

## “Finding Joy in Trust”

# *Finding* JOY LENT



Image by Gerd Altmann

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Luke 4:9-12

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**10** For it is written:

“He will command his angels concerning you

to guard you carefully;

**11** they will lift you up in their hands,

so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’4:11 Psalm 91:11,12”

**12** Jesus answered, “It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’4:12 Deut. 6:16”

Special Music: “Trust and Obey” Chelsea Moon w/ the Franz Brothers

I believe that all of us have at least one thing that we are afraid of, rational or irrational. It's natural to have fears. It's a part of being human. Sometimes we judge people simply because we do not understand their fears. But not everyone is afraid of roller coasters, mice, snakes, water, caves, fire or flying in aircraft. And when we don't have a fear of something, we have a tendency to think that it is strange that other people might fear that thing that we do not fear. We may not be afraid of hang-gliding, but I assure you that there are a number of people that will intentionally never try hang-gliding. Fear may appear to be irrational to an observer in some cases, but I want you to know that that fear is very real to those that experience it, no matter the source of that fear.

Many years ago, I was the co-owner of a theatrical supply company. While we sold theatrical products, we also did technical design and construction for special projects. Just like any company, we were always looking for new work. We bid on a project for a local mall that had undergone a massive renovation and they wanted to celebrate their renewed presence in the community. They were requesting a large champagne bottle constructed and hung in the center courtyard of the mall. The champagne bottle was huge, almost 30' long and was extremely heavy even though we built it as light as possible. It truly was a wonder to behold. It was covered in lights looked almost magical.

After weeks and weeks of work, it came time to hang this bottle. I had done my fair share of climbing on trusses in the theatre, but this was a little different. We brought in a Condor man lift and we were going to hang the bottle from four support poles in the center of the concourse. We needed at least six people to hang the bottle, one person to work the condor, one to supervise and a person on each of the four poles. The hanging points were going to be approximately 60 feet in the air. We were short one person. Even though it was not something I was used to doing, I volunteered to man one of the poles. Now to do this, since we only had one man lift, each pole person had to be lifted up to the pole position and then would hang there in a climbing harness on the pole until all the pole positions were set. We knew that it would take over an hour to set and hang the champagne bottle. I was given the glorious job of being on the first pole, which meant that I would be hanging from my climbing harness for well over an hour.

I have a fear of heights, probably because I have fallen from high places more than once. But this was the highest I had been in this type of situation, hanging 60' in the air and having to put my complete faith in the rig supervisor and the nylon straps that were holding me in place. It was probably one of the greatest challenges in my life as I faced my fear to not only trust the people and equipment around me, but trust them enough that I did not let the fear keep me from accomplishing the task before me. I have faced many fears in my life, but I have to admit that hanging 60' in the air, held to a steel column by a few nylon straps, all the while knowing that the surface below me was solid concrete,

**focusing on rigging steel cable to ensure that no one got hurt, was one of the most difficult and fearful moments in my life.**

**Remembering that time brings to mind three elements that we all face when it comes to overcoming our fear. These elements relate to each other and hinge on our understanding of each one. So, let's talk about these three elements before we dig into our scripture. Let's look at some realistic definitions.**

**What is faith?**

**Faith is the belief that, even though things might be out of our control, there is reason to believe that there is hope; that are greater forces at work and that everything is going to work out for the best. Our faith in our fellow man means that we believe that someone will come to our aid in our time of need. Our faith in God is the belief that He is real and that He has everything under control; that he knows what is best for us and that He holds us in the palm of Hand. That any situation that we face is never outside of His control.**

**What is fear?**

**Fear is that emotion that we feel when we are in a position that can be harmful to us or our family with regards to physical pain, sickness or disfunction, or maybe financial loss, emotional distress or spiritual devastation. There is a big question**

mark in our lives about how that situation will be resolved. Are we going to fall? Are we going to crash? Will it bite us? Will we ever get well? Are we going to die? Will we ever walk again? How can my mate ever love me again? Will I ever be able to trust anyone again? Will God still love me, in spite of my thoughts and actions? Fear is essentially extreme worry about something that has yet to happen, but the possibility of it happening is very real, at least to us in that moment. It is basically a huge question mark that only leads to more question marks. Fear can bring us to a standstill. It can stop us in our tracks. It can keep us from moving forward and accomplishing what is necessary.

### **What is Trust?**

Trust is one step beyond faith. Many years ago, with the decision to reduce the number of weapons of mass destruction in the world, a term was coined: "Trust, but verify." And while that turn of a phrase may be effective with regards to diplomacy, it is an oxymoron. Trust is not like a water spigot. You can't just partly turn it on. It is more like a light switch. You either trust, or you don't. If you have doubts, then the bond of trust isn't there. Some people have said that Faith is going to the edge of a precipice and taking one more step. That isn't true either. You can have absolute faith in something or someone, but if the trust factor does not exist, if you are not totally committed, then faith is just another word. It is trust that allows us to take that next step; not as a test, but as a knowledgeable commitment to our faith.

**There is another element of trust that you don't find with either fear or faith. Fear can be overcome. It can push you to make better choices, and even eventually allow to move beyond fear to the point of bringing new adventures, new perceptions, and new passions into your life.**

**Faith can be regained. If you lose faith, you can always return to it and it will welcome you back with open arms. Faith is a conscious choice that brings us in sync with ourselves and our creator.**

**But trust, trust is totally different. Once trust is broken it is extremely difficult to regain. When we have lied, cheated or not kept our promises to those who trust us, or to our God, it becomes a challenge to regain that trust, especially if someone gets hurt in the process. When someone lets us down, it is difficult for us to give them the same responsibility again without rebuilding the relationship. And when we let others down, it is just as difficult for them to engage in a bond of trust without a lot of bridge rebuilding. It can be done, but it is never easy, and it requires a lot of work on the part of all parties involved. And even then, it is questionable that the same level of trust can ever be regained.**

So let's look at our scripture today once again, which, ironically doesn't even contain the word trust, but examples it in its' purest form.

