



THE PRAYER CLOSET

Transforming Lives Through Intercessory
Prayer And Fasting

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TRUSTING GOD

Do you struggle to trust God? Do you find yourself wavering too many times between unbelief and trust? God longs for you to trust Him. He is pleased when you depend on Him. He desires that you put away any doubt and unbelief in your life.

His Word is filled with directions and encouragement to trust Him. Some of these are:

Proverbs 3:5—"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding."

Psalms 20:7—"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the LORD our God."

Psalms 18:2—"The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."

Psalms 56:3—"Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You."

Through these verses and many others, God reveals His desire that you grow in your ability to trust in Him. The Christian life is a life of dependence on God. It is walking with Him by faith, trusting Him regardless of your circumstances, "For we walk by faith and not by sight" (**2 Corinthians 5:8**).

Yet, how do you grow in your ability to trust God? It is possible to learn to trust Him more fully as you walk with Him. You can mature in your ability to trust Him. In order to do this, there are some principles that will help you grow in your faith in God. These principles are illustrated in the life of Abraham. From his life, you can receive insights on how to grow in your ability to trust God.

You can use these insights to guide you in seeking God for a more mature faith that will cling to Him and His will in every circumstance of your life. These insights will provide you with help to seek God for a deeper trust in Him.

God's call to salvation is a call to trust Him daily

(**Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 11:8**)

Genesis 12:1-3 reveals that God called Abraham to follow Him. This call required him to forsake all in order to follow God's call, "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house to a land that I will show you" (**Genesis 12:1**). However, God promised to bless Him and to fulfill His purpose for him, "I will make you a great nation, I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you shall all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (**Genesis 12:2-3**).

When God called Abraham, it was an invitation to a lifetime of trust. His whole lifestyle had to be characterized by trusting God. **Hebrews 11:8** declares that Abraham followed God's call without knowing the details of God's plan, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. *And he went out, not knowing where he was going.*" Abraham had to trust God. He had no idea where he was going. He would spend the rest of his life trusting God.

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When God called you to salvation through His Son Jesus, He called you to a lifetime of trusting. When you first came to Christ, that was the beginning of your believing. Your lifestyle is to be characterized by trusting God in all the circumstances of your life.

You may not have to forsake all in order to follow God's call as Abraham did. Yet, you do share one thing in common with Abraham: you have no idea where you are going. In other words, you do not know where God's will is going to lead you. You have no idea what tomorrow, next week, or next year holds. God has not revealed to you His whole plan for your life. Only He knows what you will have to face in this life. This requires you to trust Him. This reveals the necessity of a daily trust in Him.

God longs to make **Proverbs 3:5** a living reality in your life, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding." He wants to bring you to the place where you will daily trust in Him with your whole heart. He desires that you depend on Him and not on yourself. God loves you and wants to lead you to the place where you will trust Him in all the circumstances of your life. It is only by trusting in Him that you entered into salvation. Now, God wants to build your faith. He works to move from that simple trust in Him to a mature, unyielding trust in Him. His call to salvation is a call to growing in faith in the daily circumstances of life.

The ability to trust God is built through the Word of God

(Genesis 12:6-7, 13:14-17, 15:1, 17)

The Word of God is the primary instrument that God will use to develop your faith. You grow in your ability to trust Him as you fill your life with His Word. The more you understand and appropriate His Word in your life, the deeper your trust in God. The Word of God will strengthen and sustain your ability to trust Him daily.

This principle is illustrated in the life of Abraham. God's Word enabled Abraham to trust God regardless of His circumstances. God used His Word to sustain Abraham's faith in trying circumstances. These occasions were:

