

IMAGINE

TRUSTING **GOD**
LIKE NEVER BEFORE

7 Day
Devotional
Reading
Plan

simon lawton

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Day One: Imagine trusting God like never before

Readings: Proverbs 3:1-6

Charles Blondin the famous French tightrope walker was renowned for walking a tight rope 160 feet across Niagara Falls on numerous occasions. I've visited the falls and they are spectacular, completely mesmerising and the noise is thunderous as approximately 6 million cubic feet of water go over the Falls per minute.

Yet Blondin was fearless. He made his crossings more interesting by crossing blindfolded and then, with a stove, he cooked an omelette on the tightrope! In June 1859 he crossed with a wheelbarrow. He then asked the crowd if they believed he could push someone across in the wheelbarrow and the crowd shouted back enthusiastically, "Yes!" to which Blondin replied, "*Would someone like to step forward and get in the wheelbarrow?*" The crowd hushed and no one responded. ⁱ

Blondin proved that day that there is a massive gulf between belief and trust.

No one trusted Blondin enough that day to get in the barrow! It is the same with our spiritual lives at times. God doesn't want us to just believe - He wants us to trust Him!! I want to encourage you to imagine what your life would be like if you really, yes really trusted God!! Solomon, who was the wisest man who has ever lived, trusted God and he declared this familiar truth encouraging us to;

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

We would do well to take on board not just Solomon's wisdom but also recognise that it comes from God. I would encourage you to pause for a moment and read through this verse again. It is in fact an incredible promise and a conditional one at that. Consider during today what your life could potentially become like if you really did:

- *Trust in the Lord (and all that means) with all your heart*
- *Lean not on your own understanding*
- *Acknowledge God and submitted to Him in everything you do*
- *Discover the straight and prosperous paths God has for you*

Imagine the impact on your faith, your relationship with God and other relationships such as your marriage, family and children. Imagine the impact on your finances, job, career, ministry, health. In fact imagine the impact of trusting God with your future and your ambitions and dreams. Imagine what you might step out and do if you really trusted God.

I believe that, if we trust God like never before - we will live like never before!

Prayer

"Father, I surrender my life to you. Help me to really and deeply trust you with all my heart, not to not trust nor lean on my own understanding, to acknowledge you in all my ways and as I do - please make my paths straight. Amen."

Day Two: Trust is the issue

Readings: Psalm 41:9; Psalm 146:3; Proverbs 11:28; Psalm 20:7; Isaiah 26:3-4

We live in a generation where trust has been almost completely eroded. Trust levels are at an all time low. A man's word used to be his bond but not any more. Sadly at times, politicians lie, car salesmen sell us piles of junk, estate agents break their word, supermarkets deceive us, fake news is rife and even family members let us down.

We simply struggle to trust anyone and the result is that we really struggle to trust even God. There has been an erosion of trust! Everything we are and everything we do in this world flows from that relationship of trust with our wonderful creator and Father - God himself. We were created to TRUST GOD! Deeply! Unswervingly! Totally!

We simply have to re-connect and begin to really trust Him. Once we do then our lives, relationships, marriages, financial affairs, service and ministries will be transformed. In fact every single area of our lives will become transformed. We will mature, develop fully, grow and become fruitful.

Can I encourage you, in spite of your experiences, what you've seen and perhaps the way other people have let you down - to start to really trust God again? Let's make a choice to trust God more today than we did yesterday and to really begin to develop and enlarge our trust in Him. Often our trust can be in our own abilities, skills, bank balance, spouse, friend - anyone or anything other than God.

King David recognised the danger of trusting in anyone or anything else;

"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God."
(Psalm 20:7)

David learned it initially fighting the lion and the bear and later of course when tackling Goliath. He also fought many battles and faced many challenges to his kingship but he learned down the years to trust in one thing only - the Lord! The central verse in scripture declares;

"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." (Psalms 118:8)

Make a decision today to really put your trust in God - maybe for the first time. He will never let you down or abuse your trust. He is completely trustworthy and absolutely deserving of your trust.

Prayer

Pause for a moment and ask God to help you to go on a journey of trust and to help you trust Him more every day. Commit any situation or context wherein you are particularly struggling to trust God and ask for His special peace.

"You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord himself, is the Rock eternal."
(Isaiah 26:3-4)

Day Three: Trust in the Lord

Readings: John 14:1-6; Revelation 19:11, Psalm 145:13

The motto on the American dollar states, *'In God we trust.'* This serves as a reminder to all Americans in whom they should place their trust. What do we actually mean by trust? To trust means to place a *"firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something."* (Oxford Dictionary) ⁱⁱ

To trust in the LORD with all our heart means to hide in Him for refuge and to place *all my confidence* in Him. Solomon had learned to, *'Trust in the Lord with all [his] heart....'*

Have you?