**Luke 4:9-12**

**9 The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here.**

**10 For it is written:**

**"He will command his angels concerning you**

**to guard you carefully;**

**11 they will lift you up in their hands,**

**so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'4:11 Psalm 91:11,12"**

**12 Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'4:12 Deut. 6:16"**

This is a very interesting exchange between Jesus and Satan. We talked in our two previous messages how Jesus responds to Satan, not by acknowledging the temptations and not from the authority of being the Son of God, but by quoting scripture. Did you notice that with this last temptation, Satan tries a new approach. Last week we saw how Jesus let Satan know that His authority over the earth is temporary at best, that anything he offers cannot last. And that what authority he has, is given to him by God who can it take away any time He wishes. In this last temptation, Satan tries to re-establish his authority by what? Quoting scripture.

He quotes Psalm 91:11-12:

**10 For it is written:**

**“He will command his angels concerning you  
to guard you carefully;  
11 they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”**

**In other words, throw yourself off the highest point of the temple and God will protect you. He will send angels to keep you from getting hurt. “Jesus, if you really believe the scripture, you won’t have any problem putting it to the test. If you truly TRUST God (there’s that word), if you truly trust what God tells you, then you won’t have a problem throwing yourself down. There’s nothing to fear. You can’t get hurt. God says so and you trust God. Trust but verify. Show everyone that you believe this scripture by jumping off the temple. Everyone will be so impressed when they see those angels save you. Even if you trust, everyone needs a little proof.”**

**This is very much the water spigot approach to trust, and it shouldn’t surprise us that Satan pushes this lie not only to Jesus, but to us as well. He wants us to challenge God into proving to us that He loves us, as if He hasn’t already proved that by sending Jesus to die on the cross for us. Which proves that the quote from Psalms is taken totally out of context in order to perpetuate the lie.**



Jesus is going to actively show us the nature of this temptation and how trust is one step beyond faith. Let's first look at Matthew 26:52-54. Jesus is in the garden and the soldiers have shown up. Peter's immediate response is to draw his sword and cut off the ear of one of the soldiers. And Jesus responds:

**52 "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.**

**53 Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?**

**54 But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"**

Peter's response to the arrival of the soldiers is genuine. He wants to protect Jesus, but He forgets that Jesus really doesn't need protecting. Peter sees vulnerability in Jesus because he still doesn't understand what is about to happen. He loves and cares for Him while, at the same time, forgetting who Jesus really is.

Jesus, on the other hand, knows that He has God's angels at His disposal. He knows that He can snap His fingers and bring those angels to protect Him. But He also knows that to call them would keep the scriptures from being fulfilled. The fulfillment of those scriptures was the purpose of His ministry here on earth.

He had to remain the perfect, unblemished sacrifice for our sins. There is no question that He knows He can walk away. He knows that He can call for protection. He knows He has an out. But He is totally purpose driven by His love for us.

Even in the garden, Luke 22:42 shows us His resolve

**42 “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”**

There is fear here. Fear because He is choosing to face the task before Him as a human. Fear because He is choosing not to call those angels. He fully understands that His death is necessary in order to complete the Father’s will and the redemption of mankind. He knows that the salvation of humanity hangs in the balance. But remember, fear is not the absence of faith and faith is not the absence of trust. Jesus’ trust in the father’s will is His total focus. Is it frightening? Of course, it is. It is more frightening that sitting 60 feet in the air held in place with nylon belts staring at a hard, concrete floor and praying that everyone knows what they are doing. It is more frightening that climbing onto a hang glider or facing a fear of flying.

**But God's got this. We are His children. While our faith may shine a light on our path, it is our trust that gives us resolve and purpose in life. Where faith may take us to the brink of knowing God's plan for our lives, it is our trust in Him that allows us to step into the unknown and find joy in that trust. Taking that step is not putting God to the test, it is embracing His purpose, knowing that He knows what He is doing and how best to use us for His purpose.**

**It may mean hanging by nylon straps, 60 feet in the air. You know, I ended up being at the top of that pole for over three hours. I also remember wishing the whole time that it would come to an end as quick as possible. But we completed the job and the champagne bottle looked gorgeous. The client was pleased, and we all felt a tremendous sense of accomplishment.**

**I could just as easily have told you the story of how I came to First Christian Church of Fort Stockton, swinging on a thread, following the path that God placed before me, watching as he moved mountain after mountain to get me here, and the fear that I needed to overcome as He found purpose for my life in the midst of a very trying time. We are never alone when we trust in God and His plans. And there is no better view than standing in the palm of God's hand.**

**This week, another new challenge. This week I would like for us all to spend time in prayer asking God to reveal his plan for our lives to each of us. All too often**

**we pray for God to reveal Himself to us by testing Him. “God, if you will do this, I will do that. God, if you will give me more money, I will give more money to the church. God, if you will heal me, I will pay more attention and follow you. God, I know that you say that if I throw myself off this building, that the Bible says you will send your angels to protect me.” Instead, let’s give into His desires for our lives knowing that He knows what is best for us and how best to use us.**

**“It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Instead, let us find purpose in His will for our lives and by doing so, “Find the Joy in Trusting Him.”**

**AMEN**

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