



# UNTANGLING FAITH

Reclaiming Hope in the  
Questions Jesus Asked

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<i>About the Author</i> .....	6
<i>Introduction</i> .....	7
<b>Week 1: Can I Trust God?</b> .....	<b>9</b>
Video Viewer Guide .....	44
<b>Week 2: How Can I Grow in My Faith?</b> .....	<b>45</b>
Video Viewer Guide .....	77
<b>Week 3: Why Should I Pray?</b> .....	<b>79</b>
Video Viewer Guide .....	109
<b>Week 4: What Must I Do to Be Healed?</b> .....	<b>111</b>
Video Viewer Guide .....	146
<b>Week 5: What Is God’s Plan for Us?</b> .....	<b>147</b>
Video Viewer Guide .....	178
<b>Week 6: What Does It Mean to Follow God?</b> .....	<b>179</b>
Video Viewer Guide .....	215
<b>Final Thoughts on <i>Untangling Faith</i></b> .....	<b>216</b>
<i>Video Viewer Guide Answers</i> .....	218
<i>Notes</i> .....	219





Week 1

# *Can I Trust God?*

MEMORY VERSE:

*“The Lord is my strength and my shield;  
my heart trusts in Him, and He helps me.*

*My heart leaps for joy,  
and with my song I praise Him.”*

*(Psalm 28:7)*



We throw around the word *trust* a lot in our society. Phrases like “trust fund,” “trust me,” “trust issues,” “living trust,” and “a company you can trust” may be part of our everyday vernacular, but saying we trust and actually trusting can be problematic because most of us have had someone (or perhaps lots of someones) breach our trust.

According to *Merriam-Webster*, trust is “assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something.”<sup>1</sup> This week we will explore the trustworthiness of God by considering His character, His ability, and His strength.

But do not fret, my friend, if you struggle with trust issues when it comes to God, because you are not alone. There are even examples in the Bible of heroes of the faith who struggled with trust.

One such example is John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus. Through great spiritual commitment—which involved living in the wilderness and baptizing multitudes, including the Messiah Himself—it seemed that his faith in the identity of Jesus was unshakable. But when John was imprisoned, he faced uncertainty and doubt in the trustworthiness of Jesus. John questioned if Jesus was the promised One, asking his followers to inquire of the Lord (Matthew 11:2-15). Though we will not be covering John the Baptist this week, we can certainly empathize with his struggle!

In this first week of *Untangling Faith*, we will address our questions regarding God’s trustworthiness as we explore God’s nature as a loving parent, His goodness, His faithfulness, His character as a safe place, and His desire for us to see Him clearly. A deep dive into who God is can be the first step to unraveling, grappling with, rediscovering, and rebuilding our “trust fund” with God.



## Day 1 God Is a Loving Parent

### Jesus's Question:

*"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish,  
will give him a snake instead?"  
(Luke 11:11)*

### The Question We Ask:

*Does God care about me and my struggle?*

### Big Idea

God responds to our needs as a loving Parent.

### Leaning into the Question

No one seemed to hear my continued cries for help. The acoustics in the bathroom made my wailing deafening to my ears, but the adjacent rooms were designed so that outside sounds were muffled—because no one heard me.

"HEEEEEEEEEEEEELLLLP! Please, anyone, help. Scotty?!?!"

My husband, Scott, was sitting with dear friends down the hall in the church. We were having lunch together and discussing ministry, friendship, and the excitement of expecting our first child. I had been pregnant before and had suffered miscarriages, but this time the pregnancy had surpassed the first trimester, and we thought we were home free.

Needing to use the restroom (not unusual for a pregnant lady!), I had made my way through the labyrinth of hallways in this historic church building designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and found myself gawking at the beauty of the architecture. When I finally found the facilities, I hurriedly closed the stall door and shimmied my skirt up. Then I saw the blood. My underwear was spotted with crimson dots, and I knew this was not a good sign. I had felt a little uncomfortable earlier that day but had excused it as the effects of something I had eaten, never thinking that my unborn baby was in danger.

For many years, we had begged, cajoled, and bargained with God for a child. I had cried more tears, said more prayers, consulted with more doctors, read more books, thrown more fits, and tried more fertility techniques than one could count. Our hearts had leapt with joy when the baby first leapt in my womb. We had already lost our hearts to this unborn stranger. We had been discussing baby names every night for years, and now we were decorating the nursery and





purchasing clothes for this long-awaited answer to our prayers. We had *plans*. But in the moments that followed, my body expelled our precious child along with our hopes, our dreams, and our plans.

