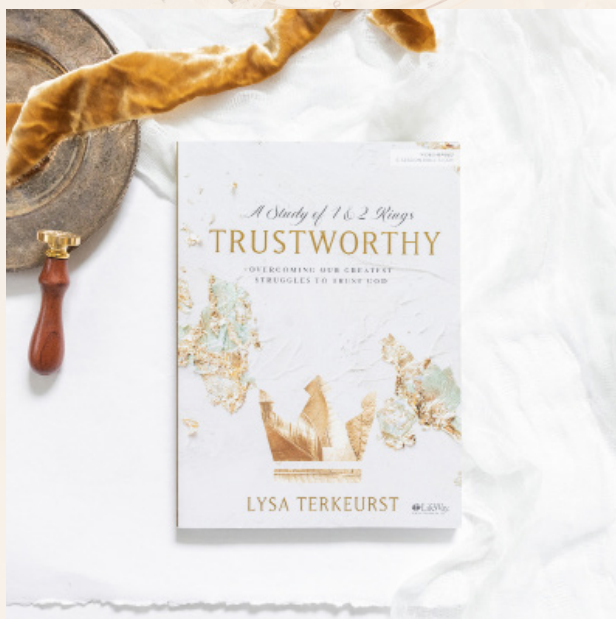


CHOOSING TO TRUST OVER TAKING CONTROL

10 COMPASSIONATE DEVOTIONS

That Will Increase Your Faith While Decreasing Your Doubts



Taken in part from Lysa's new study, Trustworthy

HEY FRIEND,

I'm so thankful you downloaded *Choosing To Trust Over Taking Control: 10 Compassionate Devotions That Will Increase Your Faith While Decreasing Your Doubts*.

No human should have to carry the weight of being their own god, but so many of us do.

We say we trust God, and then we work our fingers to the bone and our emotions into a tangled fray trying to strategize, take control and figure it all out.

But can you imagine how much less anxiety, fear, angst and heartbreak we would have if we truly trusted Him?

I don't mean just saying we trust God because it's the Christian thing to say. I don't mean just singing words of trusting God because it's in the praise song. I mean having a marked moment. A real, live moment we can point to and remind ourselves that we declared we will trust God with this circumstance. With this disappointment. With this person and this fear.

Maybe you need to have one of those marked moments in your life right now.

Our God sees things we can't see. He knows things we don't know. And He wants us to trust His ways and His plans.

That's why I pulled together this collection of devotions for you. I know how hard all of this can be — especially when the winds of all that's uncontrollable whip around us and thrash against us. We need something to ground us. Steady us. Hold us together when circumstances are falling apart. And there's no better place to start than the truth of God's Word.

Let's fix our eyes on Jesus ... choose to believe that God's plans really are the best plans ... and remind these fragile, human hearts of ours that we can trust Him at all times.

Holding on to hope and truth with you,





DAY 1

CAN I REALLY TRUST GOD?

“The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy.” Psalm 111:7 (NIV)

I stood in front of the busted-up walls, amazed by all I never knew was behind them. Wires. Pipes. Support beams. Insulation. It all stood out now so very vulnerable and exposed. I ran my hand along the rough reality of renovation and thought how very similar my heart felt at the moment. The only difference was I knew my house would be put back together, better than ever.

I wasn't so sure about my heart.

With the house, I knew a basic time frame. I also knew enough about renovations to add a few months of buffer time to the end date. Regardless, I absolutely knew there would be a beginning to this project and there would be an ending to this project. I also knew the end result would be beautiful. And since I knew the basic time frame and how beautiful things would eventually be, the busting-up part of the renovation didn't bother me. I was actually happy that demolition occurred.

The demolition was not a sign of irreparable problems. It was a sign of intentional progress. But I couldn't say the same about the busted-up places of my heart. Not right now. Not yet.

When I stood and looked in the mirror, my demolished heart wasn't quite as easy to see as the walls in my house. The brokenness certainly revealed things, but they weren't as easy to identify as pipes and wires. They were strange threads of fear, anxiety, shock, trauma, and distrust.

Distrust. There it was. The biggest of all the issues that resided beneath my surface. The ripping open and exposing of my heart had certainly revealed something I needed to see but didn't dare want to admit.

About me. About God. And about my utter lack of trust in Him.

Now don't get me wrong, I'm a Jesus girl through and through. I love studying His Word, doing the right and required things, following Him and fulfilling my calling. But when God starts to deviate from the plan I'm assuming my life should follow, I'm much more apt to want to tame God, not trust Him.

I want to demand the builder hand over the tools. And though I have no clue how to truly make things better, I start patching and covering and frantically fixating on a hodgepodge repair that will be disappointing at best, detrimental at worst.

And I wonder why I find myself so very exhausted and anxious and heavy burdened on the inside while singing and quoting verses about the abundant Christian life on the outside.



DAY 1

There is a disconnect somewhere between the faith I want and the one I'm living.

I know you feel it too. I've seen it in your tear-filled eyes and I've heard it in your questions around the hard things to understand about God.

So how do we rebuild our trust in God? Where do we even begin? I've found the best place to start is in His Word.

