



**Week 4**

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## **TRUST, NOT LIMITS**

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# WEEK 4: TRUST, NOT LIMITS

**Looking Back:** What did God teach you this past week as you read the daily devotions? What opportunities did you have to apply what you learned?

**Looking Up:** Play the video and work through the discussion questions.

What is a situation in your life that you look back on and see how God was working in the details for your good when you were unaware (you met your spouse at an event you almost didn't attend, etc.)?

This question was asked in the video teaching: Do our choices limit God, or is God at work in all our choices? How do you respond to that question?

Read Jeremiah 17:9. What does this verse teach you about your daily choices?

Read 1 Peter 5:6. When it comes to the choices you make each day, what does it look like to humble yourself under God's hand? What is the promise for those who do?

God's providence won't happen outside what He has expressed in His Word. With this in mind, what are some truths you know about God that encourage you when you face difficulty?

How might we make room for God to move in surprising ways? What are some ways we don't make room for that outcome in our lives?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:27-29. Identify a difficult situation in your life. How might these verses apply?

Read Psalm 27:13-14. According to this passage, what can we know and believe as we endure difficult circumstances? Why?

**Looking Forward:** How will you take what you learned today and apply it to your life this week? Take a few minutes to plan your next meeting and spend some time in prayer together.

## **WEEK 4: TRUST, NOT LIMITS**

### **DAY 1—READ JEREMIAH 17:9**

*The heart is deceitful above all things,  
and desperately sick;  
who can understand it?*

Jeremiah 17:9 places a magnifying glass on our hearts and asks us to examine what we see. The human heart represents not only the seat of feeling in our lives but also our understanding and volition. This verse, then, zooms in on our feelings, understanding, and will—and finds us entirely lacking. In our own reasoning, ability, and power, we come up short every time.

Sin is a sickness. Our hearts deceive us into rebelling against God. They make us want to ignore His will for our lives. They trick us into thinking our circumstances exist outside of His purposes and power.

Sick people adopt morbid, distorted views of life that they would not embrace if they were well. This is because they do not understand themselves.

So where is the hope in Jeremiah 17:9? This verse helps us recognize the true condition of our hearts and teaches us that we desperately need redemption in every area of our lives, including our relationship with the truth. It teaches us that all of our thoughts and feelings need to be tested by the Spirit of God and the truth of His Word. Our hearts lie to us all the time. To overcome the deception of our hearts, we need to embrace the truth of God's Word.

**Put Jeremiah 17:9 in your own words.**

**Why is it important that we rely on the Bible and not on our own hearts for the truth? How have you experienced this personally?**

**In what situations have you noticed that the natural tendency of your heart is to lead you down the wrong path?**

**Thank God that He exposes the lies of our hearts with the truth of His Word. Invite Him to do that in relation to whatever circumstances you face.**

### DAY 2—READ ISAIAH 55:8-9

*<sup>8</sup> For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.*

*<sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Have you ever struggled with an unanswered prayer only to watch others have their prayers answered immediately? Maybe you have been praying for years, and then someone else has the seemingly exact same prayer answered immediately.

Our default question to God is, “Why?” We want to know the reason He gave what we wanted to someone else and not us, hoping the answer will help make sense of it all. The problem is, even with all the answers or all the reasons, these things still may not make sense to us. Isaiah shows us that our thoughts and ways are not God’s. His ways are infinitely higher than ours. Often, our prayers reveal our desire for looking out for our own interest. Yet, God is working on the complete narrative of redeeming His creation. His plan and work are far greater than what we imagine.

His purposes and plans on the ins and out of our lives may be a mystery, but God has not left us completely in the dark. He has chosen to reveal who He is and how we ought to live in His Word. His Word reminds us that He ultimately isn’t concerned with our idea of fairness but His work of restoration. As a result, His ways are greater, and His plans go deeper than our temporary plans on earth. Will we rely on our gauge of fairness, considering our limited lifespan and perspective, or will we trust our eternal God and follow His unchanging plans?