I began to weep, quietly at first, but then I realized that I wanted someone to hear me—just as I wanted to know that God heard my cries for help, even though I felt alone. *I'm in a church, for goodness sake, I thought to myself, it should be a safe place to cry and mourn.* So, I began to wail. I wanted my husband to find me, mourn with me, hold me, and tell me that everything would be alright.

But it wasn't alright.

That was a long time ago. Since that loss, we have had two children, who have grown into amazing adults. We have been married over thirty years and have rich, fulfilling lives. Weeks go by when I do not think of the baby we lost, but sometimes the loss comes rushing back—as it did one day recently.

A small bird was nesting in the awning of our front porch. Our family watched her build the nest, and then we watched each morning as she nurtured and protected the eggs in that nest. It was a joy to watch, indeed. But one morning, we woke to find that the nest had been knocked over, likely by a predator on the hunt, causing the eggs to fall onto the concrete floor of our porch. The splattered shards of eggshell and yellow tint of lingering yolk represented the dashed hopes of that mama bird.

In the following days, she would flap and squawk at the place where the nest once had been. We had removed the nest and cleaned the porch to the best of our ability, but the faintest hints of the mama bird's loss are still visible on the concrete months later; I am not sure they will ever disappear completely.

I understand that all too well. You probably do, too.

Maybe you've lost a job, a spouse, a child, a friend, a dream, or an opportunity somewhere down the line, and you want to tell that mama bird that it will be alright. She will make other nests, fly other days, and enjoy other sunrises. But you know that the sting of loss never goes away completely.

**Name three losses that you have suffered.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**When and how did God seem near and present in those losses?**

**When and how did God seem distant or absent?**



**Did those losses shake your confidence in His love in any way? If so, how?**

**How have those losses shaped you and your understanding of God's love? Would you say they have grown you or made you stronger? Explain your response.**

The days following the miscarriage were filled with family and friends who encircled us and loved us well. But if I am honest, they also were filled with questions for God. *Why would You allow this to happen? What did we do to deserve this? Are You mad at us? Can You be trusted?*

Trust in God is a hallmark of the Christian faith. But trust in God is honed and developed through difficulties, challenges, and all manner of experiences over time as God meets our needs. Along the way, those experiences may leave us asking: *Is God good?* Fortunately for us who are looking for answers, Jesus asked his followers some questions that provide insight into the character of God.



### **Leaning into the Scripture**

In the opening verses of Luke 11, Jesus teaches His followers about prayer, offers an analogy, and asks several questions of them. Verse 1 reads,

*One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."*

I think it is so fitting that this chapter, in which Jesus addresses an unspoken question through even more questions, begins with a bit of ambiguity. Luke writes, "One day...in a certain place." He does not disclose the specific day or name the exact location where Jesus and His disciples are. Just as this leaves us with unanswered questions, so there are unanswered questions in our lives. Sometimes, we struggle with the concept of God being loving and good because we are uncertain about something that has or hasn't happened in our lives.





The next sentence is key. One of the disciples—yet another ambiguity, for no specific name is given—asks Jesus for help with prayer. The disciples knew how to pray, so essentially, he is wanting to know how to talk with God in order to know Him better. Jesus responds with the Lord’s Prayer. This prayer that is often recited in worship, prayed alone and in groups, sung in weddings, and taught to children gives us a glimpse into some characteristics of God. Let’s look at each line of the prayer and peek into the keyhole, so to speak, to see God’s nature. (Comments about God’s nature are added within brackets.)

<sup>2</sup>He said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be your name, our kingdom come. [God is holy, and He reigns.] <sup>3</sup>Give us each day our daily bread. [God is a provider.] <sup>4</sup>Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. [God is forgiving.] And lead us not into temptation. [God is stronger than anything that tempts us.]”

(Luke 11:2-4)

A few verses later, Jesus reveals more of God’s love as He makes a promise and provides hope for those who are eager to truly know God. (Comments regarding God’s nature are added within brackets.)

