

Learn to trust the Lord

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. Alan is absolutely right. I did ponder. I always ponder. I'm a bit like Mary. I'm a ponderer. And I love that Mary pondered. I just do. I think that's what mums do best, is ponder of what our children do. And our daughter got to ponder over what Millie said. Our daughter Tiffany has a little three-year-old called Millie. And they were in the car. And Tiffany got the old talk as they were in the car. And Millie said to Tiffany, did Jesus make us? And Tiffany said, yes, he did. And Millie said, but how? And Tiffany said, I don't know. We'll have to wait until we get to heaven and ask God. And Millie sat there for a little while and she said, it's taking too long. I need a helicopter to get up to heaven and ask Jesus. And Tiffany said, you can't fly there. You go to heaven when you're old and die. And Millie said, oh no, you're already old. And Tiffany said, when you're much older than me. And Millie's little heart is true to what we all like really, isn't it? We all have questions that we think we're going to ask God when we get to heaven. There's the what's and the why's and the when. When you were seeing me in this situation, Lord, what were your thoughts on that? And why did you allow it to happen? But the truth is, is that when we get to heaven, we probably won't utter a word because we'll be in awe in facing the God that we've worshipped throughout our lives. And sometimes it really does seem a bit long that God seems to be giving an answer to a question. Sometimes we have to wait days and weeks and years for God's answer. But this morning is about learning to trust God in all our questions. And it's about reminding us that actually God knows best whether we like it or not. And of course, I did look up the dictionary meaning of trust. I pondered over that word because trust is the central word to this this morning. And the dictionary meaning, we've got a, there we go, thank you. I'm not going to look for slides, by the way. If they fall into place, that's wonderful. But I tend to get a bit lost and forget that I need to prompt the slides along. So we'll see where they go. But anyway, the dictionary meaning of trust is a firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something. Now, I remember you,

Andy Lloyd, speaking about trust once and about the ability of a something, which was the chair to hold you. Didn't forget. I'm going to talk about the some ones. And in the some ones in my life, we've had to actually put our trust in our builder. Now, you all know that we've had a bit of building done. It's taken, I think, five to six months instead of 12 weeks. But it was, it was tough going. But we got there. And we truly could trust our builder. He was absolutely magnificent and trustworthy. In fact, for a 29-year-old, I wonder where he got his amazing ability to look at something and say, that's three quarters of an inch out. And you think, what? How can you do that? You're looking at a great expanse. He was incredible. But at the beginning, when we first met him, we said, look, you can start building, but we're going away. And he said, whoa, can you trust me?

And we said, yes. We actually said yes to our children, too. We said exactly the same to them. We can trust you as long as you show that we can trust you. And we can trust you as long as you show us that you don't show us you can't, if you know what I mean. Something like that. Anyway. But until you can't trust, we can't trust you anymore. And our trust in him was longer than a country mile because we actually were one country away. We were in Germany when he started his build. And so we literally handed the keys over to him and we put our trust in him. But we had a firm belief in the reliability and the ability, sorry, the liability and the ability of Paddy, our builder, to do what he said he was going to do. And that is start the build and follow the plans.

And we put our trust in him to take care of our home in our absence. We couldn't see what he was doing, but we trusted that he would do it. Did we do this blindly? Well, no, of course not. We didn't.

[4 : 42] Because what we did do was rely on the evidence of the builds that he's done before. We looked at those. And we also heard testimonies of our friends and other friends who'd had him to come and do that building for them. And they all said, thumbs up. He's a good guy. Mike and I put our trust in Paddy and his work and his reputation through that process. I began my trust in God in

much the same way. What I did do was I saw Jesus in the eyes of the friends that I met who were Christians.

And I saw how God worked in their lives. And then one day I went to a church and heard about our pastor's wife saying, I put my trust in Jesus. And then I got a relationship with him and God. And I thought, wow, that's radical. You mean you can have a relationship with God? Think about it. Most people think of God as some lofty entity, some lofty higher being that they have got no connection with.

But you couldn't be more opposite from the truth. You may be sitting here today and thinking to yourself, can I have a relationship? And the clear answer is, yes, you can have a relationship with God through Jesus, his son. But the question remains, how can you trust him if you don't know him?