The truth of God's trustworthy character is evident in every page of Scripture. We see evidence of this truth in the covenant promises God made to Abraham, Moses and David and then kept. We see it in His faithfulness to provide for the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings — going before them in a pillar of fire by night and cloud by day, resting in the midst of their presence in the tabernacle, providing them manna to eat.

And there was one thing God did that outshines every other example of His trustworthy nature. God was faithful to the promise He made to Adam and Eve by crushing the head of the serpent as He sent His own Son to earth to die the death we should have died. Jesus reigns victorious over sin and death.

This is why the psalmist could truthfully declare in Psalm 111:7, *"The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy."*

The Hebrew word for trustworthy in this verse comes from the root word, אָמַן (á·mân) and encapsulates loyalty and faithfulness. It tells of dependability, all characteristics that are true and evident in God. In one sentence the psalmist declared that all of God's works are faithful and filled with justice; therefore, He is trustworthy.

This is how we stop resisting God's ways. This is where we start finding a more grounded faith, renovated hearts and a strengthened trust in God like never before. We look to His Word for the truth of His faithfulness.

Because when we remember His faithfulness, we come to believe that because God is faithful, He can be trusted.

Father God, thank You for reminding me that I don't have to have all of the answers. I just need to trust. Help me to fix my eyes on Your faithfulness. I'm loosening my grip and surrendering all of my life into Your loving and capable hands. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Loosen the grip of trying to control people and circumstances in your life by taking steps today to truly rely on God with Lysa TerKeurst's Bible study, *Trustworthy*.



DAY 2 RELEASING CONTROL

“For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.”
2 Timothy 1:7 (NIV)

Fear is something I battle constantly. Which isn't surprising since fear and trust issues seem to go hand in hand.

I have to work at not living in the harshness of the worst-case scenario. When I am triggered by a small fear, instead of taming this thought, I feed it. I magnify it. I let it dictate my reaction. Everything gets blown way out of proportion because I convince myself that only my created protection will help me avoid the worst-case scenario.

When my daughter, Hope, was fifteen years old, she announced she wanted to spend her summer with a missionary family in a remote village in Ethiopia. The minute she told us what she wanted to do, my mind started racing through all the scenarios of dangerous possibilities, from her plane crashing, to getting kidnapped, to contracting a life-threatening illness far from medical help. Fear overwhelmed my emotions to the point where I couldn't hear any of the details she was sharing. I just quickly and sternly said, “Absolutely not!”

She kept trying to plead her case, but I shut her down and kept saying no.

I could see the hurt and confusion sitting heavy on her. And that look on her face kept popping into my mind over and over. I felt utterly conflicted. I wanted what was best for her but my fear kept overriding any consideration I had for letting her go. I wanted to protect her but my desire turned into control the moment I refused to pray and seek God about it. Anytime I want my way more than seeking wisdom, I stop checking my desires with God and easily go astray.

We distrust God when we are fearful of losing control.

When we try to take control, we ultimately leave no room for God to be God.

Eventually, I felt God tugging at my heart with this thought, “The safest place for your daughter is in the center of God's will.”

Though I was still afraid and anxious, I slowly opened my heart to the possibility of her going on this trip. Now, granted, my fears were not unfounded. But as I released control of the situation, I gained a deeper sense of trusting God. If the door opened for Hope to go, I wouldn't let my fear keep her back.”

Have you ever done something similar, taking a concern and turning it into a big, all-caps FEAR?



DAY 2

For me, when fear emerges in my heart, it then tends to feed my doubts. Before I know it, I'm attempting to control things to get my fear under control. This is when I've learned I must respond to my fear in faith based on what God's Word says.

And what does God's Word have to say about fear?

"For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline," (2 Timothy 1:7).

"Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my victorious right hand," (Isaiah 41:10).

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

That summer missions trip did more to grow Hope's faith in God than anything else she'd ever experienced. God had a plan, and I'm so grateful my desire to control situations that make me afraid didn't derail that experience.

Though this story about Hope happened almost ten years ago, I think about that situation as other fears in my life emerge. Using God's truth and remembering His faithfulness from that experience has helped me fight my fear in other circumstances.

I don't know what worst-case scenarios are trying to steal your peace right now, sweet friend. But I do know this: God is in total control and holds our very lives in His hands.

Father God, thank You for reminding me that the safest place to be is always in the center of Your will. I'm releasing control to You today, choosing to remember and believe that You are good. And I can trust You at all times. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Learn more about overcoming your fear and doubt about how things will turn out with Lysa TerKeurst's Bible study, *Trustworthy*.



DAY 3

ALARMED AND RESOLVED AT THE SAME TIME

“Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah.”
2 Chronicles 20:3 (NIV)

It’s hard to look around at all that is happening in our world today, or even within the realm of our own personal lives, and not feel fear grip our hearts. That’s why I want us to continue talking about it today.

I think fear is a feeling we have all faced at some point in our lives. We crave safety and certainty and simplicity as we raise our families, serve God and live out our Christian beliefs in both private and public. But so many things feel threatening to those desires.

