

“Trust me!”

We all trust someone at one time or another. I trusted a complete stranger with my life the other day when I had to travel to Los Angeles for a meeting. I hoped this unknown person was a person with a lot of training and experience, got a long with everyone else at work, and had gotten a good night's sleep – but I didn't know for sure. Who was this trustworthy stranger? The pilot of the airplane. I guess my trust was well-placed, since we arrived just fine.

There are other times we put our confidence in someone and the trust is misplaced. William Thompson was the first person to go by the title of confidence man, a name given him by the newspapers at his trial in 1849, although his particular line of work had been around for centuries. It worked like this: he would gain the confidence of someone just by chatting with them and eventually get them to let him hold their watches. Then he walked away. With the watch.

So what is the lesson here, that some people we meet are not trustworthy and others we never get to meet are the types we can put our full confidence in? Perhaps, but the real lesson to learn this week is that the Bible gives us reason to understand that Jesus is the one worthy of our full confidence and trust at all times for all purposes. Let's study together what it means to trust Jesus.

Monday – Eager to do Good

“It is easy to perform a good action, but not easy to acquire a settled habit of performing such actions.” Aristotle, 4th c. BC Greek philosopher

1. Please read 1 Peter 3:13-16. How might you show your eagerness to do good today (v. 13)?
2. In 2 Timothy 2:22, what does Paul tell Timothy? How can you develop these signs of maturity in your life?
3. What is the main problem in Isaiah 58:1-14? What situations have you faced where your supposedly correct behavior was not actually supported by your motives or attitude? How does Isaiah say to fix this?

Making it Personal: Pray for God to give you an eagerness to do good, and that you will honor him doing so.

Tuesday – Right Suffering

“To do good and be evil spoken of, is kingly.” Inscription on the Town Hall of Zittau, Saxony

1. Please read 1 Peter 3:14. What type of blessing can you imagine coming from suffering for doing good?
2. What description is given for a servant who suffers in Isaiah 52:13-53:12?

Text Insight: Isaiah wrote of Jesus centuries before his birth, as in this prophecy about the suffering servant.

3. According to Philippians 2:5-8, what is the extent of Jesus' suffering for doing good?

Making it Personal: Look for ways to share in Jesus' work through your own sacrifice today, asking God to guide you so that you will honor him in doing good.

Wednesday – In your Hearts

“Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him ... Oh for grace to trust him more!” Louisa Stead, 19th c. American hymn writer

1. Please read 1 Peter 3:14-15. How can setting apart Jesus Christ as Lord keep you from fearing those who can harm you when you do good?
2. In Philippians 2:9-11, what ultimately resulted from Jesus' sacrifice? How can this give you confidence even in the face of being ridiculed or harmed for doing good and honoring God?
3. What does Thomas's declaration in John 20:24-29 tell you about Jesus?

Making it Personal: Have you said the same as Thomas, that Jesus is God and that he is your Lord, the one you seek to honor above all others? Ask God to deepen your relationship with him more each day.

Thursday – Having the Right Answer

“Act honestly, and answer boldly.” Danish proverb

1. Please read 1 Peter 3:15-16. What would it take for you to be prepared to give someone an answer if they asked about your relationship with God?
2. What insight do you get from 2 Timothy 2:23-26 about responding to those who question your faith?
3. How did Peter answer Jesus in Luke 9:18-20? Consider– as Peter found with Jesus – that the more we speak with God and grow in relationship with him, the more ready we will be to tell others about him.

Making it Personal: Questions about God come in many forms: you might be asked what you believe, or simply what you did Sunday morning. How would you answer? Pray for God to teach you how to be ready.

Friday – Winning the Debate

“Truth gives a short answer, lies go round about.” German proverb

1. Please read 1 Peter 3:15-16. How can you be assured of a clear conscience while those opposed to you may end up feeling ashamed?
2. In Matthew 15:16-17, where did Jesus say Peter gained his knowledge from? Where should you look to get what you need to answer people effectively and correctly about God?
3. Now take a look at 1 Corinthians 2:6-16. According to verse 10, where does our ability to understand spiritual things come from? What does this tell you about other people's lack of understanding?

Prayer Focus: Pray for those you know who do not understand who God is and their own need for him, that the Holy Spirit will work in their lives and that God will use you to answer any questions they may have.

For the Weekend: Read Psalm 9:1-11. What did the psalmist's confidence in God lead to? Why? What guidance do you find there about developing your own confidence in God and how you should act on it?