

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness (James 3:13-18).

Trust God

There are many ways that we seek to justify our failure to trust God during troubled times:

- We're angry – we believe we have the right to be upset
- We've been hurt deeply – we're not ready to forgive
- We're impatient – God's timetable is exasperating!
- We're afraid – we feel vulnerable
- We're confused – God's apparent plan isn't making sense
- We're lonely – God seems to have deserted us

- We're stubborn – we want to resolve conflict our own way

The list of excuses and rationalizations is almost endless! When we refuse to trust God during times of conflict, we substitute His presence and blessing for a variety of self-centered and miserable experiences. Too often we resist surrendering to the lordship of Jesus Christ, even though we continue to hurt ourselves, other believers and our churches.

Trusting God During Troubled Times

King David certainly experienced many difficulties and conflicts in his lifetime. As a boy David faced attacks by wild animals, the ridicule of his brothers and the giant warrior Goliath. Later David spent years fleeing from Saul's relentless, murderous pursuit. Even after being firmly established as king of Israel, David faced the heartbreaking rebellion of his son Absalom as well as several other occasions when enemies threatened the security of Israel.

Rather than blame God or others for his circumstances, David trusted God completely, confident that God and God alone was his strength and refuge. Psalm 62:5-8 reveals David's heart as he expresses his absolute reliance on God:

Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.

King David could trust God because he understood God's character and ways. David knew from personal experience how God is wonderfully omniscient (Psalm 139), magnificently omnipotent (Psalm 136), absolutely good (Psalm 34:8), infinitely loving (Psalm 100:5), and amazingly forgiving (Psalm 51). For David, God was not an abstract, disinterested "higher power" but a loving shepherd who was intimately involved in David's daily life - caring, renewing, guiding, and protecting him (Psalm 23:1-4).

Trusting God in the midst of church conflict is not easy but is essential for allowing God to work in the situation. Trust involves choosing to base our attitudes and actions

And we know that
in all things God
works for the good
of those who love
him, who have been
called according to
his purpose.
Romans 8:28

on God's nature, character and promises - not our emotions or current circumstances. We can trust God to lead us through troubled times because He knows every aspect of the conflict, including the hearts of those who struggle

against us. We can be confident in God's power to work for our good in all circumstances, even when the outlook appears to be bleak.

Jared was called to serve as the pastor of Victory Valley Church four years ago. Initially there was an air of excitement among church members as baptisms, attendance, and giving increased dramatically. Nearly everyone sensed that God was working powerfully in the congregation.

Then a women's class began to be dissatisfied with Jared's leadership. They disliked the new worship music, felt threatened by the people who were joining the church, and questioned Jared's time management and priorities. A few of the ladies complained that Jared was neglecting them and other longtime members. Gradually some of the women's husbands adopted

their wives' critical spirit and began to speak openly about Jared's resignation.

Jared wondered how these church members could be so negative when God was working in the church in such powerful and obvious ways. It wasn't easy to endure their criticism, but Jared clung to God's promises, confident in his calling to serve as pastor of the congregation.

Trusting Is Obeying

We trust God when we acknowledge the truthfulness of what He has said through our faithful obedience. "Doers" and not "hearers" of God's Word are those who genuinely trust God. As James writes, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1:22). Trusting God is not an emotion but an act of the will which results in faithful obedience. We trust God when we acknowledge the truthfulness of His Word and put it into practice, believe that His methods are the best methods of resolving conflict and wait patiently for Him to act in our circumstances.

Trusting God's Truth

The only real truth is God's truth, especially when controversy and confusion erupt in the church. The Bible illuminates hearts that are darkened by sin, teaches us how to relate to one another in the Body of Christ and provides practical instruction on forgiveness and reconciliation. As the storms of conflict swirl around us, only God's Word offers us the truth on which to anchor our lives.

Unfortunately, far too often we rush to resolve church conflict without prayerfully seeking what God has told us in the Bible. No wonder so many conflicts blaze into uncontrollable firestorms! Only God's Word sanctifies our

attitudes and actions, enabling us to examine our hearts and motives and respond to conflict in godly ways.

Trusting God's Methods

Let's face it! Biblical conflict resolution is completely unconventional and even foolish by the world's standards. Biblical conflict resolution begins with examining ourselves to determine if we need to remove the "log" from our own eyes (Matthew 7:3-5). Worldly conflict resolution uses principles of negotiation which seek to achieve the best possible outcome for each person involved in the conflict. Biblical conflict resolution requires us to relinquish our rights for the good of others and the glory of God.

Trusting God's Timing

Sometimes conflict can be resolved quickly and easily, especially when it involves a minor disagreement or misunderstanding or has not escalated into a churchwide controversy. Many times, however, conflict is not resolved quickly or privately and seems to drag on endlessly. We cry out for immediate relief from the pain of conflict. God wants us to trust Him. After we have done everything that His Word instructs us to do, He wants us to wait on Him and His timing so that we can see Him at work and give Him the glory when authentic reconciliation occurs.

Trusting God means that we will let God be God and not vainly attempt to usurp His rightful role in our lives and in our congregations. God views our conflicts from the standpoint of eternity, and He knows when our hearts are truly ready for reconciliation. The Lord is never slow to act on our behalf. His timing is impeccable. In fact, God's timing is perfect!

When We Trust God

Trusting God fuels our faith. We lay down our own understanding and rely on God's sovereignty. When we trust God, we allow Him the room in our lives to prove Himself to us. In Malachi 3:6-10, God asks His people to trust His provision. His requirement of the tithe was a way to stretch their faith. They had to relinquish in order to receive. His promise to them is no less amazing to us today. Like the words of the old hymn, "Trust me, try Me, prove Me, sayeth the Lord of Host," God speaks a blessing in His challenge. "Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it" (Malachi 3:10). WOW! Who couldn't take that kind of blessing? That's worth a little bit of trust!

When we trust God, we cannot be shaken (Psalm 125:1); God becomes our strength, our joy and our song (Isaiah 12:2); and we give Him the opportunity to be God - God Almighty, God the Most High - in our lives. When we trust God, He acts and we can rest! We can have more than a trouble-free mind; we can have perfect peace. "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you" (Isaiah 26:3).

In times of conflict, we can trust God's truth, God's methods and God's timing. We can trust because He is perfect!