Those well know words so easily roll off the tongue but let's remind ourselves who this is we're talking about - the God of the Bible, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The God of Moses, Joshua, Esther, David, Jeremiah, Peter, Paul and He is your God too.

You can trust God completely because He is the TRUTH, His Word is truth, He is trustworthy and totally consistent in all He does. He has a proven track record.

Jesus said *"I am the way, the TRUTH and the life"* (John 14:6) and *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Trust in me also."* (John 14:1)

Jesus is described in this way in Revelation:

"Then I saw heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. Its rider was named Faithful and True, for he judges fairly and wages a righteous war." (Revelation 19:11)

Can I encourage you today, no matter how you feel and whatever you're facing to trust in the One who is Faithful and True? At times God may appear to be absent by His silence, however that doesn't mean He has forgotten you.

He is not human like us - blesses one day and curses the next, loves one day and forgets the next. He is consistently loving and completely trustworthy! He is faithful to all His promises.

"Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does." (Psalm 145:13)

Prayer

Today - why not choose, in spite of the circumstance to live by faith not by sight and to trust, yes really trust in the One, who above all is faithful and true.

"Father, in spite of the circumstances and how everything looks right now, I choose to live by faith and not by sight and to trust in you completely for you are my precious Father, who has promised never to leave me nor forget me. I make a choice, with your help, to keep my eyes fixed upon you. Amen"

Day Four: Trust with all your heart

Readings: Ezekiel 11:17-20; Psalm 86:11; 2 Chronicles 16:9

The heart is used in the Bible figuratively for the feelings, the will and even the intellect and also as the very centre of our being for example, “*out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.*” (Luke 6:45)

Charles Stanley challenges us with this quote:

"Basically, there are two paths you can walk: faith or fear. It's impossible to simultaneously trust God and not trust God." iii

It appears that at times, whilst our desire is to trust God, we perhaps have a divided heart. If we're honest and reflect for a moment we'd probably agree, that there are some areas of our lives where we find it easy to trust God, for instance - with regards to salvation, His Word, the work of the Cross forgiveness, eternity etc. However we often struggle to trust Him with our money, job, health, family or our future.

God recognised that Israel had issues of the heart and that in fact their hearts were divided:

*"Therefore say: This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again. " They will return to it and remove all its vile images and detestable idols. **I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them;** I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God." (Ezekiel 11:17-20)*

There are so many places in the Old Testament where God tells His people how much He loves them and reminds them how much He cares for them, only for them to continually have their hearts drawn away by idols, heathen religions, worldly possessions and pleasures.

God repeatedly exhorts His people to have an undivided heart, a heart that loves Him alone, *trusts Him alone* and seeks after Him only. Clearly, like us today, they struggled to do this and their hearts were divided. I guess like us - they knew what they ought to do and how they ought to live but struggled to live like it consistently.

Prayer

Why don't you make that passage from Ezekiel your prayer today? Ask God to forgive you for not trusting Him enough and ask Him to give you an undivided heart, to put a new spirit within you and cause you to trust Him and be ready to do His will.

If we trust God like never before - we will live like never before!

Day Five: Don't lean on your own understanding

Readings: Isaiah 40:28; Isaiah 55:8-9; Romans 11:33-36; Jeremiah 10:12 & Romans 12:2

You may have never heard of Buckminster Fuller. He created the “*Knowledge Doubling Curve*” when he noticed that up until 1900 human knowledge doubled approximately every century. In fact by the end of World War II it is thought that knowledge was doubling every twenty five years. ^{iv} Today things are not quite as simple because different types of knowledge have different rates of growth. For example, it is said that nanotechnology knowledge is doubling every two years and clinical knowledge every 18 months. However average human knowledge is doubling every 13 months. According to IBM, the impact of the internet will eventually lead to the doubling of knowledge every 12 hours.

Mankind has become so clever! Never has a generation had so much knowledge and yet lacked so much understanding & wisdom. We are ever seeing, ever hearing and yet not really understanding. However God's knowledge and understanding is incredible and indescribable. He is all seeing, all knowing, all powerful and everywhere present! He is infinite and immortal and His wisdom is unfathomable. Part of trusting God with all our heart is to learn to seek and depend on His wisdom and understanding rather than our own limited viewpoint.

As I look back on my life I realise that I have made so many mistakes, misjudgements and poor decisions. There were occasions where I trusted my own instinct and gut feeling rather than trust God. I rushed into things at times and it cost me dearly. Maybe today is a day to slow down, back off from that major decision and talk to God about it. There really is no rush. God is sovereign.

