



Let Go

Trust God

Deanna Bartalini

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Let go to get something better

Strength for Weakness

Learning to let go and trust in God may seem like a topic for those who doubt and struggle more than a person of faith. I don't think so. I have faith, some days great faith and other days faith the size of a mustard seed but no matter what size faith we have God has given it to us and will give us more if we ask. What intrigued me about writing on this topic is our humanity in relationship to trusting God.

Our humanity, along with free will, is how God made us. All those emotions, needs, personality quirks, and desires are good. Sin then entered the picture and now we have fear, anxiety, disordered needs, and mistrust. In our humanity, we assign God traits that belong not to him but to people and that is why we need to think about how we trust God and learn to trust him more.

Before we can fully trust, there needs to be an emptying of self, a desire that instead of doing our will we follow God's will. I think that is a lifetime's work. We struggle mightily to give up our troubles, our worries, and our desires to God. We ask to be filled with what he wants to give us and knows we need. Yet we live in a world that tells us it is all up to us, we can be self-made, and we can have it all. We live in that tension between God and the world. When we fall short, is it because we have trusted the world and not God? In my experience, that is usually the case. I think I know better so I go ahead without bothering to talk to God first. Proudful, yes, but I doubt I'm the only one who has done that.

Life gets messy, plans unravel, discord all around and we call out, "Why God?" How many times were the problems because I did it my way? Instead of trusting I took matters into my own hands. I didn't want to bother God or maybe I was afraid of his answer. What if he asked me to let go? For me, not being able to let go is the biggest obstacle to trust. Even after years of being able to look back and see God's hand at work I still hold on, thinking I can do it all by myself. Why? Because there is that whisper in my ear, "you don't need help, help is for weak people, you're not weak."

I am weak. I am weak when I buy the lies. I am weak when I deny I need help. I am weak when I don't rely on God.

Emptying myself to be filled with God makes me strong. And with him, I can do whatever he asks me to do.

Trading weakness for strength

When we empty ourselves we ask God to trade our weakness for his strength. How do we do that? Prayer and study of scripture are two ways that are a tremendous help.

Look at this verse from Sirach 2:10: *“Study the generations long past and understand; has anyone hoped in the LORD and been disappointed? Has anyone persevered in his fear and been forsaken? Has anyone called upon him and been rebuffed?”*

Turning to God in prayer is one of the most beneficial things we can do for ourselves. When we pray, we need to have it be a time of both talking to God and quiet.

Tell him everything that is on your mind. Yes, of course he knows already but articulating it is more for ourselves than for him. Hearing your concerns out loud can help you realize how important or not important they are. When we speak our worries they have less of a hold on us and we might realize that we can stop worrying. When we speak, we turn our concerns over to God. I love the image of putting them all in a box at the foot of the cross. And leaving them there!

Then sit in the quiet. Breathe. Rest. Imagine yourself sitting in God’s lap or walking with Jesus. Feel the presence of God. Don’t try to hear anything. I find my answers don’t usually come when I am sitting in quiet. They come later, when I’m washing the dishes or out walking, my mind just wandering and suddenly, I get the word or next step from him.

Make time for prayer every day and incorporate it in your day. Try to follow St. Paul’s words to “pray without ceasing.” When you need to make a decision, pause, breathe, ask God to guide you. Do you feel anxious? Pray the Lord’s prayer to be reminded that God gives us all that we need. Did something wonderful happen? Thank God.

God wants to be near to us, he is ready; we need to call on him. Prayer calls on him and helps us let go. Prayer teaches us to trust.

The Word Trust

I like words. When I get furniture to put together or new technology or try a new recipe, I like words to be present in the instructions. Have you ever seen instructions without words, just pictures with arrows and other stuff guiding you? Does not work for me. Do not like it at all. Words, give me some words. Of course, a visual aid can be helpful, but not as the sole set of instructions.

