

Trust God

Good morning church! It is great to be with you this morning.

My name is Robbie Isley and I have the privilege of being the Director of High School Ministries here at Coram Deo. I want to take a second and thank Pastor Rob for giving me the opportunity to share with you this morning.

As we close out the summer and begin to usher in fall, I want to take some time this morning to encourage you. I want to show you how God worked this summer and how I had to learn to trust even more.

I found myself in a position where I was saying, “you need to trust God in this. We can’t worry about this; we need to trust.” Whether it was nerves about an upcoming event, or conversation, whatever it was, I was extremely comfortable telling everyone else to trust...and then. Then God said...guess what. Now you’re going to get to practice what you preach.

That’s where we begin. Through my experience this summer I hope to encourage you to Trust God.

Go ahead and open your Bibles to Proverbs chapter 3. **If you don’t have a Bible with you this morning, get the attention of one of our ushers and we will get one into your hands.**

We will be reading verses 5 and 6, this is arguably one of the most well-known passages in church world, but this has undeniable truths and encouragements

As you get there, I want to tell you a little bit about this summer. The first thing you need to know is haven’t slept since Memorial Day. See last summer we were in the midst of a pandemic, and everything got cancelled, which unfortunately began to seem very normal, but it was far from normal.

Once the summer hit, school got out, we as a Student Ministry team were in full force preparing for camp. We actually begin planning details out right after LIFT in February, but now came the task of pulling it all together.

We only had a couple of weeks and then camp was upon us and I learned a very valuable lesson during camp. I missed more than just a week of camp the summer of 2020. I missed out on time with our students, time to build relationships, time where I could pour into them, and time I got to witness our Youth Group leaders do what they do best. Love and disciple the students.

I got to witness that this year. It was amazing, time I will cherish forever. I was able to spend irreplaceable time with them and I have to say I picked up some of their mannerisms. So if you see me twitch...that’s why. I got it from them.

So...there hasn’t been much time for sleep, and the times I do have for sleep my mind is racing because I’m excited about what God is doing in our student body.

Now that we have the context for this morning let’s dive into God’s word. Two short verses but packed full for us.

Proverbs 3:5-6.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. [slide]

Let me read that one more time.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Through this short passage I want to explore two points. Just two. Two points of encouragement and reminder for us.

The first point for this morning is:

- **Trust God Completely (5a) [slide]**

The first part of verse 5 says, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart”. To Trust God completely, is to trust with all of your heart, with your soul, your mind, you spirit, and actions.

With every inch of your being, every fiber of who you are, trust God. This is much easier said than actually done, though. Isn’t it?

Especially in the country we live in. If you need something...you go, get it. How often do we actually trust God with all of our heart, for everything?

Trusting God completely means that when all our conveniences fade away, we know that He remains and will supply us with what we need, not what we want, but what we need.

Trusting God is having a mindset that that, ‘even until death, I trust that He will supply me with more of what I need. And what I need is more of Him.’

Over this past year we have seen things taken away more than ever before in recent history. Even the basic necessity of human contact was taken away.

But God was, is and will continue to be there, even when everything else goes away.

Back in early March, when Danny Phillips, our outreach pastor, and fellow leader of the trip, and I decided that we were going to take a group of High School students to Belize I began to stand face to face with the decision of whether or not I was going to trust God completely.

By worldly standards attempting to take a group of High School students out of the country for a week was not a bright idea.

Because of COVID no guarantee if the trip was going to happen, if we would get stranded down there, or what, but we knew that God wanted us to trust him in the process and that he had lessons he wanted to teach us.

We continued to walk through the doors we saw God open and decided not to stop until those doors were shut and sealed.

So, we held the meeting in March and 15 students sent in applications to go. Over the next few months, they began to raise support, attend trainings, apply for passports, and prepare for this trip. **[Team Pic]**

They began this process of planning for the trip during a time when travel was volatile, and their leaders didn't have answers to the questions they had.

If I had a nickel for every time I said, "I have no idea," from April to the end of July my kids would have a very large college fund.

This is when I really began telling them to trust. Trust that God will carry out his plan. Trust that God has everything taken care of. Trust that God's will, will be done.

That was the only answer I could give. My encouragement to the team was to trust completely.

And then....then the passports became an issue. And I was forced to trust God completely.

Many of us had to apply for passports to go on the trip. So we applied in April thinking that was plenty of time to receive a passport. It was not.

The week we left for the trip five team members, including my wife Anna had not received their passports and there was no sign that they were coming by the time we left.

This is where the rubber began to meet the road. Was I going to trust or was I going to worry and be anxious?

A stark reality was presented. Was I "trusting" that God would reveal his plan in the way I wanted it to be revealed, or was I truly trusting that God had the best plan in mind?

Of course, I wanted everyone to go on the trip, but what happens if that's not the case? Was God still good if things didn't go my way? Was God still trustworthy if my prayers were answered with a, no?

The conclusion I came to, was an absolute yes! He is still good if not everyone goes on the trip, and he is still in control.

With that in mind we began to prepare when I received a text from one of the students on the team telling me her dad knows "people."

