

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths.” (NIV)

“The Message” says it this way. “Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don’t try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he’s the one who will keep you on track. “ (MSG)

As I sat the other day watching Sesame Street - with my two year old grandson, Ben,- ---Elmo started singing a familiar tune - “Row, row, row your boat gently down the stream. Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream!!” As we sang it several times - I started to think about the words. How many times do we have to row, row, row through stuff in our own lives - yet many times - we just can’t get the boat going- let alone to have it go merrily down the stream. So often - We are stuck on the things that happen every day in our lives.

But - That’s kinda’ how life is. Each day we weather many storms that keep us from going merrily down the stream.

- Sometimes our storms are like little rain showers.
- Sometimes the rains are heavier and we might even experience thunder and lightning.
- Sometimes the storms are bigger and the winds start to blow and the calm river of our lives turns into a raging sea.

You may be rocking out of control and even though you are doing everything you can to fix it - you just can’t seem to get your boat / your life going in a straight line.

Then we have those days when we seem to experience those thunderstorms, those hurricanes, those floods and maybe even some tornados that just seem to want to destroy us. Just like the boat - we are floating out of control!!

My guess is that many of you are facing some sort of storm in your life right now or you have faced one in the past.

Look at the list of names on our prayer list in the bulletin - they are all in the midst of some storm

- When I think of just the people I know here at NEUMC - so many of us have
 - o faced a severe illness of some kind - a cancer, brain tumors, heart disease, lung issues, depression, - a child with serious health concerns
 - o some have had someone in their family that has faced addiction,
 - o some have had a marriage break up or are struggling to keep one together
 - o some of us have seen our kids or someone we love make the wrong decisions in life that have caused great pain and heartache.
 - o Some of us have dealt with kids that are just driving you crazy!!

- o Some of us are dealing with or have dealt with financial problems and don't know where we are going to get the money to pay our bills or buy food for our family.
- o Some of us have experienced having loved ones that have spent time in a rehab center or maybe even a prison
- o Some of us have experienced the death of those we dearly loved.

So many of these "storms" we face on an everyday basis - and sometimes they are just too numerous to count. Sometimes they seem to hit all at once and you truly wonder -
 how can I keep on going!!! Will my anchor hold??

One time, I was going through some tough stuff and a friend of mine said to me - "You are a Christian - **and you need to trust the Lord with all your heart** and He will see you through. " And I thought to myself - "Are you kidding me!!!

I'd like you to walk in my shoes for a while and just see what I'm going through! How can I trust God when my life seems to be falling apart in front of me."

I have even said - "I don't think God really cares about me and my problems - He's got bigger things to think about than me. Sometimes I wonder if GOD even knows where North East is on the map!!!"

Yet the reality is - God does know where North East is and He does know everything - and I mean everything that is going on in your life. After all- He created you and He is your Father. Even before this earth was created - He knew you and He knew that you would have problems and He knew that through it all - He would still love you unconditionally.

Let's look at Proverbs 3:5-6.

"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 direct your paths." (NIV)

The phrase "to trust in" means to place one's confidence in - to hope

Many of us find it really hard to truly trust God with what is going on in our lives. And sometimes we may even struggle to trust that Jesus is really who He says He is. So often we say that we're trusting Him - and we say we are giving whatever is bothering

us over to Him - whatever storm of life were going through we are giving to Him - but then we take it back because we think we can do a better job at "fixing it"! Or we think God is taking too long !!

The word - Lean- means to **rely on**.

So how do we learn to trust in God / to lean on Him?

TO TRUST IS TO ACKNOWLEDGE GOD IN EVERYTHING.

“In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct (make straight) your paths.”
(Proverbs3:6)

Acknowledging God means knowing God wherever we are and whatever we are doing. This does not just mean that we have an intellectual understanding of who God is, but the fact that we can identify His character and His will in every moment of life.

So. ----- If we dedicate ourselves to trusting and seeking God in all circumstances - are we then to believe that life will be easy and trouble free? Absolutely not.

