



LOVE GOD STUDY TRUST GOD

SPIRITUAL OUTCOME DEFINED

Trusts God and not idols (e.g., money, relationships, career) as the source of one's security, joy, and purpose.

SPIRITUAL OUTCOME DESCRIBED

Some may think that a follower of Christ can be described as someone who believes in the existence of God and believes in the deity of Christ. Simply believe that God exists and that He sent His Son, and you are considered a Christian. While this is true, it is incomplete. It misses the critical distinction between *belief* and *trust*. A person might believe an airplane can fly but not be willing to trust in the airplane by actually boarding it and experiencing flight.

To become and live as a Christian involves not only believing in the existence of God, but entrusting our lives and well-being to God through Christ. James wrote, “*You believe there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder*” (James 2:19). Or put another way, even enemies of God believe God exists and that He sent His Son.

Belief without whole-life entrustment implies a lack of relationship. If God is all-knowing, all-wise and demonstrated His deep love for us by sending His Son, what better option do we have than to trust Him with our very lives? And yet, we gravitate toward things other than God for security, purpose, and well-being, effectively making these things gods.

There are many things we can place our trust in instead of God: money, social status, vocational advancement, beauty, marriage, family, politics, and more. Not all of these things are inherently evil, but it is the misuse of these things that makes them so. We are wise to recognize that they make lousy gods and serve us best in their rightful place. David, the warrior and king, knew this distinction well when he wrote, “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God” (Psalm 20:7).

“Personal saving faith, in the way scripture understands it, involves more than knowledge. Of course it is necessary that we have some knowledge of who Christ is and what he has done, for ‘how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?’ (Rom. 10:14). But knowledge about the facts of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection for us is not enough, for people can know facts but rebel against them or dislike them.” - Wayne Grudem

EVIDENCE OF THIS SPIRITUAL OUTCOME IN A PERSON’S LIFE

- Enjoyment of God’s gifts (e.g., money, friends, opportunities, jobs, etc.) without clinging to them.
- Willingly follows God, even when it hurts (losing the deal rather than compromising integrity, losing the relationship rather than compromising morals, etc.).
- Willingly follows God, even outside one’s comfort zone (engaging needed but risky conversations, following God’s promptings without full understanding, etc.).
- Has a rested spirit and an absence of striving.

GUIDANCE

Read each passage multiple times. Then write your observations about the passage and any thoughts you have from the discernment question. What do you notice in the passage, and what does this reveal about your life?

EXODUS 17:8-16

Observations:

Discernment Question: Moses and the Israelites entrusted their battle to God. What do you do when life battles against you (engage, escape, pray, eat, drink, etc.)? What are practical ways you can entrust your battles to God?

EXODUS 20:3

Observations:

Discernment Question: What is God's greatest competition in your life? What "gods" might you go to rather than going to Him?

1 SAMUEL 17:41-45 (ESPECIALLY 17:45)

Observations:

Discernment Question: If Goliath was living your life, what would he point to for his confidence (education, finances, skills, strength, etc.)?

PSALM 20:7-9

Observations:

Discernment Question: What is the equivalent of “chariots and horses” in your life? What does it look like to entrust your well-being to God whether you have these chariots and horses or not?

PSALM 147:10-11

Observations:

Discernment Question: In what ways do you think God is delighting in you in this season of life?

PROVERBS 31:30

Observations:

Discernment Question: How have physical attractiveness or physical strength affected your confidence in life? Have they brought about either arrogance or insecurity? If so, why and how might your confidence in God (or lack of confidence) influence these areas?

JEREMIAH 1:4-8

Observations:

Discernment Question: What has God called you to be or do, but you have hesitated due to insecurities?

HABAKKUK 3:17-19

Observations:

Discernment Question: How have disappointments and unmet expectations affected your trust in God?

MATTHEW 6:25-34

Observations:

Discernment Question: How has having material possessions and money affected your trust in God? How has not having material possessions and money affected your trust in God?

MATTHEW 8:23-27

Observations:

Discernment Question: What “wind and waves” are currently rocking your boat? How might you experience God’s peace despite these challenges?

MATTHEW 14:13-21

Observations:

Discernment Question: What are the loaves and fish in your own life God is wanting you to entrust to Him?

NEXT STEPS

What are practical next steps you will do based on what you have discovered in this survey of Scripture about cultivating trust in God? Include insights offered from others in your Life Group that could be applied in your own life, as well.

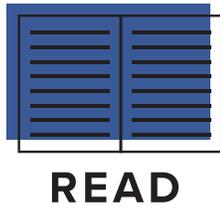
MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE

Psalm 46:10, NIV

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV

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.



