

Why I Can't Seem To Trust God:

By

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Introduction

Lately one of my biggest struggles has been trusting God. I've been a Christian for a number of years, but I find myself struggling to truly trust Him at various times in my life. Although I've trusted Him for salvation, in "practical" or "tangible" matters, I've not been as faithful to Him. During difficult situations I've found it so easy to think only on the "bad" that's happening and lose focus on God and what He's done in my life. When I pray about a situation, I find myself begging or praying out of fear and desperation, instead of faith and trust.

This lesson focuses on the "quicksand" of doubt and why it seems difficult to trust God at times. Doubt leads to a damaged relationship with the Lord and missed blessings. So, in this lesson, we'll discuss how to keep this from happening.

Scriptures Used In This Lesson

Proverbs 3: 5

Hebrews 11: 1

Exodus 14: 31, 15: 22 – 25

Exodus 3: 7 – 10

Exodus 17: 1 – 7

Numbers 13

Numbers 14

Background

Moses had been called by God to lead the nation of Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land. After a series of miracles and a "great deliverance" (crossing the Red Sea), God led the people out of Egypt and into the wilderness. The original plan was to spend a "minimal" amount of time in the desert and then cross over into the Promised Land. The desert or wilderness became the "testing ground of faith" for the nation of Israel. It was the place where God attempted to teach the people to trust Him and establish a right relationship with Him.

During their wilderness period, the people "failed" the test, i.e., the people complained to Moses (and God) about certain needs not being met. Routinely Moses would pray, and God would provide for the need. Ultimately, this repeated pattern of grumbling and distrust cost the nation what they desired the most.

What Does It Mean To Trust?

A good starting point is to define what is meant by “trusting in God”. Proverbs 3:5 - 8 is a favorite passage of mine. Whenever I read it, the encouraging words remind me that God is in control. Read this familiar passage.

In verse 5, the word “trust” comes from the Hebrew word, “batach”, which means:

to trust, trust in, to have confidence, be confident, to be bold, to be secure, to cause to trust, make secure, to feel safe, be careless

The word comes from the idea of throwing something of yours on the back of someone else. So, if we are trusting God, we are secure, confident, and bold. We feel safe because we have “thrown” our own cares on His back. We no longer carry the burden.

By the same token, we need to know what “faith” is. A foundational scripture on faith comes from Hebrews 11: 1.

“Faith” in this verse comes from the Greek word “pistis”, which comes from the root word “peitho”, which means:

1. Persuade, to persuade, i.e. to induce one by words to believe
2. to tranquillize (to relieve of mental tension and anxiety)
3. to persuade unto i.e. move or induce one to persuasion to do something
4. to be persuaded, to suffer oneself to be persuaded; to be induced to believe: to have faith: in a thing
5. to believe
6. to be persuaded of a thing concerning a person
7. to listen to, obey, yield to, comply with
8. to trust, have confidence, be confident

If we have faith in God, we are persuaded in His ability (and not ours). We feel tranquil (relieved of mental tension and anxiety). If we have faith, our actions are characterized by obedience. We walk with confidence.

Can you think of a time when someone you know trusted God in unusual or difficult circumstances? What was their demeanor, i.e., how did they conduct themselves during this time?

Now that we have a better understanding of trust and faith, we can explore common reasons why we step into the “quicksand of doubt” so many times.

Quicksand: Common Reasons We Don’t Trust

We can’t see God – We are a people who live by our senses. If we can see it, feel it, hear it, smell it or touch it, then it has meaning to us; it seems more real to us.

God is invisible. We can't touch Him in the same sense as we can touch a book or tree; He seems distant at times.

We don't know Him – It's more difficult to trust someone you don't know. When you think of your best friend, spouse, or parent, it's easy to trust them. You know them; they don't have to identify themselves when they call you. You recognize their voice immediately. You even know when their voice is "altered" because of a cold or sore throat. You've built a history with them. Trust also comes more naturally because of your emotional tie with that person. By contrast, with someone you don't know, trust is more difficult; it is more of a choice than a feeling.

Our current circumstances seem more real – Since God is invisible, He sometimes doesn't seem as real as our current situation. The physical or emotional pain, the pile of unpaid bills, the pink slip from work, are all tangible and appear more real than our Creator. Because we are "buried" in our circumstances, we lose sight of our Helper.

Fear – Fear is a powerful emotion. It can affect our thinking, actions, attitudes, and health. If God is leading us into a situation that causes us to be fearful, then we may have a tendency to not trust Him.

Anger, bitterness and other strong emotions – We are physical beings with emotions. If our emotions rule us, as opposed to the Spirit of God, then, we won't trust Him. We sometimes have a tendency to make decisions and handle situations by our feelings as opposed to a trust in God.

Listening to others – Sometimes we'll listen to others and "what they would do" as opposed to listening to God or godly advice. We'll trust the opinions of others before we'll trust God.