How do we navigate both our fears and our faith? How do we trust God when everything around us in the world today leaves us feeling quite alarmed?

One of my favorite kings to study over the last few years has been King Jehoshaphat. Although his story is only found in tucked away parts of Scripture, what I really love is how we can clearly see his absolute resolve to trust in the Lord.

King Jehoshaphat is mentioned in both 1 & 2 Kings, but there’s also a unique story about this faithful king of Judah in 2 Chronicles 17–20. King Jehoshaphat was connected in alliance through marriage to the wicked King Ahab since his son married Ahab’s daughter. They ruled around the same time. We may question his decision to be connected to a wicked king like Ahab through marriage, but Scripture teaches us that Jehoshaphat was a good king who walked in the ways of David his father. Rather than seeking false gods, Jehoshaphat sought after the Lord; therefore, God was with him (2 Chronicles 17:4).

Of course, this doesn’t mean that Jehoshaphat never faced fear-inducing situations. In 2 Chronicles 20, we find that three countries have banded together, forming a massive army to attack Jehoshaphat’s much smaller country of Judah. If ever there were a time for a king to feel alarmed, this would have been it. But Jehoshaphat didn’t fall apart.

I am both inspired and challenged by how he chose to react to his overwhelming circumstances: *“Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah”* (2 Chronicles 20:3).

Do you see how King Jehoshaphat’s name is bookended in two realities: alarmed and resolved? He had both the feelings of alarm that are a natural human response to his threatening situation and a supernatural resolve to inquire of the Lord. The resolve was a predetermined pattern built over time that emerged as naturally as the feelings of alarm rose within him.



DAY 3

I want this for my life. I want my resolve to inquire of the Lord to be my first response, not my last resort when feelings of alarm arise with threatening situations. But to be honest with you, I think I still need some work in this area.

When I get caught off guard, stunned by threatening circumstances in the world, or unexpectedly wounded by a hurtful statement, I can literally feel my body being overrun with a flood of emotions. Based on conversations with different friends of mine with different personalities, it seems like each of us has a go-to feeling that rises up and wants to take over in threatening situations: anger that wants to come out swinging, fear that wants to shrink back and disappear, confusion that wants to talk it out and restore peace quickly, just to name a few.

Though seeking the Lord doesn't always come naturally as my first response, it is the only way to infuse supernatural strength into my resolve. The more I turn to the Lord in daily struggles, the more natural it is to return to Him in times of unexpected trouble.

Does this mean I'll never wrestle with feelings of fear? Of course not.

**But I'm learning that while we can sometimes feel afraid,
we don't have to live afraid.**

We can be alarmed and resolved at the very same time. We can let our declaration mirror Jehoshaphat's words to God in 2 Chronicles 20:12b, "*We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.*"

Dear Lord, thank You for reminding me that fear doesn't have to pull me away from trusting in You. Fear can actually be the catalyst to me choosing to trust You more than ever. Today I'm choosing to fix my eyes and my hope on You. The God who is for me, with me and loves me without end. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Identify your own trust issues with God and how to overcome them with the help of Lysa TerKeurst's Bible study on 1 & 2 Kings, *Trustworthy*.



DAY 4

WHY DID GOD LEAD ME HERE?

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” Psalm 23:1 (ESV)

I realize this is the point in the devotional where you may be saying, “But my deepest fears have come true, and, quite honestly ... I’m not so sure I even want to trust God anymore.”

I wish I could take you by the hand and tell you how incredibly sorry I am. In my own life, I have walked through seasons of devastation beyond what I thought I could survive at times. But I have also been incredibly blessed and humbled as God has proven Himself faithful beyond my ability to comprehend in the midst of twists and turns I never would have chosen for myself.

Maybe you’re in the devastatingly dark middle of an unchosen journey right now. One that leaves you tempted to pull away from the Lord because “How could a good God lead me to such a difficult place?”

Oh, friend. I understand.

So does David, the shepherd destined to be king who penned the words of Psalm 23. David’s desperately honest cry in Psalm 22:1 reveals he was well-acquainted with discouragement and despair: *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?”*

Despite the agony and distress we find in Psalm 22, Psalm 23 reveals David still knew where his hope was found. This shepherd boy needed a greater Shepherd — the Lord. We do too.

So how do we keep choosing to follow our Shepherd when He leads us into “valleys” we would rather avoid? We can begin by remembering these two truths about the Lord:

1) He will never lead us carelessly.

Psalm 23:1–3 paints such a serene picture: *“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.”*

We may imagine lush green hills like you find in Ireland, but David’s reality was the steep, rocky, dry Judean hills. Hills that had to be carefully traveled in order to get to the water and vegetation waiting in the valleys below.

Shepherds leading their flocks also had to be cautious about the timing of their trips. Hard rains could quickly lead to flash floods in a gorge. When a shepherd knew a storm was coming, he wouldn’t allow the sheep to be down in the gorge because they would drown. The shepherd patiently waited until the storm passed before leading his flock down to drink. So not only did sheep have to trust where the shepherd was leading them; they had to trust the when of his leading.



