



Understanding Trust

PROVERBS 3:5

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.” These words of wisdom hang in frames on walls, live forever in ink on bodies, and are shared on social media where they increasingly accumulate “likes.” They are memorized and spoken by believers every day all over the world. This verse is a quick and simple invitation into the presence of God, into abiding.

As I sit in my comfortable chair in my home by the beach, having no reason to not trust God, I find these words difficult to live by. For me, trusting is an action of my mind, not my heart. It is a choice I make - to trust my husband, to trust my doctor, or to trust my paycheck will be deposited on time. When any recipient of my trust threatens that decision, I must choose to trust them still or take corrective action.

But with God, there is no opportunity for trust to be threatened. He cannot fail; he cannot let us down. He cannot break trust. Perhaps this is where our hearts come into play, when our minds are not threatened by the possibility of broken trust. What a wondrous place to rest - the absence of worrying if God can be trusted, and totally surrendering to what trust truly feels like. Perhaps this feeling is beyond our understanding, as it is not wholly familiar.

We cannot lean on our own understanding because trusting God with our hearts is beyond what our minds can conceive of.

It makes sense, then, that these words are shared often, imprinted on wall decor and on skin. The freedom that comes with fully trusting God is beyond that of trusting in people or systems. It is a deeper freedom where minds and hearts meet. It is not a place we easily understand, as we cannot fully experience this connection of heart and mind with anyone or anything else, where there is a possibility of broken trust. It is a feeling of peace in the deepest part of our beings.

“Lean not on your own understanding” because trusting the Lord is a matter of your heart, not your mind. It is not only about choice, but surrender.



When the Arrow Strikes

EPHESIANS 6:10-18

When an arrow pierces its target, it hurts more than just the surface. Pulling it out becomes even more damaging than the initial impact. The skin and whatever organs are immediately behind it are wounded beyond repair.

But the front of the tip is not the most dangerous part of the arrow. The front makes a clean cut, and if this was the primary injury, only a few stitches would be needed to recover. Assuming there was no infection, the area would be left with a scar and otherwise unchanged after healing. But arrows are much more deadly, not because of the tip but because of what comes after.

The back catches after it goes in, macerating what was a clean cut, turning it from a simple laceration into a deadly wound. Any hope of repair is destroyed as this damage takes place. Healing is possible, but only with more extreme measures such as transplant or removal of the affected area altogether.

Paul speaks of our fight in a spiritual battleground in Ephesians 6:10-18. Satan shoots his flaming arrows at us, and we can protect ourselves from them with a Shield of Faith. Although the imagery is not literal, this battle is real. We fight an enemy who is actively working to steal, kill, and destroy us. His arrows may not always be physical, but the impact of his weapons are just as harmful to our mind, body, and soul as arrows would be.

Paul mentions the weapons we yield and the armor we wear as tools we can use for spiritual battles. The shield - which is our faith - actually diminishes the work of evil. Growing in our faith loosens the grip Satan has on the bow. God fights for us, and faith in him is our responsibility in this fight. As we grow in our faith, we grow in our protection.

By the grace of God, healing and redemption is possible even if the arrows pierce us, causing pain and leaving scars. Perhaps the fire that's meant to destroy can actually cauterize the wound? God has the power to turn what was meant for evil and use it for our good (Genesis 50:20). He can use the flaming tips to cauterize the injury, preventing more damage and beginning the healing process immediately upon impact. In the moments we are struck when our shield is down, not all hope is lost. Healing can still come, and instead of bleeding out, we can be restored.

We can win the battle. In fact, Jesus already did. Even if our shields fail us, the Great Physician won't.





Linked With Love

PHILEMON 1:1-25

There is an undeniable link between gratitude and love. Paul writes to Philemon sharing his thanks for *him* and for his *love* for the church. He makes a request to Philemon, but is clear to explain that he is not ordering, demanding, or persuading him to grant his request. Instead, he is asking him *in love* to *show* love.

It begins with Paul expressing his gratitude for Philemon, reminding him that he is on his prayer list. When you think about the people you pray for regularly and the people you love, the list probably overlaps a bit. It is generally easy to pray for those we love. Conversely, it is also easy to love those we pray for. But our hearts are not so strong that we can hate those we pray for.

You may have some people in your life that you wouldn't use the word "love" to describe your relationship with. How many of those people do you pray for regularly? I don't prompt this question to persuade, guilt, or shame; much like Paul, I ask this in love knowing that your heart is capable of more. You are not the Grinch. Your heart capacity is much bigger than its size.

Holy Spirit power living inside of you means you have the love of God - unconditional love - accessible to your heart. Think about the people in your life that you may not want to give thanks for. Choose one of them to begin praying for them. Ask God to bless them, to reveal himself to them, to meet their needs. Selflessly add them to your daily prayer list. Send them a note in the mail or a text saying you hope they have a good day. If they own a business, make a purchase to support them. These small actions take little time out of your day but make a big difference in the kingdom because they foster love. Depending on the relationship, it may not feel comfortable; it doesn't need to. Our comfort is not the goal - gratitude and love are.

This devotional is not rhetorical. It's not just a cute idea that you can read about. It is a real request and will only be a benefit to you and the person you are praying for. It is your faith in action, your heart softening, and your gratitude being expressed. Today, show love like Paul.