It's not what we want – Sometimes it's hard to accept something that we don't want to hear or do. Like little kids, we'll reject things that aren't what we want. We want what we want, and we want it now.

We forget what God has done for us in the past – When we're in the midst of a crisis or a prolonged situation, our minds have a tendency to become so consumed with the current events, that we never take time out to remember all that God has done for us in the past. Reflecting on His faithfulness to us, provides encouragement, faith and confidence. It allows us to collect ourselves emotionally and "prayerfully respond" to the situation instead of "emotionally react" to it.

Sin – Sin, by definition are those thoughts, attitudes, actions and conditions which separate us from God. If we are separated from God, we will not trust Him.

The last time you found yourself not trusting God, what was the “real” reason? What was the consequence of your not trusting God? Can you think of other reasons people don’t trust Him?

Why Didn’t Israel Trust God and Can It Happen To Me?

To get a better feel for the “quicksand of doubt”, we need to look at some specific incidents in the lives of the Israelites immediately following their Exodus from Egypt.

Exodus 14 describes how Pharaoh chased the Israelites to the shores of the Red Sea after leaving Egypt. It also tells us how God stood between the Egyptians and Israelites in pillars of a cloud and fire, allowing the Israelites the opportunity to cross the Red Sea during the night. When the Egyptians tried to cross, the wall of water on either side fell in on them and they drowned. The Israelites, ecstatic with joy, praised God, sang, and danced because He had destroyed their enemies. Three days later, though, their joy slowly turned to doubt. Read Exodus 14:31, 15:22 – 25.

What need did the people experience? Was it necessary? How did they approach Moses (and the Lord) about that need?

Now read Exodus 16: 1 – 16. Pay particular attention to verse 3; this verse reveals the Israelite’s thinking.

The people complained and preferred to have died in Egypt. The description of their life in verse 3 is distorted; they were slaves in Egypt and treated harshly by their captors. They cried out to the Lord for deliverance, and He answered their prayer. Read Exodus 3: 7 – 10. Apparently now they want to go back to Egypt where things were “good”.

Why do you think their thinking was so confused? Why would they feel life was “good” in Egypt? Have you or someone you know been confused like this, i.e., left a bad situation and later looked back on it and wanted to go back? Why did your/their thinking change, especially if the bad situation remained bad?

Do you feel that the Israelites were trusting God at this time? Why or why not? Did God ultimately supply the need?

Let’s read about one more test. Read Exodus 17: 1 – 7.

Did God deliver them from slavery? Did He perform many miracles during that deliverance? Did He supply all their needs in abundance in the desert? Then, why couldn’t the people trust God?

Has God performed miracles in your life? Has He made “a way out of no way” in your life? Has He supplied every need you have had (although maybe not in the way you expected)? Then, why can’t you trust God?

Re-read the list of common reasons why people don’t trust God. Which one of the types of “quicksand” traps you the most?

The Price of Doubt

As I studied the scriptures concerning my lack of trust in God, I came across Numbers 13 and 14. I was almost in tears as I read these chapters. The price of doubt was much higher than the Israelites could imagine. Read Numbers 13 and 14.

The price of doubt was essentially “death”, i.e., physical death in the desert and separation from intimacy with God. At the edge of their biggest blessing, the Israelites let *repeated* doubt steal it away.

Have you lost any blessings from God because of doubt? Do you know someone who has? What did it cost them? What was their “quicksand”? Did they learn to avoid it or did they step in it again?

Summary

The last thing we need in this life is to lose a blessing from God due to doubt, especially a big one. The remedy for “quicksand” is to make a *choice* to trust God, and to stay in prayer and the Word to keep from “stepping into the sand”. Because of God’s invisible nature, we should avoid being driven by our feelings during difficult times; *we will have to make a choice to trust.*

As we grow spiritually and become closer to God, making the choice to trust will come easier. There may be times of “uncertainty”, but as we mature in Christ, the “uncertainty” will become less frequent and shorter in duration. *There is no substitute for a growing, personal relationship with Jesus Christ.* You will not survive without Him.

While doing some research for this lesson, I discovered that quicksand only becomes a danger to you when you struggle. First, it is rare that pits of quicksand are very deep. They may first appear dangerous, but rarely will they cover your entire body. Secondly, our bodies are significantly less dense than quicksand, meaning that we can “float” on top of quicksand. The less we struggle, the more opportunity we give nature (buoyancy) to take effect and lift us to the top, out of danger. The more we struggle, the quicker we sink. Once our legs and arms become submerged, it becomes more difficult to save ourselves. The key is to stay calm at the first sign of danger, and to rise to the top of the situation.

During difficult situations, we need to stay calm. If we trust God, and not struggle, we will allow His “buoyancy” to lift us above the situation. We just have to make a decision to trust. We will receive the benefits, and He will receive the glory.