



IN GOD WE TRUST, BUT HOW FAR?

It started innocently enough. I bought a small sign at a local gift shop, and perched it on the windowsill above our kitchen sink. It reads, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart”, the familiar first part of a verse from the Bible’s book of Proverbs. I was delighted to have it, since it featured my “word for the year.”

Adopting one word to watch for while reading the Bible is a way I nurture spiritual growth in a particular vein over the course of a whole year. The word God gave me for that year was “trust.” What a spiritual goldmine - and landmine – that little word turned out to be.

I unearthed the goldmine aspect of “trust” quickly when I saw how many times it appears in the Bible. Thanks to a handy phone app, it took only seconds to see that trust is an important theme in God’s divine instruction manual, appearing 147 times in the English Standard Version Bible.

And although the word and concept of trust can be mined throughout the Bible, the mother lode is deposited in the Psalms, where David and other psalmists proclaim the best and worst places to put our trust.

Time and again, the psalmists exhort us to trust God completely because He alone is entirely trustworthy. They say it clearly, as in, “Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us” (Psalm 62:8). Some psalms teach trust in God as the remedy for fear, e.g., Psalm 65:3-4, 11. Psalms 21 and 22 remind us that calling out to God with trust gets his attention, yielding blessings amid strife.

And the Psalms just as clearly instruct us in the folly of placing our trust in anything *but* God, as we often do. We are warned about placing our trust in “horses and chariots” – governmental or military power – and other idols such as wealth, our own resourcefulness, or other people who will invariably let us down. If you think you never place your trust in any of these things above God, just select “trust” as your word for the year and see what happens! This is where the goldmine can become a landmine.

Although I had certainly put my trust in Jesus as my Lord and Savior, as I walked through that difficult year, I realized that I still had much to learn about trusting Him fully and at all times – with *all* my heart, as my little kitchen sign reminded me. I kept stepping on landmines, pockets of mistrust or self-reliance that blew up through the many hard circumstances God allowed into my life for that very purpose. A spiritually mature friend explained that this is how God leads us to a new level of trust, over and over again.

The renowned theologian C. S. Lewis put it this way: “The trouble is that relying on God has to begin all over again every day as if nothing has yet been done” (*Letters to Malcolm, Chiefly on Prayer*). Although this may seem counterintuitive, and is certainly challenging, this is our loving God’s way of keeping our relationship with Him vital and our reliance on Him absolute.

After a year of having my trust in God tested and strengthened, I know that when I see my kitchen windowsill sign, I need to embrace the *entire* verse – and the ensuing one – daily: “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” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

As we diligently practice trusting God daily, amid all the uncertainties of devastating storms, contentious elections, a skittish economy, health predicaments, relational turmoil, and more, we will be blessed with supernatural serenity: “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7).

With love in the Lord,
The Rev. Christine Maddux