DAY 4

Our Shepherd wants to get us to the still waters. He wants us to lie down and rest where it's safe.

But we have to trust that His timing is perfect and His provision is good.

2) He will always lead us intentionally.

The end of Psalm 23:3 says, “*He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.*” The very reputation of the Lord is at stake in His leading. That means we can trust He will always lead us in perfect ways — for our goodness and for the sake of His name.

A friend of mine who lives in Israel says the phrase “paths of righteousness” can actually be described as circles of righteousness. It’s like circular paths going around the mountain. If you were to try to travel straight up and over a mountain, that would be incredibly hard and potentially deadly. So, when a good shepherd would lead the flock, he would travel around the mountain, maybe even in a zig-zag pattern that formed a picture of circles around the mountain because that was the safest path.

Another interesting fact is that the Hebrew word for “paths” refers to well-worn paths or deep ruts that are actually good ruts. These ruts were important because they marked the safest paths. While these paths could be formed by one shepherd over time, it’s more likely they were formed by other shepherds who had gone before — generations of shepherds wisely walking the same paths. Even today, you can literally look at the hills in Israel and see paths the shepherds have been walking for generations.

I wonder, what deep ruts or paths have you created in your life of regularly walking with God? What deep, positive places have others forged that you can follow in? I encourage you to remind yourself of those paths, of those regular rhythms of your relationship with God.

These paths of righteousness are good because they always circle back to God. Let’s keep walking those paths daily and let them lead us back to Him, again and again and again.

If you’re in a low valley right now, gracious, do I ever know what that looks and feels like. But let me speak life into your worn out, broken down, hurting heart. I’ve lived the horrors where I couldn’t see any way out. But there’s always a way with God.

Stay close to Him. Stay close to people who love Him. And He will make a miraculous way. One you couldn’t have imagined but one that is perfectly timed and planned.

Heavenly Father, even when my heart is hurting ... even when I don’t understand what You’re doing ... I’m choosing to trust Your love for me. Thank You for reminding me that I don’t have to figure everything out. I’m choosing to follow Jesus, the Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep. The One who willingly died for me. In Jesus’ Name, amen.

Shift from asking why God allows hard things to learning how to rely on Him in the midst of circumstances that make you resistant to trust with Lysa TerKeurst’s Bible study, *Trustworthy*.



DAY 5

FORMING A HEART OF TRUST

“Then the word of the LORD came to me: ‘O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done?’ declares the LORD. Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.”
Jeremiah 18:5-6 (ESV)

I want to be someone who trusts God no matter what. I imagine you want that to be the story of your life, as well.

But when life isn’t turning out like we thought it would, we can quickly shift from that place of whole-hearted trust to one of desperately trying to be in control. Especially when devastating circumstances have left us feeling not just broken, but completely shattered to dust.

How do we trust a God who allows heartbreak and pain to be a part of our story?

I have found so much hope as I’ve studied in the book of Jeremiah.

In Jeremiah 18, the prophet Jeremiah issues a warning to the house of Israel. Instead of turning to God, they continue to rebel against Him — fixing both their attention and their affections on their false gods and high places.

In response, God sends Jeremiah to the local potter’s house where Jeremiah receives a message of correction from the Creator to His creation.

“Then the word of the LORD came to me: ‘O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done?’ declares the LORD. ‘Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel’” (Jeremiah 18:5-6).

Because of how familiar pottery making was in the ancient Near East, this imagery made God’s message an easy one for His people to understand, although we soon see it was not one they received. (Jeremiah 18:12)

But I’m praying we will let this picture of God as the Divine Potter speak to our hearts today. Specifically, I believe this image can strengthen our ability to trust when we allow it to remind us of three things:

1. We can trust the hands of the One who made us, the One who loves to use dust.

The phrase for potter used in this passage is “יָצַר (yô·šēr)” in Hebrew and means to “form or shape.” Jeremiah is making the connection between the way a potter throws his clay and forms it and how God shaped “human clay” — forming Adam from dust into the image of God. *“Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being”* (Genesis 2:7 NIV).



DAY 5

I am amazed that out of all the things God could have used to make man, He chose to use dust. When mixed with water, dust becomes clay. Clay, when placed in the potter's hands, can be formed into anything the potter dreams up.

"Yet You, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand"
(Isaiah 64:8).

**How encouraging to know dust doesn't have to signify the end.
Dust is often what must be present for the new to begin.**

2. We can trust the hands of the One who has good in store for us.

Genesis 3:19 tells us that from dust we came and to dust we shall return. That can certainly make us step back and wonder, *So, what is the point of all this?* In the end, we all die, decay and decompose into dust.

But for those who believe in Jesus Christ as the Lord of their lives, this isn't the end but the beginning of a transformation we all long to experience. Physical death starts the process of receiving our heavenly bodies that will never wear out, decay in any way, or ever be reduced to dust. (2 Corinthians 5:1-5)

Revelation 21:3-5 also reminds us that in eternity there will be no more death. No more crying. No more broken hearts or broken circumstances. No more shattered realities. No more dust. What a redeeming thought: that the shattering of our physical bodies leads us to God's renewal, where we will experience no more shattering, physical or otherwise.