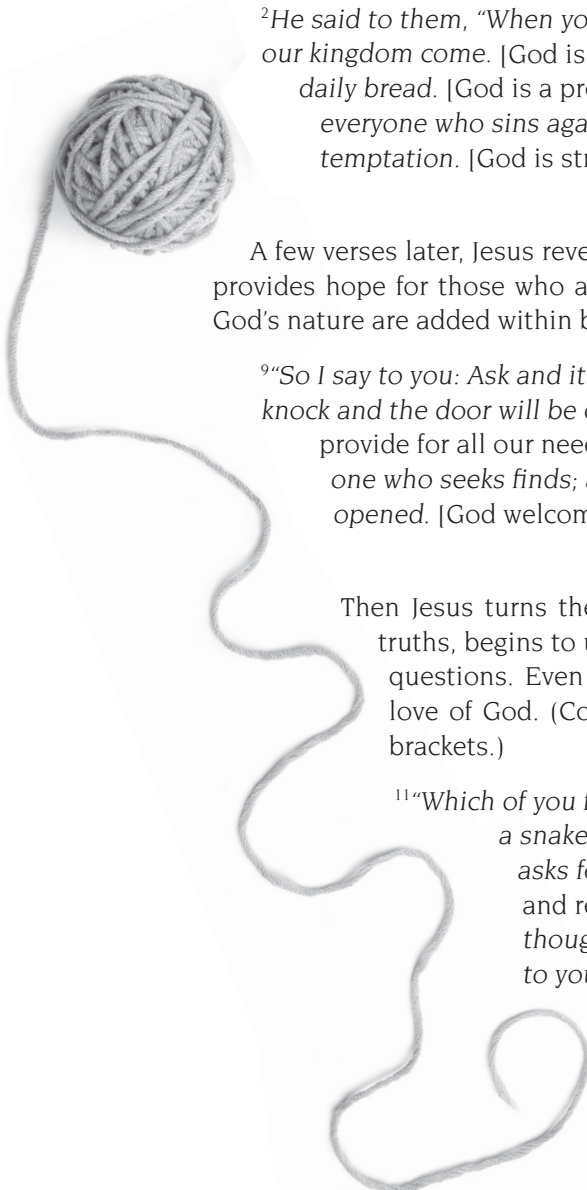
<sup>9</sup>“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. [God can be known and will provide for all our needs.] <sup>10</sup>For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. [God welcomes everyone who seeks Him.]

(Luke 11:9-10)

Then Jesus turns the table on those listening and, instead of stating truths, begins to use one of His favorite tactics for sparking thought: questions. Even in these questions, Jesus continues to reveal the love of God. (Comments regarding God’s nature are added within brackets.)

<sup>11</sup>“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? [God is a loving parent.] <sup>12</sup>Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? [God hears and responds lovingly to our pleas.] <sup>13</sup>If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” [God desires to give us everything we need.]

(Luke 11:11-13)





As Jesus poses these questions, He is not just addressing His closest followers. He is posing these questions for all who would seek Him throughout the years to come—that includes me and you. He is revealing clues about the nature of our loving God in these questions and allowing us the opportunity to ponder how we see God.

**How do you see God? What is your image of God in this season of life?**

**How has your image of God changed through the years?**

God is a loving Parent who longs to meet the needs of His children.

If I'm honest, there have been times when I've questioned the love of God—times when I have prayed and what occurs seems more like a scorpion than an egg. But as I have grown in my understanding of God's character, I have realized that God does not give me bad gifts. God is a loving Parent who longs to meet the needs of His children. And in those times when bad things happen, He redeems them, including giving us the gift of understanding Him better.

A pastor friend of mine has the opportunity to visit those from his congregation who are hospitalized. On one occasion, he visited an elderly lady from his church—I will call her Lois—the day she was scheduled to be released. She told him that she had encouraged many of the doctors and nurses, praying and sharing Jesus with some of them. Lois felt she had made a difference while there.

Soon after their visit, her son helped her into a wheelchair and began to push her toward the parking lot to make their way home. On the way to the car, a vehicle speeding through the parking lot clipped her wheelchair, causing Lois to fall and hit the sidewalk, sustaining injuries.

My pastor friend, who had gone to visit another church member in a different wing of the hospital, heard the commotion outside but did not know it involved Lois. Later, on his way to the hospital exit, he heard a familiar voice call out, "Pastor, I guess I'll have more time here to pray and encourage the staff."