LOVE GOD TRUST GOD

THE PILOT

A wealthy man lives in a large home next to his own airstrip. Beside his house is a hanger with his private plane. The man is a licensed pilot and with his resources and skills; at a moment's notice he can go virtually anywhere. He could fly to New York City and catch a show on Broadway. He could fly to Colorado and spend a few days skiing. He could fly to California and learn how to surf. All of this is available to him, but for some odd reason, he does none of it. The airplane rests in the hanger, collecting dust, while the wealthy man sits in his chair and watches television.

Why?

Maybe he had a close call and developed a fear of flying. Maybe he likes the idea of flying, and the idea of the freedom associated with flying, more than he actually likes doing it. Or, maybe it's none of that. Maybe he's just lazy. It sounds adventuresome and exciting to dart all over the world, but it also takes a great deal of energy, and he'd really rather just be at home.

There are countless other possibilities, but the bottom line remains the same: the man is squandering a golden opportunity.

OPPORTUNITY

Consider the opportunity available to those who follow Christ. Available to us, through Christ, is the presence of God in our lives. This is the grandest of opportunities. The God who created us, knows us, and loves us, wants to do life with us. The question is, are we taking full advantage of this opportunity?

We can have all the trappings of following Christ. We associate with a church. We read Scripture. We agree with the essential doctrines. We do good in the world. Put simply, we have the airplane and the airstrip. But the trappings of following Christ are not the same as authentically entrusting ourselves to Christ. The person who truly trusts Christ is the person living an ever-increasing, liberated life. These are the people who get up off the couch, get into the airplane, taxi to the runway, and entrust themselves to the power of that plane.

Scripture puts it like this: *"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder"* (James 2:19).

Belief in the existence of God, and agreement with the doctrines of Scripture, is important. A person must know the plane can fly. But belief in these doctrines is very different from trusting God. A person who trusts God will lead a very different life.

As we fan the flame of our trust in God, let's consider four questions.

First, what is trust? Second, what competes with our trust in God? Third, what does trust empower us to do? And fourth, what inhibits our trust?

WHAT IS TRUST?

When a person sits in a chair, he *trusts* the chair for his safety and comfort. This simple example gives a clue to two aspects of trust: the object of the trust, and the promise made by that object. In this case ...

The object of the trust: a chair
The promise: safety and comfort

Likewise, when a person buys a car, he is trusting the car. The same two aspects of trust are seen.

The object of trust: a car
The promise: reliable transportation

So when we trust something, we must be clear about what we are trusting that something to do. It makes no sense to say, "I trust God," but to not be clear about what we are trusting God to do. A person wouldn't trust a chair to do what a car will do, and he wouldn't trust a car to do what a chair will do. The chair will do chair-things, and the car will do car-things. We are counting on them for different things.

So what exactly do we mean when we say we must trust God? Trust God for what? Are we trusting God to be good and reliable transportation, as we would trust a car, or are we trusting Him for more than this? Clearly, something far greater is at stake. What exactly is it?

Jesus made the following claim: "*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full*" (John 10:10b).

Much more can be said about this, but let's keep it simple. The promise this "chair" makes is that if we trust in Him, He will give us *life*. We look to God, through Christ, for life. The word "object" may sound odd for God, but the meaning is clear.

The object of our trust: God
The promise: life

This leads to our second question.

COMPETITION

What *competes* with our trust in God? This may sound like an odd question, but its important when we consider the above mentioned promise. We look to a chair for safety and comfort, we look to a car for reliable transportation, and we look to God for *life*. If *life* is the promise, what might we look to – other than God – to give us life? What do we look to and think, "If I only had _____ then I would have life?"

One major contender is money. There's no question that money captures the imagination of hearts and dreams.

And from a certain vantage point, this is understandable. Money provides food, shelter, clothing, health care, and more – the very things we need for *life*. If God promises life, and money provides many of the things we need for life, it's no wonder Jesus compared a trust in money to a trust in God.

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money
(Matthew 6:24).

Scripture does not belittle money. Scripture reveals a great deal of wisdom with regard to money. Much more is addressed than just giving money away. We're told how to make it, spend it, save it, use it, and yes, give it. We're told that money will be involved in everything we do. Money is neither good nor bad. Like all tools it's a matter of how it's used.

But what happens when financial security is our ultimate security? What happens when it's the foundation of our lives? What happens when we trust money more than God?

When we do this, money is effectively our god.

The result?

Something deep within us knows we're vulnerable. There's never enough money to bring impenetrable security. There's always something or someone that could cause us to lose it all. There are countless needs money can't meet. People trust money for the security it brings, but there are holes in that security that breed insecurity.