What does the word trust mean? *“A firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability or strength of someone or something.”*

Who do you trust? What things do you place your trust in? Has someone ever broken your trust? Have you ever caused a person to stop trusting you? When we think about trust we see how easy it is to both take it for granted and abuse it at the same time. Maybe we do that with God.

Our human relationships often mirror our relationship with God, until we learn that God is not like people. Thank God! He is far more forgiving, all-knowing, loving, faithful, giving, loving, wise, patient, kind, and and and, fill in your word, than we are in our dealings with each other and with him. Yet he is faithful to us, always allowing us to return to him when we seek him.

Do you have a firm belief in God being reliable? Deuteronomy 32:4

Do you know that he is truth? John 14:6-7

Do you know that he has great ability? Luke 8:24-25

Do you know his strength? Psalm 73:26

Knowing God

Getting to know him

Prayer is a powerful way to learn to trust in God. So is reading and studying scripture. The Bible is one long story about how God acts in our lives. From the beginning in the Garden of Eden to today, it is the story of our salvation. There is overwhelming evidence of how much God loves us, starting and ending with the often-quoted John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only son so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but have eternal life.”

That’s love that encompasses all people for all time, no matter what you may think, God sent his son for you because he wants you to have the gift of eternal life. And there is no better gift. Reading scripture puts into perspective our part in the story of salvation. When you read Exodus, you are reminded of when God called you out of bondage, purified you in the desert and led you to freedom. Hosea teaches what faithfulness looks like and Job reminds us that even those who love God have trials.

Why the Word?

“The prudent man trusts in the word of the Lord; and the law is dependable for him as a divine oracle.” Sirach 33:3

If you were to go to Bible Gateway and put ‘trust’ ‘trust in God’ ‘Trust in the Lord’ in the search engine there would be a total of 263 references. There is probably some overlap and I didn’t check for synonymous words or phrases; either way, we can agree there are many scripture references to trusting God. He wants our good more than any person on this earth. Think of one person who loves you and desires your peace and happiness; maybe it’s a parent or spouse or best friend. Put that one person’s face in your mind and allow yourself to see you as he or she sees you. Pretty wonderful huh? Now multiply that by oh, I don’t know, infinity. What they see in you, how they want good for you, God wants it multiplied by infinity.

If we want to trust God, we must know him. And to know him, we must spend time getting to know him. In prayer, of course, but also in his word. There is no substitute for reading scripture. God reveals himself to us but also builds us up, guides us, inspires us, and strengthens us with his word.

When we know his word, we can rest in it. I don’t mean you should know every book with chapter and verse for every need. I don’t; but I know the general idea of what I am looking for and can look it up. I sometimes need to look up favorite verses to find the book, chapter, and verse. I consider it more important to know the verse. I can depend on the words, as Sirach says, without having to know just where they came from.

Memorize a Verse

Do you find it hard to memorize things? I do. My husband changed his phone number about four months ago and I still need to look it up if I give it to someone. While we could argue that I don’t need to remember the number since I have it in my phone there are cases where it would come in handy. Scripture is the same thing.

Yes, you can look it up, why now you can even look it up on your phone! But wouldn’t it be helpful to have a few verses tucked away in your mind to pull out when you need them, for yourself or someone else? I think so.

You need to find the verses that are meaningful to you. The ones that seem to jump off the page when you are reading your bible and stick with you through the years. For me, some of those are: Revelation 3:16, Hosea 6:6, 2 Timothy 1:7 and Psalm 17:8.

Find your verse, the one that reminds you to trust in God and memorize it. Let it be your touchstone when you are afraid, your peace in anxiety and your strength in weakness.

Sometimes life is not easy

Anxiety

Do you ever feel like you can't breathe? I do sometimes. At times in my life it has happened frequently. Not because of asthma or a hard workout, but because of anxiety. It is very frightening. My rational mind tries to reassure me, "you are breathing, you are getting oxygen, slow down," as the other part of my mind goes off to the "I'm never going to be able to take a deep breath again, I'm going to pass out" place.