I guess if you are going to be hit by a car, the parking lot of the hospital is not the worst place! As unfortunate as Lois's accident was, she was able to see God's loving provision in providing for her care and continuing to use her in a powerful way while in the hospital. God gave her peace and comfort despite her new injuries. He encouraged her by letting her know that she could continue to accomplish valuable things there, including speaking through her as she shared the good news with her new hospital roommate, who came to faith in Jesus.





Only in retrospect could Lois clearly see that God was busy “working all things for good” (Romans 8:28)—for her good and His glory—even a car accident! That’s usually the case in our lives as well. But we can grow in our ability to trust God until our vision becomes clearer. We can trust God because God responds to our needs as a loving parent.

**Think of a time in your life when you experienced a tragedy, travesty, or trauma. It might be one of the losses you wrote about earlier. What questions did you have for God then?**

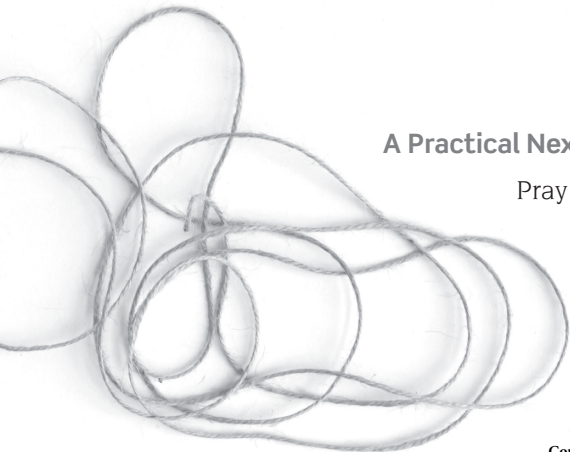
**What was it like to wrestle with those questions with God? Have any of those questions been answered? If so, how? What questions remain?**

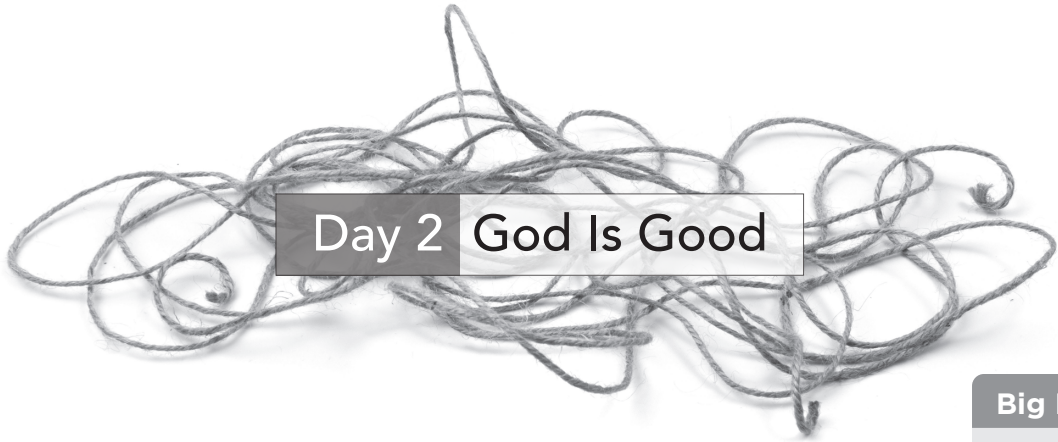
**Has God demonstrated to you that He sees your needs and “it’s going to be OK”? If so, how? If you’re unsure, what do you want God to know? Write your prayer below.**

**While your life may not have turned out as you envisioned or planned, in what ways can you see the loving-kindness of God in your life today?**

### **A Practical Next Step**

Pray the Lord’s Prayer each day this week. Focus on whichever line stands out to you that day and offer thanks to God for that quality of His character (see page 14)—or ask God to open your eyes to that quality of His character in the ordinary events of your day. Begin to look for evidence of God’s loving-kindness and care in your everyday life.





## Day 2 God Is Good

### Jesus's Question:

*"You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand?"*

*(Matthew 16:8-9a)*

### The Question We Ask:

*Is everything going to be OK?*

### Big Idea

God demonstrates His goodness in our everyday lives.

