

**Trust**  
Making Life Work Week 5  
June 24, 2018

Welcome/intro/vision

This is week 5 of a series called "Making Life Work"

As we've started summer 2018 we've been looking at some principles from the Scripture that are there to help us to make life work and to live wisely

Like we've said, whether you're a Jesus person or not

all of us at points in our lives have made decisions that led us to places where our lives weren't working well any more

And sometimes if we're honest with ourselves the reason why and how we got to that place is because of not-so-wise decisions that we have made

So we're mining some wisdom from a book of the Bible called Proverbs so that we might more consistently make life work

If you're new to the Bible so glad that you're here, Proverbs is an ancient book written a couple thousand years before Jesus

It's a collection of wisdom sayings mostly written by a man who is described to be the wisest man who ever lived, his name was Solomon

And Solomon was the king of ancient Israel during its ancient heyday, probably the time in Israel's ancient history when it had the most influence and was the most prosperous

And at one point God appears and asks Solomon early in his kingship what do you want? God essentially gives Solomon a blank check and says he can ask for anything—can you imagine?

You know what Solomon says in response, "Please give me wisdom."

And God was so pleased with Solomon's request, he essentially says, "You could have asked for anything that you wanted but since you asked for wisdom, I'll give you that PLUS everything else you could have asked for: riches, fame, power, all of it"

And that's exactly what happens.

And people from all over the ancient middle east and Africa hear of Solomon's wisdom and people come from far and wide to ask him questions and seek his counsel and get advice

Eventually Solomon has kids and he knows that his oldest son is going to be king some day.

So he starts writing down his wisdom as a dad to his son, from the man who was King to his son who was GOING to be king so that he might be a good and wise king

Today we're going to dig into one of the most famous Proverbs of all time—at least in church circles.

And I think that one of the reasons why it's so famous is that it captures the core practice, the core transaction required for a genuine, healthy spiritual life

so easy to say but so very hard to do

And the simple but hard thing that this proverb is calling us to do is to TRUST

I was watching a reality t.v. show this past week and one of the people involved in this show had grown up bouncing around in the foster system.

And she said as a result of that she had learned one critical lesson: don't trust anyone.

While this was unfortunately the posture she had to adopt in order to survive her horrific upbringing,

what became abundantly clear as the show went on was that her prime directive of don't trust anyone was totally going to undermine her whole life if she continued to live by it

*What got her through the difficulties earlier in her life was going to suffocate her from living the rest of her life if she let it*

And pretty much the whole episode was her journey of letting go of this lack of trust that was suffocating her to learning to trust in a way that would allow her to experience the joy of really living

Here's the thing—you don't have to grow up in the foster system to have trust issues. Many of us have been burned along the way from any number of sources or people in our lives

Some of us are just suspicious or un-trusting by nature

And it's not that hard to justify—there's all kinds of reasons for you and I to NOT put our trust in anything or anyone around us.

Even people who love us will let us down, not to mention those people who are actually on purpose trying to use us in some way

But if we refuse to trust anyone, we die. We die emotionally and spiritually before we die physically if we remain cut off from others

As Christians we believe that God has designed the universe to flourish on the fuel of trusting relationships. And today, Solomon in Proverbs is doing to bring us to the origin of all of it, the trust relationship that if you put this at the center of your life, changes everything.

Bible/No Bible/Proverbs 3:

***Trust in the Lord with all your heart  
and lean not on your own understanding;***

***<sup>6</sup> in all your ways submit to him,  
and he will make your paths straight.***

Read/repeat with me?

Two key verbs here that are those core practices and critical transactions for genuine faith:  
**trust** and **submit**

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart*—a total, comprehensive, radical trust

Putting your entire weight and your center of gravity OUTSIDE of yourself and onto something else

Standing up, my trust is in my own two legs to keep me up

When I sit down on this stool, I'm trusting in the stool with all my heart to hold me, hopefully it doesn't totally collapse on me!

What does it mean to trust in the Lord with all your heart?

Typically it means moving from this posture [standing] where all my weight is on myself and I'm depending on myself to hold myself up, I'm trusting in me with all my heart to take care of me

to this posture [sitting] where all the weight of my life is in God's hands

The weight of my past is entrusted to him—when I'm trusting in the Lord with all my heart, my past is not my own any more, not even mine to regret, not mine to ruminate on or fret about

My past is all God's, I'm trusting in God with the weight of my past

And my present is entrusted to him

I trust that he understands and knows me and everything and everyone around me better than I do right now in this present moment and he knows and sees how this moment is leading up to stuff that I can't foresee or know or guess

And the full weight of my future is on him. I trust that he holds my future and I trust that even if there are difficulties ahead that he is with me already, waiting for me there, and is ready to meet with me and walk with me through them.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, a total, radical putting the weight of your life into God's hands: past, present, and future.

