

Trust in the Lord

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Our relationship with God will grow only to the degree we are willing to place our trust in Him.

In our family, we sometimes play a game we call “The Crazy Trust Exercise.” You may have played it too. Two people stand a few feet apart, one with their back toward the other. On a signal from the person behind, the person in front falls backward into the waiting arms of their friend.

Trust is the foundation of all relationships. A threshold question to any relationship is “Can I trust the other person?” A relationship forms only when people are willing to place trust in each other. It is not a relationship if one person trusts completely but the other does not.

Each of us is a beloved spirit son or daughter of a loving Heavenly Father.¹ But while that spiritual genealogy provides a foundation, it does not of itself create a meaningful relationship with God. A relationship can be built only when we choose to trust in Him.

Heavenly Father desires to build a close, personal relationship with each of His spirit children.² Jesus expressed that desire when He prayed, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.”³ The relationship God seeks with each spirit child is one so close and personal that He will be able to share all He has and all He is.⁴ That kind of deep, enduring relationship can develop only when built upon perfect, total trust.

For His part, Heavenly Father has worked from the beginning to communicate His absolute trust in the divine potential of each of His children. Trust underlies the plan He presented for our growth and progression prior to our coming to earth. He would teach us eternal laws, create an earth, provide us with mortal bodies, give us the gift to choose for ourselves, and permit us to learn and grow by making our own choices. He wants us to choose to follow His laws and return to enjoy eternal life with Him and His Son.

Knowing that we would not always make good choices, He also prepared a way for us to escape from the consequences of bad choices. He provided us a Savior—His Son, Jesus Christ—to atone for our sins and make us clean again on condition of repentance.⁵ He invites us to use the precious gift of repentance regularly.⁶

Every parent knows how difficult it is to trust a child enough to let them make their own decisions, especially when the parent knows the child is likely to make mistakes and suffer as a result. Yet Heavenly Father allows us to make the choices that will help us reach our divine potential! As Elder Dale G. Renlund taught, “[His] goal in parenting is not to have His children

do what is right; it is to have His children *choose* to do what is right and ultimately become like Him.”⁷

Notwithstanding God’s trust in us, our relationship with Him will grow only to the degree we are willing to place our trust in Him. The challenge is that we live in a fallen world and have all experienced a betrayal of trust as the result of dishonesty, manipulation, coercion, or other circumstances. Once betrayed, we may struggle to trust again. These negative trust experiences with imperfect mortals may even impact our willingness to trust in a perfect Heavenly Father.

Several years ago, two friends of mine, Leonid and Valentina, expressed interest in becoming members of the Church. As Leonid began to learn the gospel, he found it difficult to pray. Earlier in his life, Leonid had suffered from manipulation and control by superiors and had developed a distrust of authority. These experiences affected his ability to open his heart and express personal feelings to Heavenly Father. With time and study, Leonid gained a better understanding of God’s character and experienced feeling God’s love. Eventually, prayer became a natural way for him to express thanks and the love he was feeling for God. His increasing trust in God eventually led him and Valentina to enter into sacred covenants to strengthen their relationship with God and each other.

If prior loss of trust is keeping you from trusting God, please follow Leonid’s example. Patiently continue to learn more about Heavenly Father, His character, His attributes, and His purposes. Look for and record experiences feeling His love and power in your life. Our living prophet, President Russell M. Nelson, has taught that the more we learn about God, the easier it will be for us to trust Him.⁸

Sometimes the best way to learn to trust God is simply by trusting Him. Like “The Crazy Trust Exercise,” sometimes we just need to be willing to fall backward and let Him catch us. Our mortal life is a test. Challenges that stretch us beyond our own capacity come frequently. When our own knowledge and understanding are inadequate, we naturally look for resources to help us. In an information-saturated world, there is no shortage of sources promoting their solutions to our challenges. However, the simple, time-tested counsel in Proverbs provides the best advice: “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart.”⁹ We show our trust in God by turning to Him first when confronted with life’s challenges.