## Leaning into the Question

The teachers' lounge in any school can be a hotbed of crazy. When overworked, exhausted, frustrated educators are given a few minutes of respite around others in the same situation, it can look a lot more like a complaint center or therapy office than just a place to eat one's lunch. If it has been an especially difficult day (think rainy days when everyone is stuck inside or the last few weeks of school), a gathering of teachers in the lounge can feel like the Avengers assembling rather than coworkers recharging their batteries.

I am not saying that is true of every school, but in the schools where I have worked, the teachers' lounge has been a room I have avoided. Not because I don't need empathy from coworkers or I am too cool for the other employees (I have had the same hairstyle since 1988, so we know that's not true!), but because the discussions about students, especially the challenging ones, always proved troublesome for me. In the past, I sometimes allowed the negative talk about a challenging student to cloud my experience with that student once they made their way to my classroom, so I learned to avoid such conversations at all costs. I want to give everyone a fair shake.

I wish I had done the same thing with comments about God before becoming a Christian. I did not grow up in a home that practiced any type of faith per se, but I inherited some erroneous opinions through the media and conversations with peers regarding God's character, such as:

- God is always angry,
- God is waiting for us to mess up,
- God is vengeful,

- God does not want us to have fun, and
- God only loves us when we are behaving. (I still struggle with this lie.)

Only through many years of following God; reading His Word; learning from people with more mileage on their “faith vehicle”; and experiencing God working in, through, and around—and sometimes despite—me have those erroneous messages dissipated.

**What are some of the lies and misperceptions about God that you inherited or learned?**

**What has helped to open your eyes to the truth about who God is? How would you describe God now?**

**Which lies do you still struggle with at times? When do you seem to be more susceptible to these lies?**

It has taken years to replace the lies I believed about God with the truth of God’s character. I still often struggle to give more of my attention to who I am in Jesus than to who I am in relationship to other human beings.

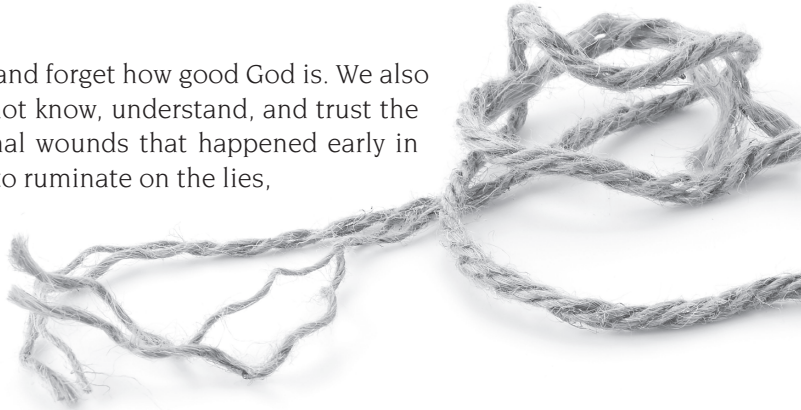
This healing process begins with identifying the lies I have believed and replacing them with truths from God’s Word and then rehearsing those truths in my mind and my everyday experience until they are hidden in my heart. It is like a recycling program for my thoughts. I exchange the old lies with truths from God’s Word about who God is and who I am, and I invite God to make those truths part of my experiential reality—my lived experience.

Yet sometimes, when I least expect it, I still can hear one of the old lies whispered into my ear by the Enemy. I foolishly give the microphone to past regrets and remnants of early conditioning. When I entertain old lies that stem from past hurts, hang-ups, and habits, I’m allowing those lies to drown out the truths of God’s living Word about my real identity and the faithfulness of God.



We can suffer from spiritual amnesia and forget how good God is. We also can have parts of ourselves that still do not know, understand, and trust the goodness of God—often due to emotional wounds that happened early in life. Either way, when we allow ourselves to ruminate on the lies, our faith can begin to unravel.

So, often we find ourselves back at square one, asking ourselves, *Is God good?* This is such a tricky question because in our society, “good” is a harder concept to grasp than a greased pig.



- *How are you?* someone asks. / *I am good*, we answer. (That may not be good grammar, but we still say it!)
- *How is the brisket at this restaurant?* / *It is so good.*
- *What is the weather like in your neck of the woods?* / *It is good.*
- *How was the fundraiser?* / *It was good.*

These questions and responses require the questioner and responder to define for themselves what “good” means. When some people are asked how they are, answering “good” means “I got a lot accomplished” or “The stock exchange was healthy today.” For others, it means, “I got out of bed today” or “My parole officer hasn’t caught me yet.”