- **Genesis 12:6-7**-God promised to give Abraham the land of Canaan. When Abraham arrived in Canaan, there was one significant problem. The land was filled with thousands of Canaanites who did not want to give the land up (**Genesis 12:6**). This could have been an opportunity for Abraham to doubt God. Yet, God speaks to Abraham and restates His promise to him (**Genesis 12:7**). God's Word sustained his faith in the face of what seemed impossibility.
- **Genesis 13:14-17**-In this episode, Lot has just separated from Abraham. This separation wounded Abraham. This separation also placed Abraham in a difficult position. Lot chose the area where there was good pasture and available water. In the midst of this adversity, God once again speaks to Him. He again restates His promise to Abraham. God's Word enabled Abraham to trust Him even in the midst of adversity.
- **Genesis 15:1**-Abraham has just defeated the alliance of kings who had captured Lot. Now Abraham and his small band of men have made a lot of powerful enemies. He is surrounded by Canaanites that could easily become hostile toward him. The people that he had just defeated might strike back in revenge. Yet, God again speaks to Him, "After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying; I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward" (**Genesis 15:1**). In the face of danger, God's promise sustained his faith in him.
- **Genesis 15:2-4**-Abraham pours his heart out to the Lord. He tells the Lord that he does not have a son, an heir. If he doesn't have a son, how can he be the father of many nations? If he doesn't have a son and descendants, who will inherit the land that God has promised to give him? He declares his struggle to the Lord. God mercifully speaks to Him. He promises Abraham that he will have a son (**Genesis 15:4**). He also says, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them, so shall your descendants be" (**Genesis 15:5**). In a moment of doubt and frustration, God's Word sustains Abraham's faith.
- **Genesis 17**-God once again restates His promise to Abraham. This came after the mess with Hagar and Ishamael. Even after failure, God's Word sustains his faith.

- **Genesis 22**-This chapter tells of God's agonizing command for Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. God calls on him to offer his son as a sacrifice. Abraham obeys this in faith. How was he able to do this? It is because he remembered and trusted in God's promises. God's Word, particularly His promises, sustained him when God asked for this sacrifice. He knew that God would not let His promise fail. He even believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead in order to keep His promise, "Concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead" (**Genesis 11:17-18**). When his faith was severely tested, God's Word strengthened and sustained his faith.

Throughout Abraham's life, the Word of God sustained his faith. It enabled him to grow in his ability to trust God.

The same is true for you. Saving faith is created in a person through the Word of God, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (**Romans 10:17**). Yet, sustaining faith is also developed in you through the Word of God. As you fill your life with the Word, the Spirit of God uses it to grow your ability to trust God. Through the Word, you learn about God's character. You see how He has worked in the past in behalf of God's people. His promises are recorded for you in the Word. The Spirit uses these things to increase your ability to trust God and to sustain your faith when you began to doubt and falter.

The ability to trust God is nurtured through prayer

(**Genesis 12:7-8, 13:4, 18, 15:2**)

Prayer is essential to developing your ability to trust God. Abraham was a man of prayer. He worshipped God. He talked to God and he listened to God. Building altars characterized his life (**Genesis 12:7-8, 13:4, 18**). The altar is symbolic of communion with God. At this place, he called on the name of the Lord. This is the place where he met with God and God met with him.

Abraham poured his heart out to the Lord. When he was struggling with doubt and frustration,

he declares this to the Lord, "But Abram said, Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" (**Genesis 15:2**). God has promised to give him many descendants along with the land. Yet, he had no son through which this could become a reality. He shares this struggle with God through prayer.

Abraham grew into a great man of faith because he spent time with God. God nurtured his faith as he spent time with Him at the altar. He encouraged and sustained him as he shared the burdens of his heart.

This same principle applies to you. Your ability to trust God is nurtured through prayer. Your faith will grow as you spend time with God. It is crucial in developing your faith in God. Why is prayer important for growing your faith?

- (1) *Prayer changes your focus.* Prayer lifts your eyes off of your circumstances and fixes them on the God of the circumstances. Circumstances can weaken and hinder your faith. When you judge situations only by appearance, your ability to trust God will be stunted. Prayer helps you to gain God's perspective on your circumstances.
- (2) *Prayer is the channel through which God releases His power and peace into your life.* When you pray, it opens the door for God's power in your life (**Psalms 22:3**). The power of God can sustain your faith. The peace of God will help guard your heart from fear and doubt (**Philippians 4:6-7**).
- (3) *Prayer convinces you of God's ability.* As you pray, you become more convinced of God's ability to do what He says. It is one thing to have an intellectual grasp of God's power and greatness. Yet, it is quite another to know it in your heart. By this I mean, having the deep conviction that God is willing and able to work powerfully in your life. It is having the certainty that God will move mightily in your life. As you spend time with God, it will convince you more and more of His ability to bless and work in your life.