I know in my life - it seems the closer I try to get to Jesus - the harder and faster the storms come. AND what is the reason for that - we have this enemy in the world, His name is Satan, who does not want us to be on God's side. He wants us to be on the side of this crazy world we live in - so he tries to tempt us - just like he tempted Jesus so many times during His life. But - if we choose to stand firm and trust in Jesus - **what we can** expect - is that our journey will ultimately lead us to our Heavenly Father and we will not be shaken when trials / storms of life come. We will trust and be able to stand firm.

Jeremiah 17: 7-8. kinda' says it all:

“Blessed are those who trust in the Lord and have made the Lord their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along the river bank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit.”

Just because we follow Jesus does not mean that life will no longer have troubles, but it does mean that those troubles are nothing to fear and that we can remain confident even when we feel overwhelmed or we feel that life is crushing in on us.

TO TRUST IS TO FEAR THE LORD

Proverbs 3:7 tells us. “Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil”

Putting our trust in the wisdom of man, or looking to ourselves is pointless.

Yes, I know - God has given us the ability to think and to reason - but we also need to include Him in our plans. Whatever we think we know, God knows more. He is more capable than we are and often he uses His thoughts for His greater purpose.

So how can we learn to trust God's wisdom and not our own?

We need to learn to : stand in AWE of the Lord, to live in a respectful fear of him. The dictionary definition of the word - “awe” means a feeling of “reverential respect” mixed with fear or wonder” -Admiration - a feeling of great respect, fear produced by that which is grand and extremely powerful, - the AWE / the AWESOMENESS OF GOD!!

In today's culture we have taken the word AWE kind of away from Godly things and instead use it to describe things like - Wow - that steak was AWESOME!
Or you should have seen this AWESOME movie we just watched.

God's holiness, His beauty, His understanding, His knowledge, and person are beyond our ability to understand. His anger at sin is staggering. In fact, the Bible gives several accounts of people falling down as though dead at his mere appearance.

The cure for us being captivated by our own knowledge **is in understanding** how WONDERFUL - HOW MARVELOUS and HOW FEARSOME our God really is.

The Bible tells us in Proverbs 3 that fearing the Lord "... will be healing to your flesh and strength to your bones." (Proverbs 3:8). Trust in and fearful awe of the Lord revives our soul.

Regardless of the pain or hardships we endure, Jesus understands them. He can use them for our good and his glory in ways we can't understand. He can provide healing in unexpected ways, even when hope seems lost, because truly our hope and our trust is in Him.

THE PERFECT TRUST IN JESUS CHRIST IS WHAT WE LONG FOR

Trusting in the Lord is the only path to life, and nowhere is this seen more fully than in the life and work of Jesus.

In His life, He trusted God (His Father) totally - even to His death.

Through His work on the cross, His resurrection and His ascension He offers us new life, pouring out His Holy Spirit into our hearts. In a culture of misplaced trusts, broken promises, and damaged lives, only Jesus is unshakable, unchangeable, unbreakable and worthy of all our trust. Only JESUS trusted HIS Father perfectly - with all His heart, making the path straight for our salvation so we too would trust Him.

Through Him, God offers healing, wisdom, and love to the world, if we only will acknowledge Him in all WE DO!

BUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE STORMS or DETOURS COME INTO OUR LIVES??

How many times are we in a hurry to get somewhere and we come upon some road-work that is being done and realize that we now have to take a detour. It can be extremely aggravating - But you know - sometimes God allows detours to happen.

There are times in life when our lives take a detour through what we experience.

- o The unexpected loss of a child.
- o Good health that has all of a sudden taken a turn for the worst.
- o The sudden stop of a friendship.
- o The unfortunate destruction of personal property after a violent storm.
- o The crumbling of a marriage.
- o THE LOSS OF A JOB

- o A set of plans that seemed so sure, so guaranteed, fall apart.

Detours come in many different shapes and sizes, but all of them share one thing in common: We didn't see them coming. They catch us off-guard, leaving us frustrated, confused, curious, even heart-broken. We question why things had to happen this way - at this time.

The ultimate temptation is to become discouraged, even angry at God, as we experience our faith being rocked.