But when discussing the goodness of God, there are characteristics from scripture we can use as a reference point:

- perfect in character (Psalm 92:15),
- benevolent (Exodus 34:6; Psalm 34:8),
- graceful (Romans 3:24),
- merciful (Ephesians 2:4),
- just (Psalm 25:8), and
- loving (Psalm 107:8-9).

**What other divine characteristics named in scripture would you add to describe God’s goodness?**

It is one thing to define God’s goodness through the truths of God’s Word. It is another thing to examine it through the filter of our life experiences.

My wedding day is so vividly and deeply etched in my mind that it feels more like last week than thirty years ago.



Scott and I were paying for our own wedding (for the most part) and “shoestring” does not begin to describe the budget. Scott’s grandmother did the flowers, his dad officiated our ceremony (yes, I married a pastor’s kid), his aunt made my veil, we got married in his home church (being the pastor’s kid has its privileges!), and our friends provided most of the music.

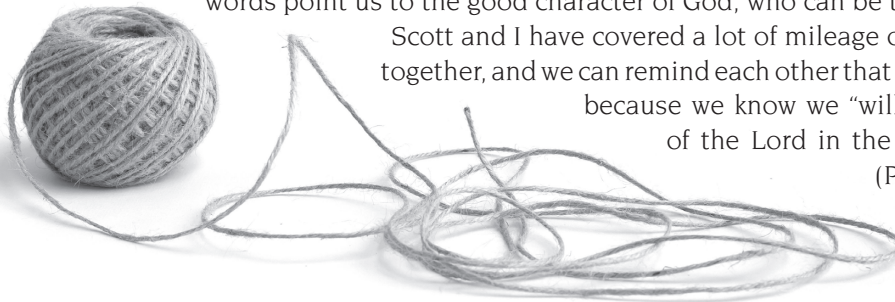
A very popular part of weddings in the 1990s was to have a song in the middle of the ceremony. We wanted to sing to each other. Yes, both of us sing (although he sings much better than I do), but we both knew that our emotions would not allow us to do so live. I knew I would be a blubbing idiot when I got going, so we thought it best to record the song. We could not afford a recording studio, so we used a tape recorder. (If you are too young to know what that is, you can Google it!) We got two recordings of the song—one was fair and the other was the one we would use for the ceremony.

When we came to that part of the wedding ceremony and the music started, people started to look around to see who was going to sing. My soon-to-be husband (like, six minutes from then soon-to-be) looked me in the eyes and whispered, “The tape got mangled, but it’s OK. I fixed it enough to play the other version.” My face bunched up. “It is going to be OK,” he assured me, and as if I hadn’t heard it the first time, he repeated, “It’s going to be OK.”

I wish I could say that I felt like everything was going to be OK. My husband is cute, and I wanted to trust him, but he does not know the future. In the months to follow, everything did not seem OK—I still couldn’t seem to get pregnant, fit into my skinny jeans, stop overeating bread, or bring world peace. But God continued to draw me to His heart. As He did, I started to see more clearly that things are not going to be OK because circumstances will miraculously improve. Things are not going to be OK because I get what I ask for in prayer. Things are going to be OK because God is good. Period.

Scott has said “It’s going to be OK” ten thousand times or more since we got married. Finances, kids, safety, friendships, infertility, broken appliances, the death of parents, and lost jobs are just a few of the splotches on the canvas of our marriage, times when Scott has assured me with the words “It’s going to be OK.” I learned to believe him—not because Scott is good or I am good, but because the words point us to the good character of God, who can be trusted.

Scott and I have covered a lot of mileage on our faith journey together, and we can remind each other that “It’s going to be OK” because we know we “will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living” (Psalm 27:13). Faith can be fostered in churches, in prayer, and in





scripture, but it also can be strengthened in times of despair and uncertainty—when we feel that we are at the end of our rope and our hope.

Through heartache, loss, disappointment, and fear, God has proven Himself faithful to me, as I'm sure He has for you. That does not mean we do not have questions at times, but if we will recall the faithfulness He has shown us in the past—even when we cannot see it clearly in the present—we will be strengthened and reassured. And should a time be so devastating that we are unable even to recall God's faithfulness, we can lean upon our sisters and brothers in Christ to uphold us by their faith until we're strengthened once again to believe "It's going to be OK" because of God's goodness.

