

What Is Faith
April 22, 2007
Proverbs 3:5
Pastor Carolyn McOwen

Most Thursdays and Fridays when I'm not here, I try to spend some time with each of my grandchildren. When our two year old, Emma sees me, she gets so excited and starts running, squealing, until she falls into my arms. I move towards her, bend my knees, getting down as low as I can, as she runs, until she reaches me. The older she gets the harder she runs and the harder she connects with me. **She doesn't question or wonder whether I will catch her- she just knows I will wrap my arms around her and lift her up.** It is the best!! The sad part of this story is that I'm not as trustworthy as Emma thinks I am right now. She will grow up and realize my frailties. I will let her down. But, as she grows up, my prayer for her is that she will know and trust God just as she trusts me and run to him with abandoned love and joy. For he is trustworthy and will never let her down. The more she gets to know me, the more she will see my shortcomings. Through prayer, the more she gets to know our Living God, the more she will trust him and lean on him.

Let us pray.

We continue this week in the series called, Discipleship Essentials, becoming disciples of Jesus Christ. We've learned about grace, justification, redemption, and what it means to be adopted in the family of God. Last week, Tom spoke of the good fruit that comes from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. **We keep hearing the words, Jesus in our hearts, the Bible in our hands, and our feet out the door.** But how do we do this? How do we put grace, justification, redemption, adoption, and good fruit of the Holy Spirit altogether? Through **FAITH**.

- Faith that Jesus is our Lord and Savior
- Faith that the Bible is true
- Faith that we are called to serve God and bring his message of the good news of salvation to all the nations.

So, what is this faith?

The text today is Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."

Most of the book of Proverbs was put together by King Solomon, around 970-930 BC. The Lord appeared to Solomon after being anointed king of Israel by his father David (1 Kings 3), and said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." Solomon asked for wisdom, "a discerning heart and to distinguish between right and wrong." Hence the book of Proverbs is considered part of the Biblical Wisdom Literature, where Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

So let us break these verses down.

"Trust in the Lord" means Trust in God, to regard him as the source of wisdom and power. It means to have confidence in him. A bold, confident security in God. A feeling of being so safe that we can be

carefree, like my Emma, and run into the arms of God. We can be so secure in our trust in God that we can, at anytime, run with childlike abandon into his arms.

In our culture, we put *trust* into practice daily. We trust the builders our house that it's not going to fall in on our heads. We trust the other drivers on the road every time we get into our cars. Every time I hear of someone in this congregation having surgery, I know trust has been put into the doctor's hands. Anytime we go into crowds, we trust the people around not to harm us.

But, we all are aware this week of how often this trust in people fails, this trust in systems fails, this trust in our society fails. And failed it did big time this week. Words cannot be put to all our emotions over what went on at Virginia Tech. What a breach of trust and personal security, a violation to our whole culture, our whole society.

So, these words in Proverbs, "Trust in the Lord," are very timely.

"Trust in the Lord With all your heart" means trust with whole conviction, with our whole mind, emotion, and will.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And do not rely on your own insight." Other translations use the word *lean* for rely. Do not lean on your own insight, or do not lean on your own understanding. We are not to lean on ourselves. We are to let go of our control. I find this interesting for a society who thinks "It's all about me" and "I can do it myself." Self-reliance, self-achievements. Look what I've accomplished!

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight, gives us a sense of putting our whole weight on God, resting and trusting in Him. This trust is not easy. It means giving up trust in one's own understanding and placing our full trust in Almighty God. Referring to the events of this week, **how DO we respond to what happened in Virginia?** All I can say is what Mother Teresa is famous for saying, **"All we need is Jesus, but we don't know that until Jesus is all we have left."**

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight, In all your ways acknowledge him, Acknowledge that every aspect of our life is part of our journey with God. Not one part of our life as a Christian is secular, separate from God. He is with us every minute of our life- when we wake up in the morning, at meal time, when we work, when we socialize, and when we sleep. The Hebrew word for **"acknowledge"** is much richer than our English definition. It actually means having 'fellowship with'. Have fellowship with God in every aspect of our life as he desires to be active in every detail. **As I lean down to hug Emma when she comes running, think how much more our God, whose love is perfect, leans down to pick us up when we go to him with even the smallest detail.**

The result of "Trust God with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight is that **"He will make straight your paths."** This does not mean that this path is without the problems, suffering, or pain. It **does** mean that the result of trusting God will be **a life that is used by him, a life that is right with him.** Romans 8:28, explains it this way, "We know that all things work together for good, for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." This is not saying that if we trust God, good things will always happen to us. This is what we call prosperity theology, but that is not Biblical theology.

If we put our trust in God, lean on him and not ourselves, let him control and direct our path of life, our life will be straight, that is, it will be righteous and honoring to him and bring him glory. We will find peace in the midst of any circumstances. And we can find joy in the midst of pain when God is in control.