We have read in Exodus that the Israelites went through a similar experience during the time when God called them out from slavery in Egypt. Why would a loving God let His chosen people suffer for hundreds of years? We cannot understand it completely.

God has a plan that is being fulfilled everyday - and how suffering fits into this plan is a mystery to us. Amazingly, the Hebrew people stayed faithful to God through all those years of hardship. It wasn't easy and sometimes their faith wavered.

But yet - God proved faithful through all the pain and all the heartache. When we are faithful, we will see God's own faithfulness in return.

Many times the way God leads us may not make sense to us, but He has his reasons for each and every detour.

I can remember a time when Joe was laid off from his work. We started to pray about it - we so wanted for God to give Joe a job. But months went by and nothing happened - he filled out applications - he was overqualified - he was underqualified. I said to God - "Don't you realize Joe needs a job!!

We have bills to pay, our kids are young and we need medical insurance. DON'T YOU HEAR ME?"

So often - God, in his divine sovereignty and wisdom, has a reason for the detours he allows to happen in our lives. And because we know that God is good, we can therefore trust that his every reason for these detours is equally good. When I talked with my Mom about why God seemed to not hear our prayers - she reminded me that believing in God's promises was so important. She said, "Maybe God wants to get you to the point where you truly learn to TRUST HIM no matter what you're going through"

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him and he will direct your path." (Proverbs 3:5-6)
God's ultimate goal is that we become more like him. This does not mean that the paths He chooses will be easy. BUT - we can choose to trust that His direction and timing are right or we can choose to just put Him aside and see what happens.

So often, the purpose of the detour **may be to showcase God's glory, both to our enemies and for the sake of our own faith. God's timing is perfect and usually when he withholds a solution it's only because He wants to give us something better.**

Ya' know - one of these days, when Christ returns for His church, we will be able to claim "every detour, every storm that we suffered was worth it, and we will glorify our God in the ultimate sense when we worship him for eternity. " For now, we can choose to lift up His name in the midst of the storms of life because we know that His glory will be revealed, and we can also bear witness to a world without hope by trusting his ways and praising His wisdom.

When a detour feels threatening or confusing, we can trust that God is indeed protecting us.

How can we know this to be true, especially when we feel left alone to fend for ourselves and God seems distant?

The ANSWER: The cross of Jesus Christ. Jesus, the sinless Son of God, took our sins upon himself at Calvary and, as a result, was justly rejected by the holy God, who turned his face away from his Son's suffering. And all of this so that we would never know God's rejection or abandonment; for when we trust Jesus' work on the cross for our righteousness, we are identifying with him, and God clothes us in his perfection.

When he looks at us, he sees Jesus. Because Jesus was rejected, we will never be. More than that, in this life we are promised the presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit and the protection of Christ as our soul's everlasting Advocate.

God is indeed protecting/guarding his children, giving them his peace that surpasses understanding, nourishment of the truth from his word, and freedom from fear and doubt through the gospel.

Detours or the storms of life cause us to see God's character more clearly.

God uses these tools to teach us about himself.

How would we know that God is our Eternal Comfort,- unless- He places us in an uncomfortable position?

- o How would we proclaim with praises that Christ is our Gentle Shepherd unless He exposes us to threatening dangers and suffering?
- o How would we lift up our Righteous Judge unless He unveils through our exposing circumstances what the cross accomplished for our sake?

God uses detours to make our hope firm and, ultimately, to plant us in the heavenly places with Christ. Whatever track you are on right now - be it sickness or pain or changed plans - God is molding you as clay. He is being intentional and compassionate as his hands squeeze you and stretch you to look more like his Son, Jesus.

So how can we be sure we are trusting God everyday? We need to lean on Him and not depend on Ourselves! I know that sometimes trusting Him completely like that can be tough. Each day, we must consciously lay aside our own plans and expectations - and surrender to His plans.

Sometimes we may just need to cry out to God. He already knows what you're thinking - so if you're mad - tell Him you're mad. Use your thoughts and your

voice to surrender your life to God. We need to show that we are dependent on Him.