And then this really hard word, *submit*. Americans don't tend to like this word, but you can't follow Jesus without it.

But it's not just Christianity or religion that requires submission.

You can't be a great piano player or roofer or teacher or athlete or farmer or salesman or parent or husband or wife

without submitting yourself some sort of discipline or practice or preparation or simply the submission and giving over of your time and energies to focus on the task.

Submission means surrendering some or all of your time, energies, preferences, gifts, abilities, or desires to a larger purpose or meaning

***Submission is the giving over of yourself (or some portion of yourself) for the sake of something better than JUST yourself***

Every great marriage includes submission from both parties. Every healthy parent and child relationship includes different types of submission from both parties

And if you and I want to have genuine faith, it's going to include both TRUST AND SUBMISSION  
These are the key verbs for an authentic engagement with God

This is in CONTRAST to being **merely religious**.

There's all kinds of religious people in the world who do outwardly religious things but these two core practices of TRUST and SUBMISSION aren't actually a part of the dynamic

Some people still go to church for social reasons or business contacts or to go through the motions or are even trying to work out some sort of spirituality or faith

But there's no real trust, no real submission, it's just something that you do socially OR just a religious ritual you go through to get some nice morals and make sure your kids aren't psychotic

But the key verbs and core practices in religion are **DO** and **COUNT**: you DO or DON'T DO certain activities like go to church, take communion, say the right words in the right prayers,

And the key in religion is to do ENOUGH of these things to make sure that you're good:  
good with God, good with yourself, good with whomever you're trying to impress or whatever nagging voice in your head you're trying to placate or silence with your religious stuff

NOTICE in a genuine faith you're TRUSTING and SUBMITTING and while that's something YOU'RE doing, these words both imply something outside of yourself—you're trusting in someone else, you're submitting to someone else

Trust and Submit involve another party as the main actor, the one worthy of trust, the one worthy of submitting your life to

But when it's just religion, and the primary practice is that you're DOING and COUNTING, who's the main actor here? ME! SELF is at the center of it all!

You know what that produces? SELF-righteousness and/or SELF-condemnation, because self is at the center of it all!

And in fact when Jesus came around a couple thousand years after this Proverb

the people he most argued with were the Pharisees, the religious leaders who were VERY GOOD at DOING and COUNTING and making that the center of their faith practices  
And they were not quite as good at TRUSTING and SUBMITTING

Trust and submit. These are the core practices of a genuine faith relationship with the God of the universe, these are the core transactions at the heart of what it means to be a Christian

So I gotta start this morning by asking you: how are you doing here?

If these are the primary, core internal world practices of a genuine faith and an engaged life with God that makes a difference in real-time

How's your practicing going? How fluent are you in the language and work of trust and submission?

What I find is there are multiple challenges with this on a couple of different levels: some of us aren't even sure that God exists, while others of us WANT to trust, we just struggle with how

Let's talk first with those of you who aren't sure that God even exists and if God does exist whether or not God's actively engaged in the world and is actually trust-worthy is all up for debate

And those questions all make sense, and for those of you who are here asking them we're so grateful that you're here wrestling with those questions with us

Let me see if I can respond with an illustration:

Science tells us that amoeba's exist. There are all kinds of books that you can read about amoeba's, testimonies by people who say that they've seen these things called amoeba's and that they explain some small part of how the world works

But let's say that you're skeptical about amoeba's existence; you're not sure, or maybe you're an adamant amoeba atheist

And you can dismiss all the books and testimonies, that's all just a giant conspiracy concocted to make us all scared of these invisible and imaginary things called amoeba's

You demand first-hand proof that amoeba's exist before you're putting your faith in something that you can't see

And when you say that out loud, the people around you tell you that the only way to get that proof is by looking through a microscope.

That's the tool that enables you to have first-hand proof of the existence of amoeba's.

But you object! Surely if amoeba's are EVERYWHERE and have the type of impact that you SAY they do, surely amoeba's can't JUST be visible through the microscope!

In fact, I'm an American and I've got rights. I demand my right to see the amoeba through a telescope, not a microscope.

And if I can't see an amoeba through the telescope, then I refuse to believe that it could possibly exist.

My friends, an amoeba can ONLY be seen first-hand through a microscope. That's the only tool that will enable you to personally experience the wonders and joys of an amoeba for yourself

AND, my friends, TRUST is the only tool that will enable you to personally experience the wonders and joys of God for yourself.

If you're not a Christian, not a religious person, not sure what you believe, and if you want to actually give yourself the best chance of actually knowing if there is a God

Then the best thing you could possibly do is take this command from the Bible and lean into it with all your might for the next 30 days:

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 make your paths straight

Others of us, we believe in God, and some of us WANT to trust him, but we find it's easier in some areas and harder in others.