Christians accused, not yet, Shelley, Christians are accused of having blind faith, believing in something they can't see or touch. This is Satan's way of making you blind to the truth. Christians aren't blind in their faith. Quite the opposite. Because the Bible is not fiction. This is non-fiction. This is a biography of Jesus' life and God's love for us from start to finish. The Bible is based on real lives and real events. I know people say the story of Noah and the story of David and the story of,

but the truth is, these are life events. These people lived. They felt. They breathed.
[6 : 55] And they hurt. And they came out of their hurt with the help of God. And this Bible is a bibliography of books. It's 66 books written by 40 writers. But the author is God. So I want you to know this is the truth. And if you don't believe it or you feel a bit of a question about it, I challenge you, put a little note on the front of your Bible. It says, this is not fiction or this is the truth.

Okay? Because it's just so important that you read this and believe it to be the truth. Proverbs 9.10 says, the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. So my prayer to every one of us is we read this and we get that knowledge and we get that understanding, just as you said earlier, that we get that understanding and put our trust in God. And then, next slide, Shelley.

The Center of the Study for Global Christianity reported through Research Lifeway that Christianity is actually growing. So that's the number of people that put their trust in God. And actually, that's really good news, isn't it? It's fantastic to think that Christians are, people are becoming Christians more and more every day and more and more every year. But how many of those that put their trust in God actually trust the God they put their trust in? Sounds confusing, doesn't it? But when you put your trust in God, you essentially believe that he sent Jesus as his only son to die for your sins.

You repent from those sins. You ask for forgiveness and you begin a relationship with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. But putting your trust in God is different because when you trust God, it's the action of your confession and the profession of your faith. It's essentially having a firm belief in the reliability, truth and ability of God to honor his promises to you that was said in this Bible.

The central theme of this proverb is found in verses 5 and 6. It says, trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding, but in all things acknowledge him and he will direct your paths. He will make your path straight. Those are different versions.

[9 : 21] And I'm going to say, in all ways, do we submit to him in all our paths? Because it says paths. Now, as Christians, we're on the narrow road. There's only one road, but there's different paths in our lives, isn't there? You've got the path of your relationships with your mother and your father, your husband and your children, your friends, your work colleagues. You've got the paths of your job, your health and your wealth. Those are paths, but you're still on the narrow road as a Christian.

But do we submit all of those to the Lord? Do we give access to God with all of those? Andy Sawyer spoke a couple of weeks ago about the no-entry signs that we hold up to God sometimes in areas of our lives. So I wanted to look at the danger of the no-entry sign that we can see in the biblical characters that we read about. And this way, we're delving into the Israelites' relationship with God, which at this point in the Bible wasn't good. In Numbers 14, the Lord said to Moses, how long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me in spite of all the signs I've performed among them? God was a bit miffed. He really was. And he had every right to be. Why? Because he'd said to them, this is a land that I'm giving you, and I'm blessing you with this. It's got masses of great food. It's fertile land. It's got plenty of space.

This is your home. I'm making it for you. And what did they do? Well, they questioned him. They questioned God's plan. It's a very slippery road that we go on when we start questioning God, by the way. But here they questioned God's plan. They said, why is the Lord bringing us to this land?

And that's the first slippery part of the road that we set on, the path. The second thing that they did was they second-guessed the outcome. They said, oh, you know what? He is going to have us killed, and he's going to have our wives and our children's taken as plunder. They'd foreseen a future that wasn't there. But they decided that that was what was going to happen. Because they thought they were wiser than God, they said, wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt? Now, I'm going to stop the bus here. And I want to, I actually, as an Israelite, I would want to get off. I would want to say, hang on a minute. You want to go back to Egypt, back to the slavery, back to the trouble?

Did you not remember how we were whipped and made bricks and built their buildings? And you want to go back all for sake of a taste of a cucumber? Seriously? Have you got this right in your head? But it didn't stop them. They began to plan their own demise. They said to each other, we should choose another leader. You see, Moses was a bit passé by now. He wasn't giving them what they wanted. So they decided, well, we'll choose another one that will listen to us, give us what our itching ears want to hear, and we will then go back to Egypt, because we did enough like that savory. And you just sit there and you think, what? The outcome of that was that they wandered around the desert until they died. They didn't get to see the blessing that God was giving them.

[12 : 40] And now that sounds really harsh, doesn't it? But it was their own fault. It was their own choice. And verse five of this proverb warns us, don't lean on your own understanding. You saw what the Israelites did, so why would you do that? And we go back to Andy Sawyer's sermon. I did really listen to your sermon, Andy. But we do go back to that, and it's following this thought about leaning on our own understanding, because it probably is the crux of that no-entry sign to God.