After I finished law school in Utah, our family faced the important decision of where to work and make our home. After counseling with each other and the Lord, we felt directed to move our family to the eastern United States, far from parents and siblings. Initially, things went well, and we felt confirmed in our decision. But then things changed. There was downsizing at the law firm, and I faced the prospect of no job or insurance at the very time our daughter Dora was born with serious medical challenges and long-term special needs. While confronting these challenges, I was extended a call to serve that would require significant time and commitment.

I had never faced such a challenge and was overwhelmed. I began to question the decision we had made and its accompanying confirmation. We had trusted in the Lord, and things were supposed to work out. I had fallen backward, and it now appeared that no one was going to catch me.

One day the words “Don’t ask why; ask what I want you to learn” came distinctly into my mind and heart. Now I was even more confused. In the very moment I was struggling with my earlier

decision, God was inviting me to trust Him even more. Looking back, this was a critical point in my life—it was the moment when I realized that the best way to learn to trust in God was simply by trusting Him. In the subsequent weeks, I watched with amazement as the Lord miraculously unfolded His plan to bless our family.

Good teachers and coaches know that intellectual growth and physical strength can happen only when minds and muscles are stretched. Likewise, God invites us to grow by trusting His spiritual tutoring through soul-stretching experiences. Therefore, we can be sure that whatever trust we may have demonstrated in God in the past, another trust-stretching experience lies yet ahead. God is focused on our growth and progress. He is the Master Teacher, the complete coach who is always stretching us to help us realize more of our divine potential. That will always include a future invitation to trust Him just a little bit more.

The Book of Mormon teaches the pattern God uses to stretch us in order to build strong relationships with us. In *Come, Follow Me*, we recently studied about how Nephi's trust in God was tested when he and his brothers were commanded to return to Jerusalem to obtain the brass plates. After their initial attempts failed, his brothers gave up and were ready to return without the plates. But Nephi chose to place his complete trust in the Lord and was successful in obtaining the plates.¹⁰ That experience likely strengthened Nephi's confidence in God when his bow broke and the family was facing starvation in the wilderness. Again, Nephi chose to trust in God, and the family was saved.¹¹ These successive experiences gave Nephi even stronger confidence in God for the enormous, trust-stretching task he would soon face of building a ship.¹²

Through these experiences, Nephi strengthened his relationship with God by consistently and continuously trusting Him. God uses the same pattern with us. He extends us personal invitations to strengthen and deepen our trust in Him.¹³ Each time we accept and act on an invitation, our trust in God grows. If we ignore or decline an invitation, our progress stops until we're ready to act on a new invitation.

The good news is that regardless of the trust we may or may not have chosen to place in God in the past, we can choose to trust God today and every day going forward. I promise that each time we do, God will be there to catch us, and our relationship of trust will grow stronger and stronger until the day that we become one with Him and His Son. Then we can declare like Nephi, "O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and I will trust in thee forever."¹⁴ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Notes

1. See "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," Gospel Library.
2. See Doctrine and Covenants 88:63.
3. John 17:21.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:38.
5. See Alma 34:15–17.

6. “Nothing is more liberating, more ennobling, or more crucial to our individual progression than is a regular, daily focus on repentance. Repentance is not an event; it is a process” (Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 67).
7. Dale G. Renlund, “Choose You This Day,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 104.
8. See Russell M. Nelson, “Christ Is Risen; Faith in Him Will Move Mountains,” *Liahona*, May 2021, 103.
9. Proverbs 3:5.
10. See 1 Nephi 3–4.
11. See 1 Nephi 16:18–31.
12. See 1 Nephi 17:8.
13. God’s personal invitations to each of us come through reading the scriptures, from living prophets, and by the whisperings of the Holy Ghost.
14. 2 Nephi 4:34.