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THE SPIRITUAL HABIT OF TRUSTING Michael B. Beaugh
John 9:1-7 November 16, 2008
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Today and this week in our Growth Groups we are talking about the spiritual habit of trusting. **Trust means taking a risk without knowing the certainty of the outcome but based on confident expectation.**

An experience I had with my dad exemplifies the meaning of trust for me.

At age 11 or 12, I was playing ping pong at a dude ranch in Wimberly, Texas. My family was there for a week of vacation. The ping pong table had a plywood top that was splintered all along the edges. At one point during a game, I reached for the ball to catch it as it was coming off the end of the table. As I did so, the fingernail on the ring finger of my left hand caught the edge of the table. I suddenly felt a lot of pain in my finger. When I looked, I saw that a splinter had driven all the way under my nail back to the cuticle.

Now I am not sure why I was given a choice, but my parents said I could either go to a doctor to have it removed, or I could let my Dad try to cut it out. Doctor or Dad. Let me see. Who would be best equipped to handle such a thing? I chose my Dad, of course. He got a razor blade from his double edged razor, some alcohol and cotton balls, and told me to put my hand on the table and not move.

To this day, I can feel that operation. He gently started slicing through my fingernail. His strategy was to cut a gap the length of the nail so he could lift out the splinter. Never once did I flinch. Never once did I wish I had chosen the doctor. My Dad kept slicing until, miracle of miracles, he had neatly cut the gap and lifted out the splinter without causing any bleeding.

Life is all about learning whom we can trust, whom we can count on to have our best interests at heart. Every day we have to make decisions based on trust. The hope is that the ones we trust, or the things we trust, will not let us down.

As it turned out, I made a good decision concerning my Dad.

But let's go deeper than that. **As Christians, trust is the big enchilada.** It is the fundamental question of our lives. Whom do we ultimately trust to have our best interests at heart? Whom can we ultimately trust to steer our lives and decisions in the right direction?

Those are huge questions. How we answer them determines what becomes of our lives.

The writer of Proverbs thought a lot about this. He advises us not to put our ultimate trust in our own understanding. In 3:5, he says, "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.*"

The Psalmist in 146:3 tells us, "*Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing.*"

Now these writers know that we have to use our understanding to get along in life. And we have to trust princes and President-elects and doctors and financial advisors and spouses and teachers. But they also know that the only One worthy of our absolute, ultimate trust is God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Put simply, we can trust God. Whatever God has said in Scripture is trustworthy. What God has done has been done with our best interests at heart. Wherever God leads us, we can trust that it is for our own good and for the good of others.

Look at the man born blind in John 9.

Blindness is one of the key metaphors for what God needs to fix in us. When the disciples see the blind man, they want to know whose fault it is that he is blind. They start playing the name the blame game.

Jesus has no interest in fixing the blame. It does not matter. In fact, Jesus says his blindness is an opportunity to show the works of God. What matters is doing the work of God. What matters is removing this man's blindness. What matters is opening the eyes of the world. So Jesus gets to work, and what unfolds is a picture of trust.

Notice what the blind man does. He says nothing. He just stands there. He lets Jesus put mud in his eyes, for Pete's sake, and for John's sake, and James's. The man had been blind forever. Guess you could say he was willing to try anything, even mud in his eyes. Mud made with spit, holy spit. Imagine Jesus spitting, if you will. The man didn't know what would happen, but he didn't run off. He didn't try to argue. He stood still and let Jesus minister to him. **This is what it means to trust in God. Just standing still for a moment and letting God minister to our need. Accepting God's provision.**

What if the blind man had said, "Oh, I've been to the best doctors, and they couldn't do anything for me." Or, "I've resigned myself to a lifetime of blindness." Or, what if he had said, like so many of us do, "Oh, I can see just fine. I can see good enough."

But he didn't do any of those things. He admitted his blindness. The spiritual habit of trust begins with admitting our need. The man stood still in absolute trust letting Jesus minister to his need.

Then Jesus gave the man something to do. He told him to go wash in the Pool of Siloam.

This pool was a collecting point for water that ran underground through a tunnel from the springs of Gihon. It was often used in purification rites in the temple in Jerusalem. No doubt, this man knew where it was. Maybe he had been there before to splash the water on his eyes as an attempt at a poor man's miracle. Alternative medicine.

He likely had every reason not to try it again. So why does he simply turn and go to the Pool to wash the mud out of his eyes? Was it simply because he needed to clean up the mess on his face? We cannot get into his mind. All we can judge are his actions. Jesus tells him to go, and he goes. Again no debate, no questioning, no hesitation. He goes.

This too is what it means to trust in God. It means going where God sends us.

The man goes where Jesus sends him, and it says in verse 7, "he came back able to see." Some scholars believe his washing in the Pool was like a baptism. I have no trouble with that since baptism is a sign of our trust in God. Our baptism is the beginning of a journey where our trust grows and where our eyes are opened more and more to the grace and goodness of God.

Let me tell you that if you want to see all that God has in store for you, if you want to see what is possible for your life, if you want to see who God is – you must begin this journey of trust. Taking steps in a God-direction before you can see the whole path. It is the way it has always been.

God called on Noah to build an ark. It probably took all his life's savings. It seemed like a silly thing to do. But Noah trusted God and did all that God commanded him to do.

God called Abraham and Sarah to leave their country behind and go where God would lead them to make of them a great nation. It seemed like a silly thing to do. But they trusted God and did all that God commanded them to do.

A burning bush spoke to Moses and told him to go thump the Pharaoh of Egypt on the nose to set God's people free. Moses thought it was a silly thing for him to do. But he trusted God and did all that God commanded him to do.

The Angel Gabriel told Mary she had been chosen to be the mother of the Messiah. It seemed quite unorthodox and dangerous. But she trusted in God and did all that God commanded her to do.

Jesus told his disciples to go make disciples of all nations. It seemed like a silly thing to expect of them. But they trusted God and did all that God commanded them to do.

For 2000 years, God has called generation after generation to be the body of Christ in the world. And many have trusted in God and have done all that God commanded them to do.

None of these had a blue print. None of these had it all figured out. None of these knew where the journey might take them. They all stepped out in faith, armed with nothing but their trust in God. And with each step, they came to know more and more of God. Their trust grew and their eyes were opened more and more to the grace and goodness of God.

God has steps for each of us to take today. This is what we mean by the spiritual habit of trusting.

I don't know where God wants to send you or what God is asking you to do. It may be the first step of a relationship with God by inviting Jesus to be the Lord of your life. It may be an issue in your life where you need to let God minister to you. It may be a splinter that needs removing. It may be a blindness that needs healing. It may be a call to unite with a church, or a call to change careers, or a call to be a missionary. Whatever it is, it is a call to trust more and more in God. To take the first step and then another. And the more you go, the more you will see, and the more you see, the greater will be your joy in life.