Eugene Peterson, translates these two verses in the Message, this way, “Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track.” And then he adds, “Don't assume that you know it all. Run to God.”

The call of the Christian is to have the sort of trust that makes us prepared to put our entire lives into God's hands. Simply believing in God is no good to us. **We are to have faith, and TRUST is the practical outworking of that faith. How do we have this faith and trust?**

First, we must have confidence in God's character, for the object of our faith is **Christ alone**. The contemporary service often sings a song entitled, “You are holy”. It is one of my favorites because it praises God for who he is and then lists all His Names; Lord of lords, King of kings, Mighty God, Emanuel, the Great I am, Prince of peace, Saving Grace, Ancient of days, Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, Savior, Messiah, Redeemer, and friend. And **he never changes**, he's the same yesterday and today and forever. **He is faithful**. 2 Timothy(2:13) says, “If we give up on Him, He does not give up, for there's no way He can be false to Himself.” (from The Message) That is who we are to trust- wow!

Secondly, We are not only to have confidence in God's character, **We must have confidence in His Word and His Promises**. John Calvin's definition of faith is “a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us. Faith rest upon knowledge, not upon pious ignorance. This is why we study the Bible here at Geneva. **The more we know of God's love for us through his Word**, the easier it is to put our trust in him. So, here is a plug for all the classes that are being offered- take advantage of the new Adult classes on Sundays and the different studies during the week. Women in the Word just started up again last Tuesday. Come join us! Quoting John Calvin again, he said, “Faith needs the Word as much as fruit needs the living root of a tree.”

Kathleen Chapman, our own Mark Chapman's mother said at MOPS on Monday, “We can't worship God until we love him. And we can't love him until we know him.” This knowledge comes from studying God's Word, “the Bible in our hands.”

This faith involves the whole person- heart, soul, and mind, and strength. Faith is a response of the ‘heart’ and not the mind alone. Intellectual belief without **faith in action** is hollow and meaningless. We are to use our minds that have been given to us, **but then we must also let the Holy Spirit lead us and respond to God with our hearts**. We can't understand the ‘why’ behind the tragedy at Virginia Tech this week. Our minds bring nothing but anger, pain, and revenge. But faith, even little faith, brings hope, “assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Heb. 11:1)

Corrie ten Boom described faith as a “Fantastic Adventure in Trusting God”

As one of your pastors, it is my privilege to see your faith in action, to have a little peek into some of your fantastic adventures in trusting God. I was with a dear woman last week, who had to tell her mother that

there was nothing else to be done to heal her- that it seems like God will be calling her to her eternal home and it would happen soon. As the mother was absorbing the news, they discussed all the believers in their family that have died before them, whom they both have hope that they will see them again. As the daughter was talking, she was filled with the strength of God as she leaned into him for the right words of comfort to give to her mother. Of course there was tears, but there was also hope of eternal life.

I have a question for you. **Where in your life, do you need to lean on God for his wisdom and direction?**

Another woman came to me for prayer, as she was very unsettled at work. As part of upper management, she was told that her work should be number one in her life. As a Christian, she was very uncomfortable with this. So, **after much prayer**, she went to her boss and said that her work could not have the # 1 place in her life. It has to be Jesus Christ. Her understanding of the situation is that she might get demoted or a worse scenario, lose her job. But, she is trusting in God, acknowledging him and resting in his peace that he is in control of her life- every detail of it and knows what is best for her. That is faith! **My question for you- Is God calling you to trust him enough to acknowledge him publicly with your peers?**

Another dear person here at Geneva is having experimental treatment to save her eyesight. When I talk to her, I couldn't help but feel her peace and joy in spite of her situation. It is because she is confident in God's will for her life. She experienced his provision many years ago, when her husband suddenly died two weeks before she gave birth to twins. Life was out of control for her at that time, she had to lean on Jesus. And as she did so, as he took control of her life, her problems were there, but she knew God was in control and directing her path. She knew she wasn't alone in raising her twins. This is faith; and this is what is bringing her peace as she faces this health situation with her eyes.

So ask yourself this question- **What situation in my life do I need to surrender to Jesus and allow him to direct my next step?**

One of our family's favorite program on television, I hate to confess is "American Idol." I don't have time to critique the show, the good and the bad, and yes, there are lots of opinions out there about this show. One of the good things that has come from this show is the song that will follow this sermon. As Emily sings it, please follow along with the word in your bulletin and ask yourself, **What area in my life do I need to let Jesus take control, to take the wheel. In what area do I need to not rely on my own insight and surrender to my trustworthy Lord and Savior?**

Let us pray noting that at the end of every prayer we say "Amen" which means "It is true, it is trustworthy."

In the prayer, ask for childlike faith to run into the arms of God, giving him the control.