I can say, that over time, I've come to recognize when my anxiety level is rising and have some idea how to stop the possible downward, intense spiral into a full-on anxiety attack. For me, the difference between feelings of anxiety and the feelings of being stressed are different. Anxiety is a much more physical response that demands attention. When I am stressed I may feel overwhelmed but know that if I forge ahead things will get better.

Now, when I feel anxiety, I stop. I stop what I am doing, clear my mind of all the negative messages running through it, and reach for God. Sometimes I pray, more like plead, for peace from him, other times I hold onto whatever medal I am wearing that day and ask for that saint's intercession.

I have learned to turn to God and give him my troubles.

A Shield

Do you ever feel the need to protect yourself? From someone or some situation that seems out of control? Or maybe not protect yourself but just hide out until the problem passes?

I have those days. When the very thought of moving forward through the day seems like way more effort than it should be. You get up anyway, but there is not joy in your attitude; instead there's a bit of resentment, a lack in bending your will to his. There is a need to be protected

from the world around us, the negativity, the sarcasm, the constant noise. The world can be a very loud and demanding place, taking from us but not giving back.

Time and time again I realize that no one person can be all that I need. Even ten people cannot be all that I need. It's not that I am particularly difficult (I hope) but who can give us what we need when sometimes we don't know ourselves?

God. God can. When we feel down and need some protection for ourselves remember this: *"But you LORD, are a shield around me; my glory, you keep my head high."* Psalm 3:4

He is our glory. He protects us. He keeps our head high.

It's a Process

There are some weeks we are all glad to see over. I've had those weeks, full of annoyances that make it easy to forget the good things that happen.

I think I may annoy God when I have those weeks. I keep after God... Why? What? When? How? Can I? Why not? Please. Show me. Tell me. Do you think we all sound like toddlers to him, with our constant questions?

Most times, in answer to my constant queries it seems, if I could see him, he nods indulgently, pats my back and says, "keep going, move forward, breathe, it will all work out, let that go, persist there." I try my best, letting go what he says to let go, persisting where he says to persist. Do I get it all right? Probably not. One day there's too much caffeine and sugar, another day, struggles with anger.

It's a process; letting go, trusting unconditionally, holding on to his truth and strength, knowing he understands when we fail and rejoices mightily when we succeed.

I'll keep asking the questions, listening for his answer, trying to do what he says. I pray the same for you.

Trust Yourself

Do you trust yourself? Do you follow your gut? Do you stand in what you know? Do you know what you know? At the risk of sounding like someone who thinks she is always right allow me to tell you to stop second guessing yourself! I don't know your skill set or particular gifts but that is irrelevant. You have gifts and skills and a knowledge base from years of experience of doing

your thing, whatever that may be. Yet, you second guess yourself or you defer so as not to upset another or say yes when you want to say no. Stop it.

Note: At this point, I want to say, as a retreat leading priest said, "When I talk, I'm talking to myself as well as to you."

Of course, sometimes to keep the peace it is better to say or do nothing. However, doing that on a regular basis leads to self-doubt, negativity, and withdrawal. It also leads to being less than who God calls you to be. You not only short change others and yourself when you do this, but you short change God. St. Paul reminds Timothy and us that "*God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control.*" 2 Tim 1:7

God's Promise to Us

The Slow work of God

A few years ago, this poem was given to me while on retreat. I need to read it and sit with it more often. I am impatient at times. Not so much with others, but with myself. Okay, sometimes with others, but only if things aren't moving as quickly as I'd like.

Trusting in the slow work of God is hard. Mostly because we are in a hurry to get to the end, to the very important thing we must do. Sometimes though a plan is necessary, waiting is needed, life takes time and if we rush it along, there can be negative consequences. Think of baking a cake; if it says to bake for 30 minutes at 350 degrees but you are in a hurry and turn the oven up to 500 to bake it faster it's not going to work.