Well, I think I know better, so I'm not going to let you in this path, God. I'm not going to let you in this thought, God. And let's look at what the Proverbs says about this for us today. It says, in Proverbs 9.10, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. And again, you said that before I spoke. Understanding is so important.

Understanding who God is is so important. And if we understand who God is, you can guarantee we'll actually rely on his understanding more than we rely on ours. And we will submit our ways to him.

But it's the process sometimes, isn't it? That process of walking along, and you're doing your own thing. You've got on your path of whatever it is, and it gets a bit sticky, and you think, oh, hang on a minute. My feet are, it's hard to walk here. I'm getting a bit bogged down with this.

And you get a bit stuck in something, and you're thinking, oh, it's not quite right. And then you hear God whispering in your ear, the Holy Spirit saying, you're on the wrong way. Get out of here.

[14 : 26] I'm calling you out here. Come on. I've got you. And you do hear that prompting. You do hear that response. And you know, it might be that you're in the middle of a mud and mire like David was when we read Psalm 40. I love that psalm. It's such a deep, truthful psalm from David's heart. He said, in my despair, I cried out to you, Lord. And then something really interesting happened.

The Lord turned and heard his cry. That suggests David was walking the wrong way. The Lord turned and said, hang on a minute. I'm here. And what he did is he said, I lifted me up out of the mud and mire, out of the miry clay. And then he set my feet on solid ground. And I love this bit. He steadied me when I walked. Because when you've had a wobbly bit, when you've had a troubled time, you are wobbly. You are unsteady. And God needs to steady you back again and bring you back again. And he steadied David as he walked. But again, David was a singer. And all these songs this morning, speaking to what God gave me. So I hope you were listening when you were singing.

But he said to David, I've given you a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to my Lord, so that all who will see what I have done will fear the Lord. And that's that wonderful, reverent fear, will fear the Lord and put their trust in him. It reminds me that when I've gone off road, when I've gone off piste, when I've decided to walk this path that really isn't the path God wants me on, he can lift me up out of it, set me on solid ground, and give me a new song to sing.

But the wonderful thing about it is that he will show the people all around me, they will see the mess I'm in, but they will also see the God that lifts me out of it. And then they will give a chance to them to trust the God that I trust in. Proverbs 5.1 says, my son, pay attention to my wisdom, turn your ear to my words of insight. I've heard that twice today. Once in our prayer this morning and again earlier. Psalm 3 verses 7 to 8 says, do not be wise in your own eyes, fear the Lord and shun evil.

This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. You know, David had a healthy

fear of the Lord. It was a reverent fear because he knew who God was. He knew that he could trust God and that's why he called out to him for help. David had unlocked the unknown entry door and he let God in. And that's when God got him out of the mess he was in. And we know that because in Psalm 40, this is what David said, many Lord are the wonders of you have done, the things you have planned for us. None can compare with you. Were I to speak and tell of your deeds, they would be too many to declare. And then in verse 7 he said, here I am. I have come. It is written about me in the scroll.

Oh, listen to this kid, folks. I desire to do your will, my God. I'll say that one again. I desire to do your will, my God. Your law is written within my heart. You see, David had remembered God's faithfulness and trustworthiness to him and he was ready to put his trust back into God's hands and his life back into God's hands and do his will. That's what trusting God is in the paths of our lives.

[18:14] It's wanting to do God's will. Next slide, Shelley. But do we trust God with everything? Do we trust God with our health? Verse 8 says, trusting God on God's wisdom and following his way in your life will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. But what if your health is failing and your bones feel weak? You feel like your legs can't hold you up because you're under so much pressure in your life.

Does it mean you're not wise? Does it mean you're not on the right path? Not at all. It means that you need going through a difficult time and you need to trust the God you've put your trust in at this stage.

It ultimately boils down to learning to trust God in every situation. Just like the apostle Paul did when he went and had an imprisonment, a shipwreck in a storm, which I'll speak of later.

And somebody spoke about emotions as well. And I thought this is important that we talk about this because when we're going through difficult times, our emotions are very, very real and really valid. God knows this. We spoke about this in our Bible study group. It's so important that we are real with God because he knows how our hearts feel. He knows our pain. It is all right to say, God, this is rubbish.

[19:39] I'm really not liking this. He'll get it. But though they are real and valid, our emotions aren't a good indicator of the truth of God in our lives. You see, God's word is the truth. And even though we don't feel like it or don't understand why, we need to go to his word to see the truth. See the truth that God loves us. See the truth that he is with us through the storm and see the truth that he will see us through to the other end, even if the other end isn't what we want or what we expect. We still can trust him. Here's some passages that speak of truth in our lives. And I want you to think of these situations. Are you going, waiting for a medical answer or a miracle? And you want to know that God has got you and won't let you go. Well, listen to what Isaiah wrote about Jacob and his descendants.

