



TRUSTING GOD WHEN LIFE IS UNCERTAIN

BY BARNABAS PIPER

It doesn't matter how sick I am, I don't enjoy going to the doctor. It doesn't matter if it's been six months or six years since my last teeth cleaning, I don't like going to the dentist. It doesn't matter what funny noise my car is making, I don't like going to the mechanic. That said, I am grateful for them too. I am grateful that there are people who know how to treat illnesses, fix cavities, and replace

transmissions—none of which I know how to do. Any time I avail myself of an expert's services, I am trusting him because he knows what I don't. I am trusting him completely because I couldn't even tell if he was wrong in his diagnosis. He prescribes medicine, and I take it. He says I should floss, and I do ... sometimes. He says my car needs a new belt or brakes, and I have them replaced.

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working His perfect plan for all creation.*

WHY DO WE DOUBT GOD?

Yet for some reason, our inclination toward God is almost the opposite. When things begin to go sideways in life, when we look toward an uncertain future, our instinct is not to trust God. We don't see Him as the expert to handle what we don't understand but rather are tempted to see Him as a failure or an absentee. Sometimes we even blame Him for the uncertainty or upheaval we face. Why?

The first part of the answer is "sin"—we are predisposed to follow in the footsteps of our parents, Adam and Eve, and think we know better than God. Our instinct is to figure out how to be lord over our own lives rather than to trust in the Lord of the universe. So it makes sense we would trust an expert whom we hire. He may be an authority on a subject, but he's not in charge; he is a service provider for my little kingdom. God, however, is not just a subject matter expert—He is the authority over all subject matter in the universe, and we don't much care for that.

The second part of the answer is something we don't think about often and are ill-equipped to think about at all: God is infinite while we are finite, and God is holy while we are sinful. Of course, we struggle to understand God and trust Him. With our limitations and failings and His infinity and holiness, we are bound to reach the borders of our understanding. We simply do not have the capacity to fully understand an infinite God.

He is constantly thinking and doing things at a level beyond our comprehension. At every moment, God is sustaining the entire universe, knowing every thought, weaving every life, and working His perfect plan for all creation. He never stops. We cannot possibly comprehend even a minuscule fraction of God's perfect knowledge and wisdom.

This is where doubt comes from. Doubt, in its most basic form, is when we say, "I don't know." It is simply being unsure. It is when we do not understand, so we struggle with confidence. For finite, sinful people like us,

of course we experience doubts about God. Now, you might be thinking, Well, why don't I doubt the doctor and mechanic? I don't understand them either. But you do, or at least you understand the scope of their expertise. It is reasonable and feasible that someone could study medicine or be adept at engine repair. But it's beyond our comprehension that someone could be an expert at everything while also keeping the whole universe spinning and never making a mistake to boot. So we doubt.

HOW SHOULD WE TRUST GOD?

How, then, do we learn to trust God in the face of life's uncertainties? With our sinfulness and our limitations, how do we learn to put our trust in God the same way we do a doctor, only more? Hebrews 11:1 (ESV) gives us some direction: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Here we see faith defined in terms that seem opposed to each other: assurance of hope, conviction of the unseen. If something is hoped for and is unseen, that means we are inevitably unsure of it. We may be confident, we may believe strongly in it, but we aren't sure.

But this verse says that faith is the assurance of those things, the conviction of them. Faith proves to our hearts the very thing we are unsure of, and in the midst of difficulties and uncertainty, this is precisely what we need.

When we face situations or circumstances we don't understand or like, our knee-jerk reaction is to think, *That doesn't make sense*, or *That isn't right*. But to think like this is to make the tacit assumption that we know better than God and to assume that our instincts are more correct than His Word. We can't reduce God to a size we can wrap our heads around. Nor can we overcome our sinful blindness and skewed perspective on our own. We will never neatly systematize and sum up God. This means that faith—the assurance and confidence of those things we hope for in the Lord and the conviction of those things we have not seen about Him—is the only right response to doubt.

We need to recognize that the infinity and holiness of God—those characteristics that blow our minds and leave us at a loss to understand—are precisely the reasons we can and must trust God. Our questions are not too big for God. Our circumstances



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are in all-powerful and wise hands. God is bigger than anything we have thought to ask. He is no mere expert in any subject, but rather the Creator of all subjects and their experts. Our lack of understanding and clarity are not evidence against Him, but rather evidence that He is beyond anything we can ask or imagine.

So when we see no clear answers or direction, that is

OK. God has the answer. God is the answer to all our doubts and questions. He is close; He is watching; He is caring. His knowledge is too wondrous and His sovereignty too great for us to fully grasp.

BARNABAS PIPER is the author of three books—*The Pastor's Kid*, *Help My Unbelief*, and *The Curious Christian*. He co-hosts *The Happy Rant* podcast, writes for *He Reads Truth*, and has contributed to numerous other websites and publications. Piper speaks regularly at churches and conferences around the country, lives in Nashville with his two daughters, and serves on staff at Immanuel Church.