And the more we choose to live eternally-minded, the easier it becomes to live fully surrendered.

3. We can trust the hands of the One who loves us and knows what is best for us.

Just like the children of Israel, we need to be shaped and formed as God sees best. We need to stay moldable and yielded to His work in our lives. And our willingness to yield starts with the reality that we can trust God because He loves us. We also must remember He knows infinitely more than us. (Isaiah 55:8-9; Job 38:4-41)

I don't know what hard realities have left you feeling shattered, friend. But I do know this: We can trust our God. We can trust Him with our dust.



DAY 5

Our greatest disappointments and disillusionments, those things that shake us and break us and make us wonder about everything, they don't have to mean all hope is lost. We can place our lives fully in the hands of the Potter. We can trust He is making something glorious out of dust, out of us.

Father, I confess there are days I allow heartbreak and pain to cause me to doubt You. Please forgive me for all of the times I have tried to take control of my own life, rebelling against You and Your ways as I wrongly assume I know better than You. I know that You love me. I know that You are for me. And I surrender my life anew today into Your loving and mighty hands. I trust You with my heart, my life, my dust. In Jesus' Name, amen.

Choose to believe that God's plans really are the best plans with the help of Lysa TerKeurst's Bible study, *Trustworthy*.



DAY 6 DOING THINGS GOD'S WAY

“So on the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days.” Joshua 6:14 (NIV)

I am a planner. A problem-solver.

So when I bring my struggles to the Lord in prayer, I tend to also bring my carefully thought-out ideas and suggestions He can choose from.

Here's what I think will work, Lord. I just need You to sign off on one of these, OK?

But the longer I walk with Him, the more I'm discovering that simply isn't the way God works. His ways? They aren't our ways. (Isaiah 55:8-9)

In the sixth chapter of the book of Joshua, we find Joshua and the Israelites getting to experience this truth firsthand as they encounter a problem of epic proportions. A problem that showed up in the form of a massive wall preventing them from moving forward into their promised land.

I can't help but wonder what murmurs circled through the camp as they looked at the towering walls of Jericho. I'm sure there was no shortage of ideas or opinions on how they should tackle the problem before them.

But God didn't ask anyone for their opinion. Not even Joshua. Instead, He asked for their complete and unwavering obedience. Obedience in the face of a battle plan that would make no sense to their rational minds. A plan that actually involved no "battle" whatsoever.

All God wanted them to do was march. For six days straight, they were to march around the walls of Jericho. Then, on the seventh day of marching, they were to end with trumpet blasts and a great shout. God declared this mighty sound would bring the walls down.

What moves me most about the Israelites' part in this story isn't so much their willingness to take that first crazy step of obedience. It's how they kept taking steps of obedience. Step after step after step. Even though nothing appeared to change ... even though there wasn't a single sign of cracking or crumbling in those massive walls ... they kept marching.

What if they'd stopped after day two? Or day three? Or even day six?

Think of all they would have missed. They would have cheated themselves out of certain victory from God.



DAY 6

I don't say any of this casually — as if it's easy to keep going when there's no evidence of our situation changing. It's hard to continue marching when we don't see God move the way we thought He would. It's sometimes difficult to trust that He's working behind the scenes.

So what do we do when He asks us to move in ways that don't make sense to us? How do we keep “marching” when the situation still looks hopeless?

We make the same choice the Israelites made. We choose to walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7)
We take God at His Word and hold fiercely to His promises. (Hebrews 10:23)

God had promised Joshua that He would deliver Jericho, its king and army into his hands. (Joshua 6:2) And that is exactly what He did. When they marched around the city on that seventh day and gave their great shout with the blare of the trumpets, the walls fell down flat. Flat! The city was theirs for the taking. (Joshua 6:20)

Their victory never hinged on their ability or any of their well-thought-out plans. It was solely dependent on their unwavering obedience offered to a loving and mighty God.

I don't know what seemingly impossible situation is staring you in the face today, sweet friend. I don't know what crazy steps of obedience God is currently calling you to take. But let me be the gentle whisper in your ear encouraging you to keep going. Keep trusting. Keep taking step after step after obedient step.

**We don't have to understand the “why” of God's ways.
But we do have to keep choosing to follow them.**

Let's not stop short of our victory with God. He is working things out. He is present. His plan is still good, and He can still be trusted. These are certainties even when life feels so very uncertain.

Tomorrow we'll talk some more about trusting God when He isn't moving in our circumstances like we thought He would. Until then, let's pray...

Lord, I confess that at times my heart feels discouraged when I don't see immediate results from my steps of obedience. Thank You for reminding me today that just because I can't see You moving, it doesn't mean You aren't moving. Thank You for the good plans I know You have for my life. And thank You for always leading me toward victory. Please help me as I walk by faith not sight. Day after day. Step by step. Choosing Your way above my own. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Start finding freedom from the exhausting burden of trying to control circumstances and outcomes as you purposefully surrender it all to the Lord with Lysa TerKeurst's Bible study, *Trustworthy*.