So do not fear. I am with you. Do not be dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you and I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. And then in verse 13, he says, for I am the Lord, your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, do not fear. I will help you. Isaiah 49, 15 says, he won't forget us. When you're awake in the wee small hours, because those are the hours that you do ponder on things that we shouldn't really. Well, Psalm 121, 4 reminds us that God is awake too. He never slumbers or sleeps. And therefore, he will keep watch over you because he promises it.

Are we anxious about anything? You know, it's all right to be a bit anxious every now and again. What isn't all right is if you keep it to yourself. What we've got to do is submit it to the Lord. And he'll help us with that anxiety, with that anxious thought. It says in 1 Peter 5, 6, 7, cast all your anxieties. It's like, throw them on him. He can take it. Give them all to Jesus because he cares for you. And then, are you feeling overwhelmed by tsunami waves? God, through that build, Mike and I thought we were hit by one tsunami after another. And I know there are people here that have been through the tsunami waves for years, not even months. And it's hard. Hold on to Isaiah 43, 2 to 3.

Peace. It says this, when you pass through the waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you. Those tsunami waves come. But trust God that they will not overwhelm you if you hold on to him. He's your life belt. And just in case you and I didn't get it, if we let him, Psalm 3 to 5 to 6 says, God will direct our paths. He will instruct us, Psalm 32, 8 says, and teach us in the way we should go. So if you're wondering where you should go, ask him. He says he will counsel us with his eye upon us. So let's go to the word and to God, the God we can trust in, and read the truth about the situation we're in. Remember, he's got you and he's got this. Believe it,

even when you don't feel it. This passage in Proverbs also tell us to honor the Lord with our wealth. It says, honor the Lord with your wealth, God's provision, next slide, Shelley, with the first fruits of all your crops. And then your barns will be filled to overflowing and your vats will brim over with new wine.

[23 : 18] And, well, it's so easy to think that if I give to God, he's going to just give me much more. And you can be giving and expecting. But that isn't what this is about. And God isn't easily fooled.

He'll know if you give with the wrong heart. He'll know if you give to get. And it shouldn't surprise you as a Christian that this isn't about giving, but it's more about giving, getting. It's more about giving. The whole matter of learning to trust the Lord with our wealth is linked to the instructions in Proverbs 3. It says, my son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and the word prosperity.

Now, the prosperity that the Bible speaks of isn't health and wealth. And faith isn't based, should I say, your health and wealth isn't based on your faith. We are not a prosperity gospel where we say that if you haven't got faith, then you don't. If you haven't got health and wealth, then you don't have faith. That's not what God says. The prosperity the Bible speaks of isn't health and perfect health and wealth all the time. As Christians and followers of Jesus, our life journey is a journey with Jesus. So we are to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and then do what Jesus did. This is a journey of our lives to the very end. And the prosperity that the Bible speaks of is God's desire for us to be in his will. That's the prosperity we're talking about here. And be in his will on the journey of our lives, no matter what part of the journey we're in, no matter what happens, good or bad. The apostle Paul wrote about his desire to visit the church in

Romans 1. And to paraphrase the King James Version, he said, I want to come and see you, and I'm praying for a prosperous journey. What the prosperous meant in that is that he was praying for God's will on this journey. And if any of you know about the journey, if you've read about it, you would think, what? Because the journey was some journey that he went on. First of all, he went on the journey as a prisoner. And as a prisoner, he had no rights to anything. And yet, he got favor to go to his friends and get the provisions he needed for that journey on a boat, on a ship. And that ship, they had to change. Then they lost time. They were driven by a violent storm with one anchor down. And when that didn't work, they put four anchors down and still got shipwrecked.

And yet, God's direction and landing and timing was perfect. They ran out of food for days and days, and yet bread was provided for them to be broken so they could give thanks to the Lord God that was looking after them in this storm. Now, they all thought, they weren't listening to Paul at all.

[26 : 21] They ignored him. And they thought that a lifeboat would be the place to be, to be saved. And yet, God said, stay on this ship. Now, when we are in trouble, we want to bail out, don't we?

We want to think, well, where's the nearest lifeboat? Because I don't want to be in this boat that's going to collapse. An impending doom advanced, but God sent this message. Now, halfway through trouble, don't you want to hear from God to think that you know that he's there with you, that he cares? Well, here we have Paul saying that's exactly what he did.