About that same time, we found out that one student was to receive his passport the Friday before we left. Awesome!

The remaining four still needed their passport, but through the willingness of team members and parents to step up and be used by God they were able to get face to face appointments in Chicago the Thursday before we flew out of the country.

In one day, they were able to skip 18 weeks of processing and all four, drove home from Chicago with passports in hand.

God doesn't always work in the way we ask him to, but he always works in the best way.

If it were up to me, everyone would have had their passports weeks in advance and there would have been no stress whatsoever.

But that wasn't God's plan. God's plan was to force us to trust him in EVERYTHING and to give us a front row seat to experience him working through his people.

As you go throughout your days and weeks please learn from our experience. Even though things don't work out the way you expect or want them to God is working. Be aware of what he's doing! Trust God completely.

The lessons were not done for us. The passage tells us to Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

To put this in other words.

Trust God completely...

a. **But Yourself, not so much [slide]**

Look at the second part of verse 5 with me. "and do not lean on your own understanding."

There is no fancy deduction we need to make to get to this point. Scripture is clear to not trust in yourself, but to trust in God.

How many times in life have you pushed God out of the way and taken his place?

Trusted in your own abilities, your knowledge, your understanding, and had it fail? If you place yourself at the center instead of Christ, your understanding will fail. Maybe not right away, but eventually it fails.

The reality is that no matter what kind of wisdom you have, or think you have, you are a finite being with limited understanding.

God explicitly reminds us that we don't have everything figured out, the prophet Isaiah explains this when he records God's words in Isaiah 55:8-9.

This is God himself speaking, *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."* [slide]

This should be comforting. That God is bigger and smarter than you are, and already has everything figured out.

My team saw this firsthand.

As a team we had come up with a plan for the trip. Vacation Bible School was going to be flawless, Monday, Tuesday Wednesday. We were going to share the gospel through the wordless book bracelets. [pic of bracelet, leave up until explanation of colors is done]

If you don't know what it is, here's a picture. This is a gospel sharing tool that I grew up on and if you were a child in the 80s and 90s who went to a VBS, I'm guessing you have seen one before.

Black-sin; red – blood of Christ; white – washing sins away; green – Christian growth; gold – eternal life with God.

We had everything purchased, packed and ready to go.

Sunday morning July 25th the team was scheduled to be at the airport at 4:30 am to catch our 6 am flight out of town.

At about 2:30 am Anna and I were putting the finishing touches on packing.

When my phone rang. It was Grady Adkins. Getting a phone call from the executive pastor at 2:30 in the morning was enough to get my attention.

When I answered, I simply heard him chuckle and say, “So it begins.”

Immediately I knew something was wrong.

He was calling to inform me that Danny had two of his vehicles stolen just moments before Grady called me.

I thought to myself...oof bad timing. And then Grady proceeded to tell me that Danny had prepared and prepacked all of our Vacation Bible School supplies in the truck that was stolen.

I had no other response than to chuckle to myself. All of our supplies for the week were gone, just like that. At this point I had nothing to offer, but I had a choice.

I could become anxious, throw our hands in the air, and give into the thought that “this trip simply isn’t supposed to happen.” I mean from the COVID threat since the beginning, the passports not showing up...and now this?!

Or...I could practice what I had been telling the team from the beginning. Trust.

See, my understanding was that this trip was supposed to be flawless, and our planning was seamless and that’s what was going to drive the trip.

Man was I wrong, so I chose to trust.

So, without any VBS supplies we headed to Belize, praying that God would come through. That he would show up, not only for the children in Belize, but for the team. That they could have a firsthand experience of watching God work.

Although plans are good and being prepared is a good thing, there are times where God reminds us that He **alone** is what we need, and apparently sometimes that involves grand theft auto.

What is it in your life that you need to trust God with? What is it that you are holding onto so tightly that you are keeping God from working in your life?

Addiction? Selfishness? Skepticism? We all trust something or someone. Maybe it’s money, comfort, safety, security? Let go of whatever it is and turn to God. The truth is you make a horrible god.

You were never meant to play that part, and that’s a good thing. Trust God with every aspect of your life, his ways are higher than yours and he knows better than you do.

If you don’t understand what’s happening, trust that God, not only knows, but is in control of what’s happening.

This brings us to our next point for the morning.

- **Look to God for Everything. (6a) [slide]**

Look back at verse 6, it says *“In all your ways acknowledge him.”*

In all your ways acknowledge him. When you look at the flow of the text you see a pattern. Verse 5 is internal. Trust in the LORD with all your HEART, your internal self, your soul, your spirit.

Lean not on your own understanding, how you perceive a situation, what you know. Both of these instances, your heart, and your understanding are internal things.

But then we get to verse 6 and the writer switches the focus to external.

I struggled with this word acknowledge. Is it the same as when a child looks away from a screen with that blank stare after the fifteenth time of asking them to pick up their shoes, simply to finally show they heard you....then go back to looking at the screen? That type of passive acknowledgement.

Scholars have interpreted this word many different ways, but the text lends this to being an ongoing action.