God does not abandon you when you fail to trust Him

(Genesis 12:10-20; 16; 20)

Abraham is the great example of faith in the Word of God. He is declared to be the friend of God. He is listed in the "Hall of Fame of Faith" in

Hebrews 11. Yet, this was also a man who fell flat on his face. Abraham failed to trust God at times in his walk with Him. The Bible records these times:

- **Genesis 12:10-20**-When a famine hits the land of Canaan, Abraham goes into Egypt. Rather than trusting God to provide, he moves to Egypt where there is abundance. He also has Sarah lie about the true nature of their relationship. He does not depend on God but schemes to protect himself through lies.
- **Genesis 16**-Abraham and Sarah devise a plan to give him a son and an heir. Abraham accepts Sarah's advice to have a son through Hagar. Rather than waiting on God to fulfill His promise in His time, Abraham schemes to work this out in his way and in his time.
- **Genesis 20**-Abraham once again asks Sarah to lie about the true nature of their relationship. He uses this same trick to protect himself. He does not depend on God to protect him but makes up his own plan for protection.

Abraham had his failures. But, failure is not final with God. God continued to work in his life. He continued to bless him and mold him into a man of great faith.

Even though you fail to trust God, it is not the end. He doesn't abandon you. He doesn't give up on you. He is gracious and merciful. He convicts you and forgives you. He helps you deal with the consequences. He enables you to learn and grow from your failure to trust Him.

Think of your failures to trust God like you would a scar. When you see a scar, it teaches you two things. First, you have been wounded. Something bad has happened. But, it also shows you that you have been healed. It reveals that it has been dealt with.

When you fail to trust Him, it wounds you. It grieves Him. It brings some difficult

consequences into your life. Yet, when you confess it to Him, accept His forgiveness and move on. Realize that it is an opportunity to be healed and grow. Know that God will now use this to grow your faith. Failing to trust God is not the end for you; it is a new beginning to a deeper trust in Him.

Trusting God requires believing Him instead of focusing on your circumstances

(Genesis 17; Romans 4:19)

In **Genesis 17**, God promises to give Abraham, a son through Sarah. Sarah and he were going to conceive and give birth to a son. This promise astonished Abraham, "Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah who is ninety years old bear a child?" (**Genesis 17:17**). Yet, God confirms that Sarah and he would have a son, "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac . . . But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year" (**Genesis 17:19, 21**).

Abraham had to believe God in spite of his circumstances. Both Sarah and he had gone beyond the childbearing years. It was not physically possible for them to have a son. Yet, God called on him to believe regardless of his circumstances. This is exactly what Abraham did, "And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb" (**Romans 4:19**). Abraham did not consider their inability to conceive. He did not dwell on this. He focused on God and His promise. Abraham was "fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform" (**Romans 4:21**).

You will struggle to grow in your ability to trust God if your focus is on your circumstances. Just as Abraham, you have to come to the place where you cling to God and His promises rather than considering your circumstances. You must choose to believe God rather than what you see or feel. What you see and feel may not encourage your faith; these things may actually be a discouragement to trusting God. That is why you

should focus more on God and His promises rather than on your circumstances. Developing the ability to trust Him requires a continual focus on Him and His promises. Trusting God means choosing to believe Him rather than what you see and feel.

Trusting God produces bold praying (Genesis 18:16-33)

Earlier in this issue, we saw that prayer nurtures your ability to trust God. At the same time, trusting Him will empower you to pray boldly. In **Genesis 18**, Abraham intercedes for Lot and his family. The Lord reveals to him that He is about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. This stirs Abraham to plead with Him.

Abraham's prayer is characterized by boldness. He begins his prayer by asking God to spare the city for the sake of fifty righteous people. With boldness and humility, he then pleads with the Lord until He promises to spare the city if there are ten righteous people in it.

Abraham's bold praying is motivated by His trust in the Lord. He knew that the Lord was the almighty God of heaven and earth. He realized that God was the just Judge of all the earth. He understood that God was filled with mercy. Abraham trusted in God's character. He knew that he could plead with Him and receive answers from Him.

Prayer will build your trust in the Lord. Yet, as your trust in the Lord grows, you will pray with greater boldness. These things feed off of each other. Prayer increases your trust; then your trust fuels your praying. The more you trust God, the more that you feel that you can ask of Him. If your trust in Him is weak, you will not feel that you can ask of Him. But as you grow in trusting Him, you will pray with greater boldness.

Your ability to trust God is built over time through the process of testing (Genesis 22)

Becoming a person of deep trust in God does not happen over night. There are no magical

formulas or three or four-step plans for this. It is a work that God does in you over time through testing your faith. This is why the Bible declares the inevitability of testing, "My brethren, count it all joy **when** you fall into various trials" (**James 1:2**).