We must learn first to trust and then, as we trust, not to depend on our own limited understanding (all part of trusting). In fact as we trust - we're making a decision to trust His understanding rather than our own!

“My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the Lord. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8-9)

It is so important that we recognise that God has a clearer understanding than us and that we must depend on His understanding rather than our own, if we are to walk down straight paths and experience life in all its fullness. Imagine what our lives would be like if we really got hold of this.

Prayer

“Father, forgive me that so many times I have leaned on my own understanding when I have been dealing with people, circumstances and decisions. Thank you that you see everything and everyone as it truly is. Your understanding is way beyond mine and so today I make a choice to trust you and let you lead. I make a choice to seek your counsel in every important matter and not to make life changing decisions without first consulting you. Father - help me to see everyone and every situation as you see it. In Jesus' name. Amen.”

Day Six: In all your ways acknowledge him

Readings: Proverbs 3:5-8 (TM); James 4:13-17 & Isaiah 30:1-3

Every day you will have brief passing conversations with people that go something like this: *"Hi mate. How are you doing?! You ok?!"* We all do this!

I suspect God in His wisdom, is suggesting a little more than a passing acknowledgement in our relationship with Him. Yet so many of us in the busyness of our everyday working and family lives, fail to find time to do little more than pay lip service to this primary relationship. If we're honest, involving Him in our day to day lives and decisions can be a rare occurrence. Most of our decisions are made with little consultation with the one who knows all things - past, present and future.

Somehow, within the busyness, we must find a way to carve out time to spend with the One to whom we entrusted our lives in order to talk and listen to Him. Early morning works best for me but each of us has to discover our own rhythm. As I look back, too often my prayer has been, *"God bless my plans!"* I refuse to live like that any longer. I take time over my decisions. As someone once said, *"It's better to sleep on what you plan to do than to be kept awake by what you've done!"*

Now my prayers have become, *"Lord, I'm letting you take the lead here. This is what I'm considering - what do you think? Lead me, guide me, speak to me. Shut this open door if you don't want me to walk through it. I trust that You know what's best for me and my family."*

Can I encourage you to seek God over a period of time and refuse to presume on Him or act unless God speaks to you (more than once)? This is a challenge and takes self-discipline but is more than worth it. I love this quote:

"Waiting in prayer is a disciplined refusal to act before God acts." (Eugene Peterson) ^v

We all hate waiting. We hate to slow down the process. We want it now. However God, who always desires to guide our lives, is never in the rush that we are. Let's not settle for second best but rather be those who wait for His very best in our lives.

Imagine how your life would change if you sought to acknowledge God in all your ways. Imagine what would happen if you developed an ability to hear God's voice clearly. Imagine the blessing you would be to those around you. Do you think God might be wanting to re-develop your trust in Him. In fact - what do you need to take a *'time out'* for and talk to God about right now.

Prayer

"Father, in all my decision making, both large and small, help me to slow down and acknowledge You. Help me to create space in which you can speak. In the really important decisions of my life please lead and guide clearly. Speak through your Word, speak through your people. Allow me to be alert to that 'still small voice' saying, 'this is the way walk in it.'"

Day Seven: He will make your paths straight

Readings: Psalm 18:36; Proverbs 4:1; Psalm 5:8; Psalm 23:3; Isaiah 48:17

I was about five or six years old when my parents told me I was adopted. I can remember walking to school that day thinking that I was special because my parents had chosen me to be their son. As a baby available for adoption, I'm more than aware that I could have ended up absolutely anywhere; however, God placed me in a Christian family.

As I look back on my personal journey, I can see that God has been straightening out and directing my paths. It's quite clear that God's fingerprints have been all over my life. Forensics would confirm God has been present all the time. In fact, as I reflect, I would suggest that God has been orchestrating, directing and straightening out my paths since before I was born. I'm sure the same is true for you.

If we will learn to really trust Him with all our heart and live out Proverbs 3:5-6 then the promise is that God will make our paths straight. Commentators over the years have argued about what this means. I've unpacked this more in my book 'Imagine' however I believe that God will lead and guide us along the right and righteous paths. They will be prosperous paths, and He will clear the obstacles and make them straight and level paths. However nowhere in the bible does it promise a smooth and easy path. The CEV version states:

"Always let him lead you, and he will clear the road for you to follow."

When we relocated to lead the church in Newcastle in 2008, I accepted the position right at the end of May. In Britain, you have to apply for school places the previous Autumn, and places are allocated during the winter. We started looking at schools for our daughter Amy in the middle of June, just a month before they closed for the summer holidays. There was little chance of getting a place for Amy at a good school, or so you might think. However, God miraculously cleared the way and she was offered places at two of the top schools in the city, both of which were oversubscribed at the time. God cleared the path for Amy to attend one of the best schools and her grades improved massively as a result. She is a teacher herself now.