Not a mental thing, but a physical acknowledgement, a seeking. Looking to God for everything.

Look to him to work. Look to him to move, to heal.

Ask him to move. To heal. One of the most practical ways we can look to God for everything is through prayer. Lift all of your cares up to God.

This is exactly what we, as a team, decided to do. To pray and to look to God.

Let me show you how God worked through our situation. So we head to Belize with no supplies, but there was a gentleman named Kyle who had just arrived in Belize the day before us.

Kyle is the youth pastor at Edgewood Baptist Church in Rock Island, he’d been taking trips to Belize for ten years and “just so happened” to have served New Jerusalem church for multiple years, the same church we were going to!

I had talked with Kyle the Friday before we left and were planning to meet in Belize. That was great, I was excited that someone from our area was serving down there as well.

When we arrived at the church Kyle was there and greeted us with a smile.

We talked for a few minutes and Danny shared what had happened to his cars and our supplies.

Kyle’s response was, “I brought a box of random craft supplies, it’s yours if you want it.”

This was awesome, but I have to be honest, I wasn’t hopeful that the supplies we needed would be in there. It wasn’t until I looked at the box of supplies and saw a bag of beads.

The exact beads we needed to make the bracelets, the final day’s craft, and the culmination of the gospel presentation.

God had provided!

The team decided to look to God for everything, all the details of the trip and he provided!

You may be sitting there thinking, so what, it’s a bag of beads. Yes...it was a bag of beads, but the bracelets have a long-lasting reminder of the gospel.

Here are some pictures of the kids with their bracelets. **[slide]**

The colors are designed to walk them through the gospel and if one of the colors was missing then the whole illustration falls apart, but that bag of beads had enough of the exact colors we needed to leave the children with a reminder of the gospel and how Jesus died to save their sins.

We knew that God would provide some way for us to join him in his work in Belize, but we never imagined he would take away our preparation and then provide us with supplies to be able to go along with our original plan.

The point of this is not that we got to go along with our original plan, but that looking to God for every detail we went to Belize confident that God would work, and that God would make a way for a group of willing teenagers to join him in ministry.

Remember the verse says, In “ALL” your ways acknowledge him. Look to him for everything, every part of life look, to him to take care of your needs. Physically, emotionally, spiritually.

God is the great provider, the great physician. He needs to be the first person you turn to when things are falling apart. Not your spouse, not your friends, or your children, boss, or otherwise, God needs to be the first one you look to.

He is the one with the power to heal and fix and make right. He’s the one that gives you strength to go to a job you hate. To lead your family when you’re exhausted. To walk the halls of a school you don’t want to be at.

Looking to God in all aspects of life means living life for his glory all the time.

This brings us to our final point for the morning.

Look at the text, *“In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”*

We expect to see something like, Look to God for everything and yourself, not so much. That would fit and that is true. But instead of a contrast here, God tells us what he will do. Not what we shouldn’t do, but what he WILL do. He will make your paths straight.

How awesome is that?

In essence... Look to God for everything...

And He will work it out. (6b) [slide]

He is going to be the one to work it out, he is going to be the one to figure things out. When you continually look to God for everything it is clear that he is the one who works it out.

“Make straight your paths” is to level the ground. God makes it better. Hear this...better does not mean easier, more comfortable, more money, more secure.

Better means joy. Better means we have hope. Even in the middle of hardships you can have joy because God makes your paths straight, he levels the ground which allows you to glorify him!

I look back at our time in Belize and can’t help but see this truth. He figured everything out, He knew the timing of the trip. While we were down there, we heard that the government was planning on shutting the country down again the following week.

One week later and there is a good chance the trip wouldn’t have happened.

He worked out all the passports, he moved pieces and brought attention to emails and 5 team members who did not have their passports at the beginning of the week were able to get them stamped as we entered Belize, because God moved. He made the path straight.

His timing with Kyle and the craft box was perfect.

God worked it out, not the way we had planned or, honestly, would have wanted, but he worked it out.

I want to caution you when hearing this, God worked absolutely, but not everything was perfect.

It is easy to read the book of Proverbs and see this wisdom and begin to think they are promises. Proverbs guides us and gives wisdom, but these are not promises to us. Especially when we think God will do everything the way we want it done.

For example, there were students who desperately wanted and were supposed to go on the trip that didn’t get to go.

I talked with a student who was not able to go on the trip and she shared with me what God taught her through not being able to go.

She said, “I thought I had to be involved in everything to grow closer to God. I thought I had to go to camp, the mission trip, be involved in so much to grow. But God showed me, as I was looking at the stars one night that I had grown closer to him even though I didn’t go. I used that time to focus on him and his goodness and I am now so much closer than I was before.”

God works outside of mission trips. He works in the every day. And a lot of the time he doesn’t work in the way we want him to, because we don’t know better than he does.

We don’t get to tell God how he needs to work in our lives.

No, you bring your prayers, your requests before him and then when you look to him, he will let you see him work.

We serve an amazing God that is intimately involved in our lives.

My overall encouragement this morning to you is to trust in God!

Let’s pray.