We segment our hearts, sometimes even just accidentally or without thinking about it, and by nature we find it's easier to trust in some areas than others

Some of you worry about money incessantly, that's what keeps you up at night, and you just STRUGGLE to trust God with that part of your heart.

Some of you are anxious about career or kids or your place on the social hierarchy or the lawn or the crops, you struggle to trust God with those things

We've talked about anxiety here from time to time—ANXIETY or WORRY is this: God has given us a sphere of influence, the ability to shape some portion of reality.

The Bible calls that your "dominion." You have some DOMINION abilities, that is the ability to control a very small percentage of global history, you have some dominion or sphere of influence

Worry is what happens in our hearts when we see something that is currently OUTSIDE of our control, OUTSIDE of our dominion that we want to control but we can't

So you worry about the weather when you plan your outdoor party because you WANT to control it but you CAN'T control it

Or you worry about your money or your career or your kids safety or whatever because there are significant pieces to those things in your life that matter to you that you can't protect or control

**WORRY is RUMBLE STRIPS in our souls alerting us that we have reached the edge of our DOMINION and our ability to control things**

And so there are two faithful responses when you hit those rumble strips:

1. **Expand your dominion:** before we had kids, I was nervous about changing diapers, I didn't know HOW to do it. I practiced, I learned, I did it, and the nerves went away.

When I started here at Chatham Community Church, I'd never been on a church staff before. I was a little nervous. But over time I got more and more comfortable that there wasn't some glaring thing I was missing or forgetting or that everyone else who had done this before would have known. My anxiety diminished as my dominion expanded.

Some of you are worried about stuff. And what you need to do about it is not just sit and worry but roll up your sleeves and go to work. Take a class, get some training, find someone who's smarter than you with money or marriage or career or kids and get the help you need to expand your dominion.

2. Second faithful response when you hear the rumble strips of worry: **embrace your limits.** You can't control the weather. You can't control every variable in your kids lives and the decisions they make. You can't control every variable in your career or with your money or with your health.

**And in BOTH these** situations, this verse applies, and trust and submission continue to be at the core of them.

And this is tricky in part because this passage isn't saying to check your brain or your understanding at the door. You've been given these great gifts of a mind that can understand things

And so your understanding isn't all bad, it's just very, very limited, right? Can we acknowledge that our understanding is limited, ultimately?

That a couple hundred years ago there actually WERE people who refused to believe in amoeba's or any sort of germs because it didn't fit with their OWN understanding?

And a couple hundred years from now when your great, great, great, great grandkids look back on some things that you and I believe and assume and they'll shake their heads in smug disbelief over things that we just don't know about

We're talking about making life work, how the pursuit of true wisdom, real wisdom, God's wisdom, is at the center of how we go to work making life work for us and for the people around us

And that starts with trusting the Lord with all our hearts, and leaning not on our own understanding, even and especially when it matters most to us.

I've had to do that here over the past 15 months or so.

In March of 2017, 15 months ago, I started recruiting someone for the Pittsboro Campus teaching pastor position.

I recruited one guy really heavily through the summer,

I thought he was going to be PERFECT for us, we'd worked together in the past, he grew up in a small town in North Carolina

We had LOTS of extensive conversations over many, many weeks, then he came and had a visit here to meet with lots of folks, I thought this was a lock and we'd have it all figured out heading into last fall

But then he totally shocked me by deciding not to come at the end of August. Loved the area and the church, just didn't feel like it was time to make a move yet.

I was totally, totally, totally bummed and disappointed.

But I had to come back to this: 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 make your paths straight

So we went back to the drawing board and posted the position on job boards, all fall long we slogged through over 120 applicants and resumes and listened to lots and lots and lots of bad sermons

Finally we brought someone in for a candidating weekend in early February.

We had a good weekend together, we offered him the position, HE decided not to come,

I was both disappointed AND maddened that this thing was going to drag out even longer!

We were praying like crazy and it didn't make sense to me that God wasn't delivering the right person for us

This path didn't feel so straight at that point! At that point it was feeling rather windy and up and down and all over the place!

But I had to again decide in big and small ways, was I going to trust in the Lord with this hiring decision or was I going to simply evaluate it in light of my own understanding of time tables and what makes sense to me?

So we went back to the search and posted on the job boards and we got a fresh wave of applicants and in that fresh wave of applicants was someone who wasn't looking for a job back in the fall when we first posted the job

His name was Jaime Castañer. And he wasn't looking for a job in the fall when we last posted it. But he was when we re-posted the job in late-February.