Can I encourage you today, however difficult you are finding the path that God has placed you on to trust Him with all your heart. Let Him lead. Let Him guide and direct. Let Him remove the obstacles and straighten out your path. If you've gone your one way and taken a detour then perhaps it's time to get back on track. Whatever you do, learn to trust Him more today than you did yesterday and allow Him to make your paths straight. Imagine what God would trust you with tomorrow if you trusted Him more today...

Prayer

"Father, thank you that whether I was aware or not, your hand has been guiding my life until this point and will continue to lead and guide me. Please don't stop especially when I'm being difficult and stubborn. Forgive me and lead me forward and as I learn to trust you more and seek you and lean on your understanding, rather than my own. Continue to lead me along straight paths. Please remove every obstacle as I follow you and may my whole life be an example of someone who fully trusts you. In Jesus' name. Amen."

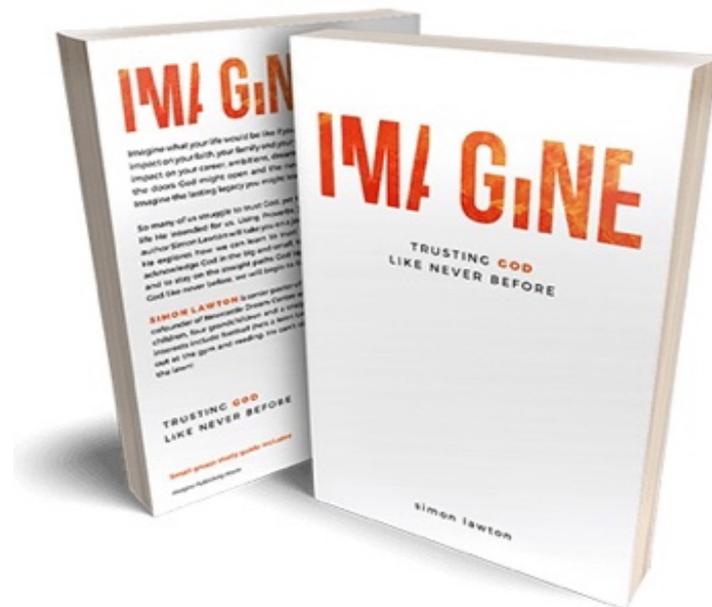
More from the author

If you've enjoyed reading these daily thoughts - why not consider purchasing the book **'Imagine'** which expands on those thoughts and unpacks what it is to really trust God more.

Using Proverbs 3:5-6 as a core text, pastor and author, Simon Lawton, will take you on a journey of new faith and discovery. He shares with great transparency from his own journey. He explores how we can trust God fully, overcome fear, acknowledge God in the big and the small, and trust in His infinite knowledge, and to stay on the straight paths God lays out for us.

A recent review stated:

"Imagine is a brilliant read and it is challenging too. Using Proverbs 3:5-6 as the central scripture and Simon Lawton's personal journey, the important issues of trust and faith are discussed in depth. It's easy to read, enjoyable and has really helped me think long and hard about God's calling for my life and how I can trust Him with so much more. Well worth reading, whether you are exploring or are new to the Christian faith, or if you have been a Christian for years – there's something in this book for everyone. Highly recommended."



'Imagine' is available on Amazon, Barnes & Noble and at all good online stores across the world. To purchase click on the links below:

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Connect

Simon Lawton is the Senior Pastor of Encounter Church in Birmingham having previously pastored Elim Church Newcastle with his wife Julia. They have five children, six grandchildren and a crazy little dog called Alfie. Simon's interests include football, travelling, park runs, movies and reading.

You can read more of his thoughts at my website/blog: simonlawton.com

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If you have any comments, suggestions or have noticed any typos then please email me at: revlawton@gmail.com

Endnotes

ⁱ The Charles Blondin Story: creativebiblestudy.com/Blondin-story.html

ⁱⁱ Definition of 'trust' in English Oxford Living Dictionaries:
en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/trust.

ⁱⁱⁱ Stanley, C., 'Choosing Faith Over Fear': crosswalk.com/devotionals/in-touch/in-touch-aug-22-2012.html.

^{iv} Schilling, D., 'Knowledge Doubling Every 12 Months, Soon to be Every 12 Hours':
industrytap.com/knowledge-doubling-every-12-months-soon-to-be-every-12-hours/3950.

^v Peterson, E., *Earth and Altar: The Community of Prayer in a Selfbound Society* (IVP, 1985).