Psalm 55:17. "Evening, morning, and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice"

Sometimes - we just need to run from Evil. There is so much in this world that can clutter up our relationship with God. Sometimes the only way to live the life God wants us to live is by separating ourselves from the bad influences that keep dragging us down. That works the best when we start putting something else in their place

We need to put God first in your life. We are so quick to put ourselves first. When something good happens, we want to congratulate ourselves with a reward. AND - When something bad happens, we want to console ourselves or find someone to blame. We must learn to be totally committed to trusting God for everything in life.

REMEMBER- The Bible is God's Basic Instruction Book Before Leaving Earth. Check yourself by reading God's Word. Let's be honest. We aren't so good at evaluating ourselves. We will go to great lengths to excuse our behavior, our actions, and our sins. Who needs a defense attorney when we can pretty much find a reason for any bad thing we do?

We need to learn to listen to the Holy Spirit. When Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to the church, He told His disciples that this Counselor would be their spiritual compass or GPS. (John 14:26) "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you". As we go through our day, this same Holy Spirit guides us, too.

That means we don't have to go it alone or hope we're getting it right. The Holy Spirit leads us into all truth and protects us. After all, the gift of the Holy Spirit to us believers reminds us that we can truly...Rest in God's Love. When we face a difficult world each day, we can sometimes wonder if God even cares. Why do bad things happen? Where is God when I need Him? Solomon reminds us that God never takes a break or leaves us to fend for ourselves: "because the Lord corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights." (Proverbs 3:12)

Even in the midst of turmoil, God sticks with us and uses those challenges to shape us. When we understand that, our perspective completely flips. No longer do we see our setbacks as failures; we see them as moments when God, as our loving Father works on us. And that is exactly why we can trust in the Lord with all our hearts.

He cares for us each and every day. He gives us what we need to thrive. He pours blessing after blessing upon us. Trusting God takes a whole-hearted commitment from dawn till dusk. But we're never alone in it. "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age". (Matthew 28:20b)

Make a vow to read God's word each day and to praise God throughout each day. Continually praise Him through both the good and difficult times of his life. As you do - you will find your heart lifted from daily distractions to a lasting confidence in God our Father.

Express your feelings to Him and then reaffirm your faith. Did you know that prayer can release our tensions in times of emotional stress?

Trusting God to be our rock, our salvation, and our fortress will change your entire outlook on life. No longer will we be held captive by resentment towards each other when they hurt us. When we are resting in God's strength - nothing can shake us. The Scripture tells us to not lean on our own understanding. When we do lean on our own understanding, we trust our own knowledge and discernment to support us through life. So - In a culture of misplaced trusts, broken promises, and damaged lives, only Jesus is unshakable, unchangeable, unbreakable, and worthy of all our trust.

Only He trusted God the Father perfectly with all His heart, making the path straight for our salvation so we too would trust Him. Through Jesus, God offers healing, wisdom, and love to the world, if we only will acknowledge Him in all our ways.

You will NEVER EVER face a situation so strong that God has not made complete provision for you to overcome. God, out of his love, has done everything necessary for you to be victorious whenever you face storms of life. He has given us the Holy Spirit to live in you to guide you in your decisions and to convict you when you make harmful choices.

So - get in that boat and row, row, row merrily down the stream.

Because as the old hymns say - when the storms of life as raging stand by me - when the storm of life are raging, stand by me - when the world is tossing me like a ship upon the sea, thou who rulest wind and water stand by me .

I thank God for the mountains and I thank him for the valleys, I thank Him for the storms he brought me through. For if I'd never had a problem, I wouldn't know that he could solve them. I'd never know what faith in God could do. Through it all, through it all I've learned to trust in Jesus, I've learned to trust in God. Through it all , through it all I've learned to depend upon His word. **Thank you Lord, for guiding and caring for us every step of the way. Help us to trust in you daily. Remind us that in the Eye of the Storm - YOU REMAIN IN CONTROL. Thank you for knowing what is best for us. Lord, we love you and we give our lives to you. In Jesus Name I pray - Amen**