And the more we looked at his resume and got to know him, the more we liked him and thought he looked like a great fit for what we're doing here

And then we brought him here last weekend and he met many of us during the weekend, we got great feedback and pretty much unanimously we feel like he's a great fit

From what we could see, this makes all the sense in the world, this is the one and it's finally time to move on with this hire

But we've gotten to this position twice in the past 10 months. And after he left on Sunday and Monday morning I had to come BACK to this call to trust.

And I had to remind myself that all this is is another opportunity for us to put our eyes to the microscope—that God understands and knows better than I do what the church and what Chatham County need: present and future!

to put trust in God at the center of who we are and how we roll around here

And for us to see how God comes through for us here to make the paths straight

So we got feedback from many of you at the beginning of last week, all of it very very positive, so we offered him the position on Thursday. And he immediately accepted the position!

We're very excited, he'll start in mid-August at some point, still working out those details, but we feel confident that God's been at work and Jaime is the right person for this next season of our church's life

The path hasn't felt straight, but I think it's led us straight to the right person.

That's just one example of how this has been in play for our community here together in real-time.

But each of us has got our own stuff we're coming in with today: our own areas, our own question marks, our own personal or family or work or health situations where the battle to trust is waging quietly or loudly in our lives

The invitation here is to sink your life-roots deep in trusting in the Lord, the peace in the midst of whatever the storm is that you're managing

The **scope and sequence works** something like this:

**Start with whole-hearted trust**—I'm going to trust God with as much of me as I can or know or understand

**THEN go to work employing all the wisdom and knowledge and understanding** that you can gather and bring to bear on your life and various situations—expand dominion or tackle the project or engage the situation with all creativity and energy God gives

And then **again release control and embrace a life of trusting in the God who is bigger than your understanding** and who sees and knows things that you and I will never know or see on this side of heaven.

Would you repeat it with me again?

***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 make your paths straight.***

What does it mean, really, that if we put our trust in God, submit to him, he will make our paths straight?

Let's start with what we know it DOESN'T mean—it doesn't mean that he'll make everything smooth. I like smooth and easy. I prefer smooth and easy to straight. I like smooth and easy processes, smooth and easy situations, smooth and easy problems, smooth and easy relationships

I want to suggest that if we want to know if we can actually trust this and if we want to know what a life that looked like this would look like,

Look at the ONE life that demonstrated this perfectly and at every turn.

See, there's just one person in all of history who genuinely has trusted in the Lord with all his heart

who leaned not on his own understanding

who in all his ways acknowledged and surrendered to God his good Father—at one point he said to his followers, "I only do whatever I see God, the Father, doing!" If you heard a 32 year old say "I only do whatever I see my daddy doing" you'd be concerned!

But in doing so, God did indeed, make this person's path straight.

His name is Jesus. And the life he lived as a result of doing exactly what this passage says to do was extraordinary—the single most consequential life in all of history

And God did make his path straight, but it wasn't smooth, was it? He was hounded and harassed at every turn, doubted and accused over and over again

And the path that God had him on led him straight, alright—straight to the cross.

Straight to giving of himself for the saving and healing of all humanity, straight to the sacrifice that forgives us all our sins and reconciles us to a good and holy and perfect and loving God

But even that cross wasn't the last word on this magnificent life.

Because the straight path led not only TO the cross but THROUGH the cross, to an empty grave, resurrection Sunday

The path led STRAIGHT to the hope for all humanity that sin and mess and pain and death might no longer have the last word on any of us or this world that God loves any more  
God has the last word. Life Does. Forgiveness Does. Redemption Does. Grace Does.

Only one person in history perfectly trusted God with all his heart and he shows us what God's straight path looks like

It's not easy. It's not smooth. But it is good. And it is right, beautiful, wonderful, awe-inspiring, transformative, hopeful. And all the various twists and turns that happen along the way serve this greater purpose and this greater good.

### **Here is today's TAKE-WITH:**

Given that trust and submission are the core practices of genuine faith and that's what we want to be about here at CCC, try this exercises:

1. Identify **one place where you struggle to trust and submit**. Could be EVERY place—maybe you're not a God person at all! But likely one area that's crying out right now in your situation or one area that's a pattern where you struggle to trust and submit
2. **Pray Proverbs 3:5-6 over that area:** over and over and over and over...this is an invitation into a richer, truer, deeper, more rooted life
3. **Worried? Prayer: Expand your dominion or embrace your limits?**
4. **Return to the Scripture:** memorize it this week! I'd encourage you to recite it twice at every meal every day this week—you'd have it in your head and it might start to make it to your heart

Say it with me?

***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 make your paths straight.***

If you're not a religious person, not a faith person, I want to invite you to do this with us. Make this the week that you start to put your eye to the microscope by engaging with the wise invitation to live a life of trust

My prayer for all of us is that we'd grow in our trust. God designed a universe that runs on the rails of trusting relationships, and it starts with this one magnificent, wonderful reckless trust, the trust in the Lord