This principle is illustrated in the life of Abraham. In **Genesis 22**, God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. This agonizing command must have torn Abraham's heart into pieces. Yet, he obeyed this command of God. He obeyed in faith, knowing that God could raise Isaac from the dead.

How could Abraham respond with such obedience and faith in God? It is because God was building his trust in Him over the years. **Genesis 22** is the pinnacle of Abraham's faith. God prepared him for this time through the successes and failures of his faith in the past. Each of those episodes was part of God's growing his ability to trust in Him.

The same is true in your life. God is building your trust in Him. Through the tests of your faith over time, God is developing your ability to trust Him. He works in your life to bring you to a place of helpless dependence on Him. He longs for you to become a person who will trust Him regardless of what you face or what you feel.

This truth should affect you in two ways. First, as you walk with the Lord, keep your eyes fixed on the end result, "That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (**1 Peter 1:7**). God is working to purify your faith in Him. He wants to create a faith in you that is dependent on Him and that will bring praise, honor, and glory to Jesus.

Too many times you can get caught up in your failures to trust God. You can also dwell too much on the victories of faith. Rejoice in the times that you trusted God and experienced victory. Confess the failure to trust God and move on. Don't linger too long on the failures. Stay focused on the long run. Fix your eyes on the end result that God is producing in you over time.

Second, be faithful to trust God in the daily affairs of life. He is striving over time to build your faith in Him. Because of this, you will have your faith tested in a variety of ways. These tests may range from interruptions in your schedule to tragedy. The tests of your faith will come in a variety of forms.

Each day God works through these tests to deepen your trust in Him. You have several opportunities each day to depend on Him and believe His promises. Strive to use these daily opportunities to trust Him. Be faithful to depend on Him and His strength in these matters. As you do this, God will build your ability to trust Him in all the circumstances of life.

Practical Steps For Developing Your Trust In God

The following are practical steps that you can use to develop your ability to trust God. These are offered to help you take positive steps in your life to a deeper trust in Him.

- *Ask God to increase your faith in Him (Luke 17:5).* Plead with God to create in you a stronger trust in Him. Pray that you will focus more on Him than on your circumstances.
- *Pray that God will show you the obstacles to a deeper trust in Him.* Ask Him to reveal to you anything that is hindering you from growing in your ability to trust Him. As He reveals this to you, plead with Him to help you remove it from your life.
- *Enlist a "trust intercessor."* Ask another believer to pray that God would deepen your trust in Him. Ask this person to plead with God continually about this matter. Have this intercessor focus solely on this need in your life.
- *Keep a record of the tests of your faith.* You might consider keeping a record of when your faith is tested. It does not have to be exhaustive. But you might want to record those times when your trust in Him is put to the test. On a sheet of paper, draw a line down the middle of the sheet. One column can be the "Tests" side. The other column can be the "My Response" side. Over time look back at this list and see what God is doing in your life. Ask Him to give you insight on your responses and how you can grow in your ability to trust Him.
- *Praise and thank God daily.* Offer specific praise and thanks to God on a daily basis. Your trust in God is strengthened as you focus on His character and blessings in your life.
- *Study and meditate on God's faithfulness.* Study what the Bible says about God's

faithfulness. Meditate regularly on how faithful God is.

- *Feed your faith a steady diet of God's Word.* Strive to read, study, memorize, and meditate on the Word of God. The Spirit will use the Word of God to build your faith.
- *Confess immediately any doubt or unbelief to God.* When you find yourself giving ground to doubt or unbelief, confess this to God. Don't toy with these things. Pour your heart out to Him. Plead with Him to help you conquer these things.

The T.R.I.A.L.S. Prayer Model

How do you pray when someone's faith is being tested? How do you pray for yourself when you're struggling to trust God? The following prayer model is offered to help you pray concerning these matters. This model is based on an acrostic for the word "trials". Each letter represents a request that you can make for others or for yourself. Plead these truths before God for yourself or for someone you know is facing adversity.

T-Thank God for the testing of your faith. Plead that you will have a thankful spirit in the midst of adversity. Thank Him for what He is going to do in your life (**1 Thessalonians 5:18**).

R-Request that He show you what He wants to teach you during the tests of your faith. Plead that He will grow you through this time (**Psalms 119:67; James 1:5-6**).