This has led many away from the money-god. "*Certainly not me,*" you might say, "*I'd never be so greedy as to make money my god. I saw previous generations do that. I'm not buying into it.*"

How about friends?

"But friends are real. Friends are important. Friends give life meaning and purpose. Even more, the second greatest command is to love people."

True. Right. Good.

Dangerous.

What happens when ultimate security is wrapped up in finding the ideal spouse? Is our well-being resting in the hands of a strong relational world? Is life finally secure when we have friends down the street, a spouse in bed next to us, and kids in the back seat?

It's clear how money can effectively become our god; relationships hold the same potential. We've all experienced friends who cling to us in ways that don't feel healthy. We've witnessed parents whose identity is wrapped up in their children. Maybe we've been that friend or parent. Maybe we've looked to others for something they just weren't capable of giving. We hoped they'd satisfy something in us they just were not capable of satisfying.

What's that about?

Make a friend into a god and the friendship will be terribly disappointing. They will inevitably let you down. Turn a spouse into a god and the marriage will suffer, if it makes it at all. Squeeze prospective spouses too tight and they run for the hills.

Why?

Yes, we were made to be in relationship with others, but we instinctively know we're not qualified to do the god-thing.

A friend? Yes. A god? No.

The list of God's competition can go on and on. When we ask, "What do I look to/trust to give me life?" we unearth a long list of potential replacements for God.

Many people believe in God, but fewer actually trust Him, which leads to our third question.

EMPOWERED

What exactly does a trust in God *empower* us to do? To say we trust God for *life* is both good and important, but let's bring that down from an aerial view and put it at the street level. How will trust manifest itself in my daily living?

We can look at this from many angles. Let's consider two.

Trust empowers us to act.

Trust empowers us to rest.

TRUST EMPOWERS US TO ACT

The Israelites had been liberated from slavery. As they made their way to the promised land, they faced countless obstacles. One such obstacle was opposition from a people known as the Amalekites. Exodus briefly records the encounter.

The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands." So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up — one on one side, one on the other — so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword. (Exodus 17:8-13).

The Israelites are attacked. They defend themselves with the sword, but their sword is empowered by something greater than the strength of their swing. When Moses stands with arms raised and the staff outstretched, the Israelite warriors are winning. When Moses lowers his hands and his staff, the Israelite warriors are losing. Moses quickly realizes this and labors to be fully submitted to God. He tires and his friends surround him. He is given a place to sit. His arms are held high with the support of his friends. All the while, the Israelite warriors fight on the field of battle and ultimately defeat their enemy.

This story is a powerful example of the power of trust toward action. The Israelites took action, they stepped onto a battlefield. The effectiveness of this action, though, was not powered by their swordsmanship, but by their trust in God. This kind of faith was so ingrained in Israelite culture that it shows up in numerous passages.

His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of the warrior; the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love (Psalm 147:10-11).

If we trust God, we will take on our own version of the Amalekites. We will step onto the battlefields of life, empowered not just by our swords, but by our uplifted arms to God. Those who trust in their own strength will be limited by their own strength. Those who trust in God are trusting in a God of limitless power.

TRUST THAT EMPOWERS US TO REST

For many of us, taking action and stepping out onto the field of battle is not our problem. The real problem is stepping off the battlefield, letting things go, or taking much needed rest. Yes, trust in God inspires action, but it also inspires the exact opposite. Trust empowers rest.

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” (Exodus 20:8).

The Israelites were commanded to rest. This command would be challenged when they were wandering in the desert after being delivered from Egypt and had to rely on God for their food. God provided a bread-like substance called manna. The manna would appear in the morning, the Israelites would gather it, and if they attempted to gather more than they needed, the manna would spoil by the next morning.

The one exception to this was the day before the Sabbath. On this Sabbath-eve, they were to collect two days worth of manna. On this particular day, when they gathered a double portion, the manna stayed fresh, and they ate their full on the Sabbath without having to labor for it. What happened, though, on that first Sabbath after receiving their manna was predictable.

Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none (Exodus 16:27).

Despite the command to rest, and despite the double provision the day before, some of the people couldn't sit still. Likely driven by anxiety for their well-being, they stepped out of their tents, jars in hands, and hunted for more manna. This action, and this lack of rest, displayed a lack of trust.

God calls us to action, but He also calls us to pull away and rest, letting God be God. This rest may test our faith more than any other. In the name of being “responsible” we often deny the trust we profess and scurry about in nonstop busyness. Authentic trust will lead us to take action, but it will equally lead us to lay our work down and rest.

WHAT INHIBITS OUR TRUST?

Our final question is about what gets in the way of trusting God. It's one thing to intellectually know we should trust God, but it's quite another to actually do it. When we consider inhibitors to trust, we quickly come into a problem we might call “projection.”