DAY 7 DEAR GOD, WHERE ARE YOU?

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” Psalm 46:1 (NIV)

“Mom, I didn’t make it. Please pray for me. I just feel confused about God.”

My heart sank. I felt my daughter’s deep hurt. I felt it as clearly as if it were my own.

I know what it feels like to want something so badly and have that dream shut down. That door close. That opportunity slip away.

She’d been talking about going for this special achievement at summer camp for three years. Every time we talked about camp, she talked about going for this achievement. But she wasn’t old enough to try until her fourth year at camp.

Finally, this was going to be her year.

She met every challenge and could see the goal in sight ... until the fire. She was supposed to light a campfire with nothing but three matches, one small square of newspaper and a few sticks of wood.

She struck the first match and held it up to the newspaper. It didn’t ignite. She struck the second match and held it up to the newspaper. It still didn’t ignite.

She stared at the third and final match. Knowing that a big part of the challenge was teaching the kids how to communicate with God and fully rely on Him, she’d been praying through every stage of the challenge. But now, she didn’t just pray — she cried out to God.

“Please help me, God. Please,” she mouthed as she struck the third match. She held the flame up to the paper once again and watched in complete disbelief. The matchstick burned, but the paper did not.

As soon as the final match burned out, she lowered her head in defeat and gave all her wood to the girls still in the challenge.

When I arrived at camp to pick her up a week later, she asked if we could go sit by ourselves and process this situation.

The fact that she didn’t get the camp honor was not what was bothering her the most. What was bothering her the most was not experiencing God’s power like the other girls had. They all had stories of God answering their cries for help in amazing ways that carried them all the way through the challenge.



DAY 7

“Mom, I didn’t get that with God. Why?”

This was a tough question. One of those questions as a mom that you don’t want to mess up in answering.

I asked her to help me recall every step of her challenge so we could intentionally look for God’s hand. As she recalled every part, I listened intently for anything unusual and unexplainable.

And when she got to the fire, I found it. There was no reason her newspaper shouldn’t light. None at all. Everyone else’s paper lit. Hers should have. But it didn’t.

“Honey, that can only be explained by God intervening. He was there. He was listening. And we just have to trust that there was some reason you shouldn’t have continued that challenge. We may not know that reason, but we can certainly trust God was right there ... protecting you ... loving you ... revealing His power to you.”

She put her head on my shoulder, “You really think so, Mom?”

I whispered, “I know so.”

I know so because I trust the truth God has given me. Truths like these are anchors that hold me to the reality of who God is:

He is the One in whom I find comfort and reassurance: *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33, NIV).*

He is right here with me in the midst of my trouble, and I am not alone: *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).*

Yes, I know deep hurt. But I also know deep hope. So, I whispered it again, “Yes, sweetheart, I know so.”

Sometimes God’s power is shown as much in preventing things as it is in making them happen.

We may never know why. But we can always know and trust the Who.

Dear Lord, thank You for knowing what I need and what I don’t — even when I don’t agree. Help me see Your “yes” and “no” as protection and guidance. Today, I choose to trust You. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Find a more grounded faith and a strengthened trust in God like never before with the help of Lysa TerKeurst’s Bible study, *Trustworthy*.



DAY 8

I JUST WANT TO RUN AWAY

“Elijah was afraid and ran for his life.” 1 Kings 19:3a (NIV)

There are three filters of truth through which I process life events:

1. God is good.
2. God is good to me.
3. God is good at being God.

This is my starting place when looking at circumstances both wonderful and hurtful. These truths help me consider good things God might be doing, even with realities that don't feel at all good. They bring me back to the goodness of God as the starting place for my continued trust in Him. These truths help settle my runaway fears and chaotic emotions when feelings beg me to question, *Why would You let this happen, God?!*

I'm not saying this is easy. Like I mentioned before, I've had some really heartbreaking things happen in my life over the past couple of years. I had so many ideas of how my life should go, including notions of what a good God would and would not allow into my life.

I said I trusted God, but in reality, I think I trusted in the plan I thought God should follow. And when my life took shocking turns so far from my expectations, my soul shook. My peace evaporated. And everything in me wanted to run and hide and stop trusting God.

This is where we find Elijah in 1 Kings 19. If you've never read 1 Kings 18, I highly recommend it. It's a chapter where we see God use Elijah to prove to the nation of Israel that He's the one true God in a miraculous and powerful way. Elijah must have been on a high, seeing God do what he expected God to do. And in essence, Elijah looked good himself as the “prophet who won the showdown at Mount Carmel.”

But oh, how quickly things can change. How quickly Elijah's absolute trust in God evaporates with one death threat from Queen Jezebel. First Kings 19:3a tells us, “Elijah was afraid and ran for his life.”

The events taking place in 1 Kings 18 and then 1 Kings 19 are both spectacular and sobering. Spectacular as we see the Lord magnificently prove His supremacy and might to all of Israel. Sobering in that, in spite of God's tremendous showing of power, King Ahab and Queen Jezebel are not overthrown, and Elijah ends up running for his life into hiding.