Life, living it to the fullest, becoming the person God calls us to become, takes time. It will happen. In God's time, by trusting in his slow work.

Trust in the Slow Work of God

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.

We are, quite naturally, impatient in everything to reach the end

Without delay.

We should like to skip

The intermediate stages.

We are impatient of being on

The way to something unknown,

Something new,

And yet it is the law of all progress

That it is made by passing through
Some stages of instability —
And that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you.
Your ideas mature gradually —
Let them grow,
Let them shape themselves,
Without undue haste.
Don't try to force them on,
As though you could be today
What time will make you tomorrow.
Only God could say what this new spirit
Gradually forming within you will be.

Give Our Lord the benefit of believing
That his hand is leading you,
And accept the anxiety of
Feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.
Above all, trust in the slow work of God,
Our loving vine-dresser. Amen.

-Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J.

Mercy & Confession

It is the truth of humanity that we often fall short of being our best, of doing our best, and of thinking our best. That falling short has a word, sin. It seems though that many people don't like to talk about sin or admit they have sinned. Which is a shame because it is in the admitting that we can receive God's mercy.

As a Catholic, I am a big believer in the sacrament of confession. It is our opportunity to have our burdens taken from us and replaced with love and mercy. We get to start over, hoping that the next time that one sin will not return with us. Yes, the next time. No matter how hard we try there's a next time to go to confession. Why? Because we are human and have fallen; we are not perfect.

When I think about trust in the context of confession it is a tremendous act of faith. You go and bare your soul to the priest, saying aloud things we barely whisper to our best friend, and he nods, prayerfully considers your words, gives you advice and then, through the power of his priesthood, he absolves you from your sins. Even that last one you said, hoping he wouldn't ask why he forgives that one too and you realize, again, how endless, deep, powerful, and needed God's mercy is for you.

Prayer of Absolution

God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son, has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins; through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Trusting in God's mercy allows us security. In our need, God will not abandon us. We can call on him in love and trust, knowing he is there. There are days when I am sure of nothing else but that God is there. And it is enough. And each day, as I give more of myself to him, trust grows, faith grows, and love grows.

Trust in God's mercy.

God Cares for Us

In Romans 8:31 we read, *"If God is for us, who can be against us."* Paul is exhorting believers to BELIEVE, to TRUST, to OVERCOME. We can believe that God is there for us, always. We can trust in God, fully confident in his love and mercy. We can overcome our life's trials and difficulties with him at our side.

Many years ago, we were in the process of buying a new house. While we were getting approved to buy the new house and selling the house we were living in my husband lost his job. And then, weeks later, I lost my job. I cannot tell you how but we were still able to buy the house. I am amazed to this day when I think about it. It makes no sense yet it happened. That is just one story where I can point to God and say, "Yep, it was all him."

I'm sure you have a story as well.

Remember those stories today as you go through your day. And thank God for taking care of us, for helping us to overcome difficulties, and being able to trust in him. He is for you, believe that.

No Separation

“For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:38-39

What a beautiful testimony to trust! We will never be separated from the love of God. Isn't that sometimes the problem? We believe that God will stop loving us because of our sin. He doesn't stop loving us, he is waiting for us to return to him. A priest gave this image: in the story of the Prodigal Son the father runs to greet the returning son; that is God, looking for us and when he sees us coming he runs out to us to embrace us, forgive us and give us his love. I've been using that image since I heard it, when I am out of sorts or have made a mistake, God is there and nothing can separate us from him.

Let Go, Gain All

The end. If this were a fairy tale, just before this would be the words, “And they lived happily ever after.” But it's not a fairy tale, it's real life. And in real life, there are struggles, problems, and concerns that come into our life. We need to deal with them. If anything, this month has been remembering that we are not alone and that by letting go, we gain God.

We gain his wisdom to guide us, his shoulder to cry on, his arm to strengthen us, his peace fills and his love lives in us.

I hope that you have gained some strength for your journey; I have, as usual, received more than I expected and I thank you.