I-Invite Him to work in your life during this time. Plead for His presence and power in your life at this time. Ask that you will be patient with Him as He does His work in your life (**James 1:2-4**).

A-Assert your faith in Him and His Word. Declare to Him your confidence in Him. Make it known to Him that you will trust Him. Share your commitment to depend on Him no matter what you face (**Hebrews 11:6**).

L-Lean on Jesus as you go through the adversity. Call on Him often and share your concerns and

burdens with Him. Spend much time with Him as you face adversity. Do not withhold anything from Him. Share your whole heart with Him. Humble yourself before Him and cast all your cares on Him (1 Peter 5:6-7).

S-Surrender yourself and your circumstances to the Lord. Ask that you will not give in to despair or frustration. Ask for a submissive spirit to Him during this time (Romans 8:28; James 4:6).

When You Have Trouble Trusting God: Praying Psalm 121

As you have read this issue, you might be saying to yourself, "I want to trust God. But I have trouble trusting Him in many areas of my life." And you may know someone who feels this way. **Psalm 121** is recorded for those who have trouble trusting God.

Psalms 120-134 are called the Songs of Ascent. They were evidently used by pilgrims on their way to the temple for the various feasts. They began in a distant land and journey through various perils and troubles on their way to the temple.

In a similar way, you are on a journey. You are a pilgrim passing through this world. You will encounter a variety of troubles that will test and stretch your faith. **Psalm 121** reveals that God is the One who keeps you as you make this journey.

If you have trouble trusting God, you can plead this psalm before God. You can use it to intercede for someone who is going through this same struggle. When you have trouble trusting Him, you can pray the truths of the psalm for yourself or others.

Pray that this person will know that there is help from the Lord (v.1). The psalmist says that he will lift his eyes up to the mountains. He also asks the question, "Where will my help come from?" The temple was on the hill of Jerusalem. The "mountains" were synonymous with the temple located on the hills of Jerusalem. The psalmist is not perplexed. He is not in search of information. He knows where His help comes from. God had placed His presence in the temple. It was the place to seek God. When he says that he will look to the

mountains, he means that he is depending on the God who caused His presence to dwell in the temple. His question only highlights the answer—it is in the God who dwells in the temple. You can pray that this person will know that there is help from the Lord. Plead that he/she will know that it is not hopeless. Ask that they will see and understand that God can and will help.

Pray that they will realize the sufficiency of God's help (v.2). The psalmist says that his help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. This speaks of God's wisdom and almighty power. Pray that this person will realize that he/she can depend on God's wisdom and power in the midst of adversity.

Ask that this person will know that God guards him/her continually (vv.3-4, 8). Plead that he/she will know that God is guarding him/her every moment of his/her who life. God's care and protection never ceases. He protects His people from and in adversity.

Plead that he/she will be assured of God's continual presence (v.6). The Lord Himself is with His people. His right hand surrounds and guards those who cry out to Him. Pray that this person will be assured of this presence. Ask that he/she will be aware of God's mighty hand in his/her life.

Pray that this person will realize that God is at work in every circumstance of his/her life (v.7). It does not matter what this person faces—trouble in the day or in the night, the good or the bad—God will guard and protect the person. He will use all these things to transform His people. Plead that this person will realize that God is there and is at work guarding, protecting, and transforming.

Worship and thank God for His character. In the midst of adversity, it is crucial to worship and thank God. Whether you pray this psalm for someone else or for yourself, worship and thank Him for who He is. Praise Him with all the strength of your being! Thank Him with all the earnestness of your body. This psalm provides some rich insights into God's character. Praise Him for these truths about His character. Thank Him for being these things. Ask Him to be faithful to these characteristics in your life or in the lives of others.

Web Site Updates!

- The God who can and does help me (v.1)
- The God of heaven and earth (v.2)
- The God who has the wisdom and power to in all the circumstances of life (v.2)
- The God who does not let my foot slip (v.3)
- The God who guards me while I sleep (v.3)
- The God who never sleeps (v.4)
- The God who always watches over me and protects me (v.4)
- The Lord my Guardian (v.5)
- The Lord my Protector (v.5)
- The Lord who preserves me in all the circumstances of life (vv.6-7).
- The Lord who always goes out and comes in with me (v.8)

Please check out our web sites. We are regularly updating the sites with new material. It is our hope and prayer that these materials will help draw you closer to the Lord and will mold you into a powerful intercessor before the Lord. Visit our sites today!

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- Getting To Know Your Father
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