Why was Elijah fearful and in despair? I have a feeling his desperation came from the same soul-shaking place I mentioned earlier — unmet expectations. Elijah probably assumed Ahab and Jezebel's unholy reign would come to an end after the mighty feat of the Lord. Yet, that was not the outcome, and in that place of unfulfilled expectation, fear ultimately crumbled faith.



DAY 8

Even though Elijah experienced the miracle on Mount Carmel, he still succumbs to the fear of persecution. Elijah flees into the wilderness, exposing the truth that even a great prophet like Elijah is still human and falls terribly short in terms of both faith and affection for the Lord.

Even so, the Lord deals graciously and gently with Elijah — drawing him close with a whisper and giving him instructions of what to do next.

God doesn't fix things the way Elijah thinks they should be fixed, but He does lead him. And isn't it interesting the Lord leads him back through the wilderness? (1 Kings 19:15) After all, that's often where God takes His people to teach them His perspective that blooms into deeper faith.

The Lord gives Elijah a second chance to face the same struggles before he ran and hid, except this time with right perspective and faith.

Elijah sees God's plan is good — even if it isn't the way Elijah would have written it himself. And the same is true for us.

God's plans don't have to match our plans for them to still be good.

What can we personally take away from studying these events in Elijah's life?

Perspective is the key to trusting God. And so often the clarity we need to see things from God's perspective happens in the wilderness experiences we all wish we could avoid.

Maybe the three truth-filters which helped me can help you in whatever life circumstances that seem unfair, unreasonable or hurtful beyond what you can bear. Let God whisper His truth that He is good. He is good to you. And He is good at being God.

Father God, I'm so thankful You don't condemn me for my fears. Instead, You have given me the gift of Your perspective-shifting, lie-sifting, head-lifting Truth. Help me use Your Word to preach truth to my own soul when I start to doubt Your goodness. Teach me how to use it as the powerful and effective weapon it is when the enemy tries to convince me I have been forgotten and forsaken. Let it remind me that You see me, You love me, and I am safe — both in Your hands and in Your plans. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Stop letting fear pull you away from trusting God as you choose to let it become the catalyst to trust Him more than ever before with Lysa TerKeurst's Bible study on 1 & 2 Kings, *Trustworthy*.



DAY 9

COMPLETELY TRUSTING OUR GOD OF COMPLETION

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”
Zechariah 9:9 (ESV)

If you and I were confiding over cups of coffee right now, I would ask you what that desperate cry within your heart is. The one that you're longing with every fiber of your being to see come to pass. Because I know what that kind of longing is like.

In my own life, I've watched minutes turn into days and weeks into years, as I've tried to learn to make some sort of spiritual peace with seasons of waiting.

On my good days, I stand assured, “It's just not God's timing yet.” But on my less stellar days, I crumble, afraid and hurt, “God, why? *When?* You know how much my heart is aching.”

What is that hurt, that desire, that prayer you've brought to God countless times?

If we turn back to the Old Testament in our Bibles, specifically the book of Zechariah, we find the Israelites in a place of crying out in desperation for the arrival of their great and glorious King and His Kingdom. While they have returned from Babylonian exile, discouragement has set in as they look at the state of their lives. Their enemies remain unpunished. The temple has yet to be fully rebuilt. And the partially rebuilt city of Jerusalem feels like a mere shadow of what God has promised it will one day be. (Zechariah 1:14-17)

The words from the prophet Zechariah in our key verse are a declaration to the children of God that hope is on its way: *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey”* (Zechariah 9:9).

Hope that is reiterated in passage after passage of Scripture that refers to the coming King and His Kingdom — Isaiah 62:11; Jeremiah 30:9; Daniel 2:44-45; 7:27; Micah 4:1-8.

The promise is sure. Their story isn't over. Their King is on His way.

But the salvation they are expecting? The ultimate deliverance they truly need? It won't show up for another 500 years. A fact we see when we look ahead in our Bibles to the exact moment the Zechariah 9:9 prophecy is fulfilled.



DAY 9

It's a moment recorded in all four Gospels as Jesus enters Jerusalem on a colt during the last week of His life. (Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:28-38; John 12:12-16) As Jesus rides down the Mount of Olives toward the Eastern Gate, the crowds rejoice and shout, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Mark 11:9) These shouts reveal both their desperation and their expectation.

They long to be set free from Roman rule — expecting Jesus to become their king on earth and right the political injustices they face. But there's a vast difference between the people's expectations and Christ's purpose. If He were merely a political king, the Messiah probably would have ridden a horse or stallion. However, when Jesus enters, He enters on a donkey! This significance is immense.

Not only was Jesus riding on a donkey fulfilling prophecy, but it also signaled Jesus had a different plan and purpose. He didn't come to bring a temporary victory by becoming an earthly king through battle. He came to bring an everlasting victory by becoming the eternal King who died on a cross to save His people.

What a powerful reminder that God's ways are sometimes opposite of what we want and expect. We need to remember to consider what God's purposes are and align our expectations and desires around His.