He sent a message by an angel to keep your courage. And we need that in the middle of a hard time, don't we? We need to keep courage. But he didn't just send that message to Paul.

He sent it to all the other people on the boat, and they weren't Christians. So remember that when you're in the boat of a storm, and you've got people around you. The message is for them too. God had said to them, this is going to be the roughest ride you've ever had, and your boat is going to get shipwrecked. Now, they didn't want to hear that, but it did.

It got shipwrecked. But listen to this. God took them from the depths of the sea and brought them in fathom by fathom by fathom until that boat was in a place where everybody could, when the boat broke, have a plank to rest on if they couldn't swim or swim and get to the shore. God's provision was throughout the whole journey. You wouldn't say it looking on the face of it. But the truth is, he was there. He provided for them all, all the way. But most importantly was that Paul touched the lives of everyone on that ship. Every single one of them saw him trust the God that he believed in.

[28 : 09] And so they could trust God too. And he eventually did get to Rome in God's timing, in God's plan, and in God's way. Now, that was 2,000 years ago, and I'm nearly finished now. But more recently, Jerry Bridges wrote in this book, Trusting God, he said this, God's plan and his ways of working out his plan are frequently beyond our ability to fathom and understand. We must learn to trust when we don't understand. And that's true. Chuck Colson was President Nixon's right-hand man. He falsified information in the Watergate crisis, and he landed up in prison. But whilst in

prison, he came to faith.

He found Jesus as his Savior. And he promised his inmates that when he got out, he would come back and speak to them. And he did. On Easter Sunday, he sat there in the congregation. And he was waiting to address them. And he had these thoughts, and he wrote them in the book. And this is what he said.

As I sat on the platform, waiting my turn at the pulpit, my mind began to drift back in time to scholarships and honors earned, cases argued and won, great decisions made from lofty government offices. My life had been the perfect success story, the great American dream fulfilled. But all at once, I realized it was not my success God had used to enable me to help those in this prison, or in hundreds of others like it. My life of success was not what made this morning so glorious.

All my achievements meant nothing in God's economy. No, the real legacy of my life was my biggest failure, that I was an ex-convict.

My greatest humiliation, being sent to prison, was the beginning of God's greatest use in my life. He chose the one experience in which I could not claim glory for his glory. Isn't that incredible?

[30 : 17] This was said by a man who relied on his own understanding, relied on his own wisdom. And then he caught hold of Jesus. And then he realized, actually, God's wisdom and God's understanding is far better than mine. And God gave him a new direction, and it wasn't what he expected.

Proverbs 3, 3 and 4, instructs us to let his love and faithfulness never leave us and bind them around our neck. Write them on the tablet of our heart. Then we will win favor and in good name, in the sight of God and man. Chuck didn't let go of God's love and faithfulness to him when he got out of prison. He could easily have walked out of prison and forgotten what he was told, what he was bound to. But he used what God had given him in the worst time of his life to preach the only words that he knew to the other shipwreck mates in the prison. And the message is that anyone wants to hear, and that is God loves you, and he cares for you, and you can trust him.

And you can trust him even in the bad times when you've messed up. Chuck could be trusted to do that because he found himself in the same place as David. He was in the mud and mire. He needed to be lifted out, but he sang a new song of salvation. And that, I'm sure, will have saved a lot of lives in the prisons he visited. And he did. He won favor with God and man because those prisoners wanted to see him back there. They wanted to hear more about the Jesus and the God he put his trust in.

And I'm going to finish now with the last, next slide, Shelley. I want us to look at this as a part of learning. We're learning to trust God. It is a process. It's born over time and over witnessing his trustworthiness in the good and bad times. I want us to, Mike always highlights things in big bold letters. Well, I'm just going to ask you to say the whole thing with me. Would you like to just say this together? Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

In all your ways, submit to him and he will make your paths straight. Now I want to make that personal. Next slide, Shelley. I want us to say it like we mean it because that's the difference between an instructed and taking on board what we've been instructed. That's the difference between following God's wisdom and his ways and allowing his will in our lives. So shall we say this?

[33 : 03] It's a big task because when you say this, you've got to mean it really. Should we do it? Okay. I will trust in you, Lord, with all my heart and I won't lean on my own understanding.

In all my ways, I will submit to you, God, and I trust you will make my path straight. Do you? I hope you do. If you don't know this yet, God is trustworthy. You can trust with him.

He's got you and he's got this. Amen.