

Faith and Trust

Did he say why he was calling the wedding off?" Kelley asked, not sensing the tension and pain in the room.

Monique sat still, seemingly gazing at the boxes of wedding invitations on the dining room table. Her friend, Tamyra, sat next to her. Tamyra shot Kelley a look that said, "Be quiet and sit down!"

Monique and Wallace's wedding date was in a few months. Wallace was a pastor's son who lived out of town. The two had met at a church function a year and a half ago.

Many in her life believed Wallace was "the one."

"Girl, you're 42," said the married Kelley. "You better jump on this and quick!"

In the beginning, when Wallace began showing interest in Monique, she fasted and prayed that the Lord would give her His choice. She didn't want anything that would take away or dilute her love and commitment to Christ.

"What's to pray about? He's a pastor's son. Surely, he is the one," someone had said.

So, Monique entered into the courtship, which involved Wallace visiting her a couple times a month and lots of telephone time. She had offered to fly and visit Wallace, but he always preferred coming to her.

Two days ago, Wallace had broken the engagement over the phone.

"What are you going to do?" Kelley asked.

"I don't know," Monique said, tears welling and flowing down her cheeks. "I'm going to keep trusting and leaning on God."

- 1.** *What do you do first when you have to make a major decision?*
- 2.** *How much have you trusted someone in the past? Was your trust well placed?*
- 3.** *Explain how God's ways are far above ours.*

Trusting God to Lift Us Up

Proverbs 3:1-4, KJV

1 My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:

2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:

4 So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

Proverbs 3:1-4, NIV

¹My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart,

²for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity.

³Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.

⁴Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man.

It is one thing to know the teachings of God's Word; it is quite another to have a good understanding of them and apply them in our lives in a manner that brings glory to Him. And God's children have no greater purpose than that.

The Hebrew for "keep" is *natsar*, which means to watch, guard, protect, and obey. Keeping God's commandments in our hearts, guarding and obeying them, speaks to how dear and closely we should hold them. To remember the Lord's teachings is important because unless we know them, we cannot obey them.

Who wouldn't want to have a long, prosperous, and peaceful life? This is what this passage speaks of when God's children place a high value on remembering and keeping His Word. Of course, we understand today that Jesus also promised His followers that we would experience persecution for our stand and testimony for Him (see John 15:18, 20b). However, even in persecution there is great reward (see 1 Pet. 4:16, 19).

Therefore, it is appropriate to balance the benefits of

wisdom mentioned in Proverbs 3 with Jesus' warnings about the inevitability of persecution and suffering when we follow the Lord. Nevertheless, the principles of Proverbs 3 are solid and worthy of our attention because they speak of the blessings of a godly life. For instance, when we seek to treat others graciously, we will be more apt to live peacefully with them than if we treat them unjustly.

This all is especially true when we faithfully apply love and truth in our lives. The picture of binding around the neck here is that of a necklace that is bound securely in place. This serves not only to be an ever-present reminder of God's love and truth in our lives, but it is also on display for others to see the true beauty of His mercy and faithfulness. Furthermore, the picture of writing them on the tablet of our hearts means that we are to internalize God's love and truth, making them part of who we are. When God's love and truth are on display in our lives for others to see, and they can tell that we are genuine and not hypocritical, then we will have a good reputation with our family, neighbors, community, etc., as well as all the blessings that come with that.

4. *What are God's children to remember and keep?*

5. *What are the blessings for remembering and keeping them?*

6. *How do people react when they see God's love and truth in our lives?*

Trusting God to Guide Us

Proverbs 3:5-6, KJV

5 Trust in the LORD
with all thine heart; and
lean not unto thine own
understanding.

6 In all thy ways
acknowledge him, and
he shall direct thy paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV

⁵Trust in the LORD with all your
heart

and lean not on your own
understanding;

⁶in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths
straight.

We finite humans cannot fully fathom the thoughts and ways of our infinite God (see Isaiah 55:8-9). But consider how wise we would be if we trusted Him to guide and direct us as we walk through this wicked world.

Therefore, it is important for God's people to trust Him wholeheartedly and not to trust in our own human wisdom. When Paul exhorted the believers in Ephesus to put on God's armor, he named each piece and what it related to spiritually for the believer (Eph. 6:10-17). And as important as each piece is for victory over the devil's evil schemes, the apostle finished by pointing out the even greater importance of maintaining good lines of communication with God: "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people" (Eph. 6:18).

When waging warfare, a country can have superior military equipment and still lose without the appropriate intelligence, as well as effective command and control. Such is the case with the believer's spiritual warfare. The whole armor of God is absolutely necessary; but without the wisdom and guidance from God that comes with an effective prayer life, many battles can be lost unnecessarily. So it serves believers well to trust in the Lord and receive His guidance by prayer and time in His Word.

