**FEAR AND TRUST**

*"Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."*

- Corrie ten Boom, author of *The Hiding Place*

*“But when I am afraid,*

 *I will put my trust in you.”*

 -Psalm 56:3

The absence of deep trust in God’s goodness and power is fear. Each one of our fears has a spiritual root, all directly linked to our view of God. These fears are often perpetuated through our own lack of trust and self-reliance. Let’s first explore the process and purpose of pain, loss, and disappointment, and then the self-made yokes we create to cope with our doubt. What does it mean to trust God in times of suffering and doubt? When our plans don’t work out, our prayers aren’t answered as we had hoped, or our dreams aren’t fulfilled as we had expected. We get frustrated, impatient, worried, and fearful. God may seem far away, distant, or maybe even cold, and we conclude that He just isn’t good or He isn’t as powerful as we had thought.

Read Genesis 17:15-19. Abram and Sarai were promised a child. Years and years pass, and no baby had come. Had they misunderstood God? Maybe they’d read too much into His promise. Maybe they have been misunderstanding God. In desperate efforts to fulfill their own desires, they took matters into their own hands. Through Sarah’s instigation, Abraham fathers a child through his maid Hagar, and Sarah claims the child as her own. Though this was a common practice in ancient Israel, God had been clear that the child would come through their marital union. Their disobedience (devised solution) brought strife, jealousy, and envy into their household. Their attempt to provide for themselves a son actually destroyed any peace or satisfaction they would have had, if they had chosen to just trust and wait patiently for God’s promised provision. Sarah’s life is a clear example how attempts to devise our own solutions only yield more anxiety and stress.

*Is there anything you’re waiting for, or praying will happen?*

When God’s promises are slow in coming, we so often stop believing that He will keep them. Or maybe we just try to reinterpret His promises to comply with our own hopes, dreams, plans, and schedules. If we stop trusting that God’s path for us is best, then we are certain to seek our own solutions and take hold of whatever we can get our little hands around. The sad truth is that we just hate to wait. We crave a life we can control, and we will be tempted to try and wrangle the reins away from God when He doesn’t give us what we want.

Even when God revisited Abraham and Sarah to remind them of His promise for a child, Abraham still begged, “Let it be Ishmael!” in Genesis 17:18. He and Sarah were still so distracted and consumed with their own desires (brought about by impatience, doubt, and fear) that they were blind to the real blessing God had in store. Their view of God was very small. We, like Abraham, set our sights on second best when the ultimate blessing awaits us. But here is the wonderful part: God fulfills His promises anyways! Genesis 21:1 says, “The Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as He had promised.” Our God is so gracious!

So often God acts contrary to how we think he should act. The answer we think we need seems so logical and clear in our way of thinking. This is where trust comes in. Real trust isn’t the belief that God will do a particular thing that I want, but the belief that God is good no matter what, and that He always provides.

**THINK (on your own):** How do we know that the Lord cares for us? He numbers every hair on our heads (Matthew 10:30). He has promised to provide for all of our needs (Phil 4:19), giving all things for our enjoyment (1 Tim 6:17). Our Lord tells us to be anxious for nothing, to cast all of our anxieties on Him, because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). He is on our side, and He has given us eternal life (Romans 8:31-32.) *\*Maybe you can write these verses out where you will see them every day*

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Look at Joshua 1:9. How did God meet Joshua in his fear?

2. When has God intervened in your life through profound disappointments or deep losses?

3. How did God use that to redefine your relationship with Him? or bring up questions?

4. What are some truths we can remember when we go through hard times in our lives?

**ENGAGING WITH OTHERS:**

Ask friends and family about the heartbreaks and disappointments of their lives. Ask about the promises (or hopes and dreams) to which they cling. Listen well. Pray that God will help you truly hear their hearts. Take the conversation to a more vulnerable place by sharing any dark or hurting parts of your own heart. You might be the one to step out on a limb and take things to a more honest place. Be brave.

**REFLECTION (talk & pray together):**

What weights are you carrying? What are the fears these things represent?

What do you know about the character of God and His care for you that contradicts the lies you believe? If we know He is faithful in our head, why do we doubt Him in our heartsl? Again, take some time and listen to the Holy Spirit.

**PRAYER / MEDITATION:** Lord, give me a bigger view of who you are, so that I believe your promises and live life fully, not weighed down by worry. Help me to see your character as it really is, so that I can have more faith in you. Help me to trust you more every day and to not fear the future, so that I can be content.