things a person comes, the closer to God they get.

Trust has nothing to do with wealth . . .

Trust has nothing to do with health . . .

Trust has everything to do with attitude!

3. We are to trust in God as our Source. Our tendency is to trust in God’s instruments of provision rather than in God himself. We trust the job instead of realizing that God is the provider of the job. We trust our health instead of realizing that God is the provider of our health.

   In Proverbs 18:10 there is an interesting contrast between people who trust in God, and people who trust in themselves or their possessions. Listen very carefully. Here’s what he says:

   "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe." Now, listen to what he says: "The wealth of the rich is their fortified city, and they imagine it to be an unscalable wall." What’s he saying? He’s saying that those who trust in the Lord when they have an issue or need, they immediately go to Him. He is their trust. But those who have possessions, they make them a fortified city. They look at that fortified city and say, "It’s an unscalable wall. I cannot be touched. I’ll hide behind it."
What’s your unscalable wall today? Is it your college degree? Is it your savings account? Is it your job? Is it your health? It’s so easy for us to trust all of these other things, and not make God the source and platform of our trust. It’s like the fellow who said, "God, it just seems like I cannot not lean on you like I want." And God says to him, "It’s because you’ve never put your total weight on me. You’re still using your own strength. You’re still using your own muscles.” You Can Trust Him. Nothing is beyond our God.

A pastor from Atlanta wrote this, “He’s the one who made us. It is He who made us and not we ourselves. The heavens declare the glory of God. The firmament shows His handiwork. His love has no limits. No farseeing telescope can bring into visibility the coastline of His shoreless supply. I’m telling you today you can trust Him.

No barrier can hinder Him from pouring out His blessing. He’s enduringly strong. He’s entirely sincere. He’s eternally steadfast. He’s immortally graceful. He’s empirically, powerful. He’s impartially merciful. He’s the greatest phenomenon that has ever crossed the horizon of this world. He’s God’s Son. He’s the sinner’s Savior. He’s the centerpiece of civilization. You can trust Him.

He does not have to call for help. You can’t confuse Him. He doesn’t need you. He doesn’t need me. He stands alone in the solitude of Himself. He’s unique. He is holy. You can trust Him.

He can satisfy all your needs. He supplies strength for the weak. He’s available for the tempted and the tried. He’s sympathizes and He sees. He guards and He guides. He heals the sick. He cleansed the leper. He forgives sinners. He discharges debtors. He delivers the captives. He defends the people. He blesses the young. He regards the aged. He rewards the diligent. He beautifies the meek. You can trust Him.

He is the key to knowledge. He’s the wellspring of wisdom. He’s the doorway of deliverance. He’s the path of peace. He’s the roadway of righteousness. He’s the highway of holiness. He’s the gateway to glory. You can trust Him.

He is mighty. He’s the conqueror of conquerors. He’s the head of heroes. He’s the leader of legislators. He’s the overseer of the overseers. He’s the Governor of the governors.
He’s the Prince of princes. He’s the King of kings. He’s the Lord of lords. You can trust him.

His office is manifold. His promise is sure. His life is matchless. His goodness is limitless. His mercy is everlasting. His love never changes. His word is enough. His grace is sufficient. His reign is righteous. His yoke is easy. His burden is light. He’s indescribable because He’s incomprehensible. He’s irresistible because He’s invincible. You can’t get Him off your hands. You can’t get him out of your mind. You can’t outlive Him, and you can’t live without Him. You can trust Him.

"He’s the Alpha and the Omega. The beginning and the end. The first and the last. He’s all things. He’s the giver of life. He’s the joy out of every sorrow. He’s the light of every darkness. He’s the peace that passes all understanding. He’s the giver of every good and perfect gift. You can trust Him. There’s no God before Him. There’ll be none after Him. He is the first. He is the last. He is preeminent. There is no other God."

You can trust Him. Amen