Zechariah never saw the fruit of the prophecy. And Jesus' own disciples didn't see the significance of His triumphal entry until much later. Knowing this helps me when I start to struggle with the timing of circumstances in my own life. I often want to immediately see the good that God promises, but sometimes God's good answer is "not yet." There is a timing to everything.

You may be living under a promise of God but not yet see the fruit of that promise. You might pray for something that hasn't happened yet and even see no hope of it ever coming to pass. Though we may not understand, we must trust God's timing is perfect.

Our God is a God of completion. He makes promises and then He fulfills them.

Even if we don't see it in this life — He will complete what He has set out to complete.

Father God, thank You for reminding me today that I can trust You in my wait. When my circumstances and my own weary heart beg me to believe You have forgotten me, help me remember You are still very much at work. Even in the silence. Even in the unknown. Even when I can't see anything on the horizon. I want to trust You more and more each day — knowing that not only are all Your ways perfect, but Your timing is perfect too. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Learn how to trust God's timing and His ways, especially when the wait feels impossibly hard, with the help of Lysa TerKeurst's Bible study, *Trustworthy*.



DAY 10 EVEN IF...

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?’” John 11:25-26 (ESV)

As we come to our last day together, I hope you feel less alone in this struggle with trust. I also hope you feel better equipped to fight the battle we constantly face between fear and faith. It’s a battle I’m so very familiar with.

When God’s timing seems questionable, His lack of intervention seems hurtful, and His promises seem doubtful, I confess I get afraid. Confused. And left alone with those feelings, I can’t help but feel disappointed God isn’t doing what I assume a good God should do.

This is exactly the kind of situation we read about in John 11.

Lazarus became ill. His sisters Mary and Martha sent Jesus a message to tell Him. I would expect Jesus to urgently respond. But, He stayed an extra two days and then headed to Bethany, where Lazarus was.

At first glance, Jesus’ delayed response truly does seem peculiar. Especially when we read in John 11:5 that Jesus loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus. But then verse 6 says, *“So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was” (ESV).*

If I love someone and they get deathly sick, my initial reaction would not be to wait around a few more days! I would frantically try to get to them as quickly as I could.

But John 11:17 tells us that by the time Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been dead *four* days. In those days, Rabbinic tradition said the spirit of the person who died hovered over the body for three days and then departed. At the end of the three days, as the body began to decompose, they believed it was “officially” too late, and death was final.

So, when Jesus finally arrived, all hope seemed lost. Lazarus was “beyond hope” dead.

Jesus had a purpose, though. And while His response on the surface may seem out of character, some careful observations throughout the rest of this story give us possible insight into why Jesus delayed His departure.

First, Jesus was very specific as to *why* He was going to see Lazarus. Verse 4 tells us His purpose was for God’s glory to be displayed through this illness, so the Son of God would be glorified. Timing His arrival set the stage for Jesus to reveal the extent of His power and might — leaving no room for doubt over His divinity.

We also get a close look at the incredibly faith-filled conversation that took place between Martha and Jesus when He drew near. (John 11:21-27)



DAY 10

Martha's faith was real. She believed Jesus could do miracles. She knew He could heal people. But this situation was hopeless, right? Imagine the agony and pain of knowing that if Christ had been present, He could have saved her brother. In the midst of this reality, Martha still confesses the might of Christ, acknowledging that Jesus could ask anything of the Father, and it would be granted to Him.

But Martha was missing the point.

She was looking forward to a *future* resurrection (John 11:24) when Jesus wanted her to focus on what He was going to do in the *present*. She'd given up hope of seeing Lazarus alive this side of eternity.

Who could blame Martha for feeling hopeless? It's hard when we find ourselves walking through devastating circumstances that appear like they'll never get any better. But I believe God wants us to embrace powerful truth today.

We don't have to know all the details. We don't have to know the whys and the hows. But we can trust Jesus will accomplish His purpose.

Even if our circumstances aren't good, His purpose always is.

Let's not miss Jesus' question to Martha in John 11:25-26. He begins with saying, "I am" and ends with, "Do you believe this?"

That's the question for all of us, my friend. Will you believe Jesus at His word? Even if He delays His response? Even if you can't ever see the fruit in this life? Even if the blanks remain blank and the questions unanswered? Will you believe, even if ...? Even if.

Oh Lord, give us relief from our unbelief.

We may be facing a delay, distraction or even devastation for a season. But it's not a final destination. Resurrection is coming. For some of us, it will be like Lazarus and happen miraculously this day. But for all who trust in Jesus as Savior, whether our circumstances change or not, there's an eternal hope because His resurrection power has the final say.

In eternity, Jesus wins.

Father God, thank You for reminding me of truth today. The truth that doubt doesn't have the final say. Disease doesn't have the final say. Heartbreak doesn't have the final say. Even death doesn't have the final say. The only One who gets the final say in my life is Jesus. He is the Resurrection and the Life. My future and my present hope. So I'm choosing to declare today that even if You don't do what I keep asking, I will trust You still. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Find a safe place to acknowledge your distrust and start taking steps to truly rely on God when you order your copy of Lysa TerKeurst's Bible study, *Trustworthy*.