Projection is when we project on God the distrust we have experienced of other authority figures. Yes, we may want to trust God, but Scripture describes God as a “Father,” and maybe our earthly father failed our trust. Or maybe it wasn't a father or mother, but maybe we have been burned in other relationships.

Wounds from those we've trusted that no doubt show up in other relationships, including our relationship with God. Despite our desire to trust God, we may be held back by these wounds and need to address them directly.

At a minimum, two things help us deal with these wounds and the problem of projection: awareness and truth.

Awareness is when we identify and acknowledge wounds from other relationships that inhibit our trust in God. This awareness is powerful. Hidden wounds impact us in ways we don't know, but once that wound is known, it loses much of its power.

Awareness is complete when we take the identified wound to Scripture to discover truths about God that differentiate Him from those who have hurt us. Scripture describes this as *taking thoughts captive*.

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Thoughts plague us, and they often lie to us. It's for this reason we must develop depth of insight into Scripture and depth of insight into God. When we do this, we discover truths that heal us by strengthening our trust in the God who genuinely loves us and not only wants what is best for us, but has the power and authority to do what is best for us.

TRUST

As mentioned above, many people believe in God, but far fewer actually trust Him. May this not be true of us. Scripture tells us that *“we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved”* (Hebrews 10:39).

A life of shrinking back is no life at all. True life, the life God intends us to live, is a life entrusted to Him, taking full advantage of the opportunity He has given us.

There’s no gain in owning an airplane and keeping it hidden in a hangar. True faith gets into the cockpit, fires up the engine, pushes the throttle forward, and pulls back on the stick. When we do this, we take full advantage of the opportunity given to us. God is available to us. He wants to do life with us.

Yes, this will take courage. This faith-inspired courage will lead us to action. And other times, it will take just as much courage when that faith leads us to rest.

Such is the adventure of a life of trusting God.



LOVE GOD TRUST GOD

We have to ask ourselves four questions about trusting God:

- What is trust?
- What competes with our trust in God?
- What does trust empower us to do?
- What inhibits our trust?

The following exercise is designed to walk you through these questions in a way that personalizes them to your own experience. You're encouraged to thoughtfully and prayerfully consider the questions. Some of the questions will be more important for you than others.

Dive deep and listen for what God's Spirit wants to teach or reveal to you.

WHAT IS TRUST?

We have already identified two aspects of trust: the object of our trust, and the promise that object makes.

Chair

- The object of our trust: a chair
- The promise: safety and comfort

Car

- The object of our trust: a car
- The promise: reliable transportation

We then asked, what is it we are trusting God for? Based on John 10:10, we said we are trusting God for life.

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10b)

God

- The object of our trust: God
- The promise: life

Based on this, consider the following three questions about whether or not we are authentically looking to God for *life*.

- When you consider an all-out pursuit of God, do you believe this pursuit will give you life or limit your life? Will God bring you into a life you want or will you be missing out? Why?

- How have you seen God produce life in you?

- Where are you not experiencing life because of not trusting God?

WHAT COMPETES WITH OUR TRUST IN GOD?

We previously acknowledged that if *life* is the promise, we may look to other things to give us life other than God. By doing so, we run the risk of giving these other things god-like status in our lives. Scripture refers to this as idolatry.

This is not to say that God doesn't bring wonderful gifts into our lives, and these gifts may be desired. Do we treat these gifts as a *need*, or do we treat them as a **NEED**? Consider the following three questions to unearth God's prospective competition for your trust.

- What are your initial thoughts? What do you look to, or what could your heart be drawn to, as your definition of life? "If I only had _____, then I would have life."
- How do you, or how could you, entrust these things to God rather than trust in them? How could you hold them more open-handed?
- Consider areas of your life where you commonly struggle to obey God. What are you believing or not believing that causes you to not trust God in these areas of your life?

WHAT DOES TRUST EMPOWER US TO DO?

We have already identified two things that trusting God empowers us to do.

Trust empowers us to *act*.
Trust empowers us to *rest*.

Use the following six questions to thoughtfully and prayerfully consider how God may be calling you to greater action or deeper rest.

Action

- What is God calling you to continue to do that you are already doing?

- What is God calling you to do that you are not yet doing?

- What will it take to let your trust inspire needed action?

Rest

- When do you experience rest in your life?

- What keeps you from experiencing deep spiritual and physical rest in your life?

- What could you do to exercise your trust in God by embracing deeper rest? What practical things do you need to do? What spiritual perspectives do you need to carry?

Either audibly or in written form below, talk to God about what you have addressed in this exercise. Thank Him for what He is revealing and ask for guidance toward what's next.

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