**In the middle of every unknown of your life, what does Isaiah 55:8-9 tell you that you can know for sure?**

**Have you ever had a moment where you asked God why when you compared your life to someone else? How does this verse encourage you in times like that?**

**How does considering the complete narrative of God's restoration help you with moments that seem unfair?**

**Thank God for the overall work of restoration that He is doing. Ask Him to help you keep your mind on His kingdom and His plan when you are caught up in hard moments.**

### DAY 3—READ 1 CORINTHIANS 1:27-29

*<sup>27</sup>But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;*

*<sup>28</sup>God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup>so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.*

Many children have had the experience of dividing into teams to compete on the playground at school. There are lots of ways to pick teams, but one of the more common methods is for captains (presumably two of the best players) to take turns choosing members to be a part of their teams. To build the best team, captains take turns choosing people from the remaining group. This, of course, leads to someone being the last pick, and that someone is perceived by most to be the worst player of the game.

But God has an entirely different method for choosing members of His team—the church. We might expect our Captain to first choose the world's more powerful, wise, and strong to be a part of His world-changing team; instead, God chooses those the world despises or sees as weak and foolish. He chooses those whose circumstances look like less than we might think are usable.

God chooses the despised, weak, and foolish for His team—and not only for His team, but for displaying His greatness. That is, He first chooses “last picks” for His glory. He does it so that we know, without a doubt, that the good that comes is from God and not people.

How might being called “chosen” both humble and encourage the Corinthian believers? How does it humble and encourage you in a world that finds the gospel foolish?

What does the world find “foolish” about the gospel? What is your response to these things?

What “weak” or “foolish” circumstance in your life has God chosen to shame what the world sees as wise and strong?

Pray that God would continually make your boast the gospel, and that the “foolishness” of your circumstances would be the very power of God at work in and through you.

### DAY 4—PSALM 27:13-14

<sup>13</sup> *I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord  
in the land of the living!*

<sup>14</sup> *Wait for the Lord;  
be strong, and let your heart take courage;  
wait for the Lord!*

If you just read these two verses, you might think Psalm 27 was a journal entry David wrote to give himself a pep talk. But the verses that directly precede these were clearly a prayer to God (vv. 7-12). If David was going to remain faithful in his circumstances, he needed to remind himself of some things.

David could have been destroyed by his enemies many times, but God protected, guided, and preserved him. Remembering the persistence of God's character and help in His life assured David that he could be persistent too. If he would not give up on God but keep asking—as he waited in full reliance on the Lord—he could be strong and confident in any situation.

Faith is not merely a decision we make one time in life; it is something we cultivate daily. We do that by praying persistently. It's not easy to wait on God in a time of difficulty, but it is often necessary. God wants us to actively trust Him every day to provide for us, deliver us from temptation, and grow our affection for Him. What we believe about God in the waiting impacts everything. When we are tempted to give up, we must remember who God is and what He has already done on our behalf.

**In Psalm 27:13-14, what truths did David want to remind himself of?**

**Spend time reading and memorizing Psalm 27:13-14. What is it teaching you in this moment?**

**In what situation do you need to remind yourself of who God is and what He has already done on your behalf?**

**Regarding the situation you identified, personalize Psalm 27:13-14. For example: Father, I believe that I will see your goodness in (name the situation). I will wait for you. I will be strong and courageous and persist in waiting for you.**

### DAY 5—READ PSALM 23:5

*You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.*

When things go badly for us, it often seems like that's the summation of our reality. Lonely and isolating feelings abound. But we are not alone. God is with us and is preparing the way forward—filling our cup with His overflowing provision—right in the middle and in plain view of the awful thing.

How do we get to the place where we can see that truth in the way David did? It's like dunking a sponge in a bucket full of water.

When we determine to lean into Jesus instead of our circumstance, we fill up with the truth of who God is. When we turn to Scripture instead of our own strategies, the Spirit fills us with truth, taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). When we turn to the community of faith instead of leaning into our fears through isolation, God fills us with joy and encouragement.

Then whenever life squeezes us, what comes out is the truth of who God is. We are not dry sponges that are empty and unable to manifest one drop of life-giving water. We are filled with that life-giving water, ready to pour out from the store of God's provision that is welled up inside us.

How did David describe God in Psalm 23:5? What does that mean to you personally? Why?

In the middle of hardship, when have you been able to say “my cup overflows”?

When our circumstances are difficult, it’s not easy to recognize God’s abundant provision. What are some steps you can take to do so?

Thank God for filling your cup to overflowing, even in the most difficult circumstances. Ask Him to help you recognize the ways He does that daily.