Furthermore, we must be willing to acknowledge and submit to His authority. When we do, we can trust that He will guide us along the right path. Though we may believe we understand the situation well enough, when we decide not to lean on our own understanding and submit to the Lord's will, we can trust that victory is ours in Him and that He will lead us the right way to carry out His will and purposes for us.

7. *How are believers to trust the Lord?*

8. *What are believers not to do?*

9. *What happens when we submit to God's will for us?*

Trusting God to Strengthen Us

Proverbs 3:7, 8, KJV

⁷ Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

⁸ It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

Proverbs 3:7, 8, NIV

⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD and shun evil.

⁸ This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

We must trust the Lord wholeheartedly and submit to Him. When we do, He gives us the strength, both physically and spiritually, to depart from the evil that the devil and his world system have to offer. Being wise in our own eyes comes directly from a prideful heart, which can very well lead to our downfall (Prov. 16:18). Instead, a healthy fear and reverence of the Lord gives us both the right motivation and godly insight to avoid evil in all its forms.

The right motivation is love and thankfulness to our Lord for what He has done for us on Calvary and the forgiveness of sins that comes by faith in Him. The godly insight and wisdom we receive to avoid evil comes from time in His Word and willingness to do what He tells us there.

When we fear the Lord and shun evil, we also acknowledge that our physical bodies are gifts from God to be used to His glory. Therefore, we do well to live well and be healthy and strong to serve Him as long as possible. God also nourishes His children spiritually (i.e., 1 Cor. 3:2; 1 Pet. 2:2). As “newborns” in Christ, He feeds us with the milk of His Word. And like a physical child, as we grow spiritually, we can take in more and more of the “meat” or deeper understanding of His Word. Such is the case for those who understand that God’s ways are higher and wiser than ours and who trust Him to lead along the righteous paths of life.

10. *What is the opposite of being wise in our own eyes?*

11. *What does it mean to “fear the Lord”?*

12. *How do God’s people benefit from fearing Him?*

Trust God Completely

Author and Pastor Rick Warren wrote *The Purpose Driven Life*, which encourages us to seek and trust God to understand our purpose on Earth. He wrote, "Trusting God completely means having faith that he knows what is best for your life. You expect him to keep his promises, help you with problems, and do the impossible when necessary." Trusting God and believing that He knows what your purpose is brings peace when trying to understand and answer the book's subtitle, "What on Earth am I here for?" God has a greater plan for you than you can ever imagine.

"You were born by his purpose and for his purpose," writes Warren. With this in mind, total freedom and rest lay in trusting God who knows our purpose for everything. Jesus did assure us of this rest in Matthew 11:28: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." What a glorious invitation! When we trust God, it brings benefits. Matthew 11:29 encourages an action to experience this rest. As Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

In order to trust God, you must know Him and learn His ways. Learn His nature and habits. Our God is gentle and humble, not brash, mean, and angry. In essence, growing in knowledge of God is the only way we can truly know ourselves. He created us. "You discover your identity and purpose through a relationship with Jesus Christ," Warren says. "Every other path leads to a dead end."

How beautiful to live with positive expectation because we trust God. Trusting in God makes us feel good and joyous. This is the will of God who knows your purpose.

13. *Why is trust the only way to follow God?*

14. *Why is God the only one who knows what is best for your life?*

15. *How is trust related to peace?*

God's Ways and Thoughts Are Higher

It is difficult for educated people to not trust in only their own intelligence. Their confidence has been placed in their education and higher learning. It is also difficult for adults to surrender their rational and decision-making skills to another. Trusting God may be difficult, but we must remember who God is and His supreme intelligence: "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'" (Isa. 55:8-9).

► *Write a prayer explaining why you will trust the wisdom of God in your everyday life. This prayer should celebrate God's majesty and infinite wisdom and end with a commitment to trust Him in all things.*

KEY VERSE

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. —Proverbs 3:5, KJV

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. —Proverbs 3:5, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of January 15 through January 21

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

- Mon.** 2 Corinthians 1:3-11—Praise the God Who Comforts.
- Tue.** Psalm 34:1-10—God Delivers Me from My Fears.
- Wed.** Psalm 34:11-22—God's Eyes Are on the Righteous.
- Thu.** 1 Thessalonians 5:1-15—Encourage One Another.
- Fri.** 1 Thessalonians 5:16-28—Rejoice, Pray, and Give Thanks.
- Sat.** 2 Chronicles 20:5-12—Remember God's Power and Might.
- Sun.** 2 Chronicles 20:13-20—Do Not Be Dismayed.