Even the most faithful followers of Jesus can sometimes struggle with "spiritual amnesia"—temporarily forgetting all that God has done and has been. When that occurs, we need a holy refresher course by digging into God's Word.

### Leaning into the Scripture

Jesus's right-hand men had front-row seats to healings, exorcisms of demons, and resurrections from the dead—all displaying God's power and purpose through Jesus. They listened as He taught people about the love of His Father. They saw Jesus feed thousands with amazing amounts of leftovers—baskets full of bread illustrating God's provision. Yet, somehow they missed the consistent, albeit unspoken, message of Jesus: "Trust me. It's going to be OK."

A conversation between the apostles about some of the religious leaders of the day, the Pharisees and Sadducees, incited a question-a-palooza from Jesus. Like a tennis ball machine, Jesus peppered His disciples with questions that got to the heart of their lack of faith and their amnesia regarding the way God had provided for them.

*<sup>8</sup>Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? <sup>9</sup>Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? <sup>10</sup>Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? <sup>11</sup>How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." <sup>12</sup>Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*

(Matthew 16:8-12)

Jesus asked these questions about bread faster than my family can power through a basket of breadsticks from Olive Garden—but I think the questions pertain more to the goodness of His Father than to actual bread! Through these questions,

Even the most faithful followers of Jesus can sometimes struggle with "spiritual amnesia."





Jesus points out the lack of faith on the part of the disciples and paints a vivid and compelling picture of the character and goodness of God.

One commentator notes that when Jesus said, “You of little faith,” He was communicating that the disciples shouldn’t worry about the provision of their needs:

They should not have supposed, after the miracles that he had performed in feeding so many, that he would caution them to be anxious about procuring bread for their necessities. It was improper, then, for them to reason about a thing like that, but they should have supposed that he referred to something more important. The miracles had been full proof that he could supply all their wants without such anxiety.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, they had seen Jesus provide in a miraculous way, so why would they doubt now?

We could certainly read this passage as Jesus packing the bags of the disciples for a major guilt trip, but instead, I think we should look at it as a glimpse into Jesus’s desire to emphasize the faithfulness of God.

Let’s break down what Jesus is saying through His questions.

- *“You of little faith”* (v. 8).  
Jesus calls out His disciples on their lack of trust in God.
- *“Why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Do you still not understand?”* (vv. 8-9a).  
Instead of encouraging one another and discussing the faithfulness that God has shown them—a group of men who have been traveling, eating, and living without jobs for the past three years—they are focusing on what they do not have instead of what they do have.
- *“Don’t you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? How is it you don’t understand that I was not talking to you about bread?”* (vv. 9-11).  
Jesus is calling the disciples to recall the miracles that God has done in their lives and live accordingly. He is calling them to recognize that God has shown His character of goodness to them clearly and practically.

Sometimes, when we are questioning the goodness of God, it is because we are failing to take our eyes off the present circumstances long enough to recall and recount what He has done for us in the past—to remember the faith mileage we have with Him—for our own sake and the sake of others.

## Leaning into Hope

Taking time to recall the goodness of God becomes easier to do once we replace erroneous information about who God is with the truth of God's character—found in scripture and supported by the evidence of God's goodness in our lives.

For years, I have kept a journal to recount all the amazing things God has done. It is a great way to recall His character and take my eyes off the current circumstances. Although He does good things because of His goodness every day in my life, I am not as faithful to chronicle all of them in my journal. But looking back on my journals I have kept for decades does serve as a reminder of the good works God does; and when I waver in my faith, those journals become annuals of God's goodness.

Another way to notice the evidence of God's goodness in our lives is to review our day before going to bed, remembering the moments when we experienced or observed the goodness and love of God. As we allow simple, everyday experiences to “bubble up,” we can receive them as gifts from our good Father, reminding ourselves, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17).

Sharing with a prayer partner, accountability partner, spiritual companion, or discipleship group is yet another way to recount the goodness of God. Others can help us to see God's activity in our lives that we otherwise might miss or overlook, as well as allow us to affirm and confirm evidence of God's loving-kindness toward us.

Whatever helps us to notice and recall the goodness of God, we can be sure that the more we focus on the goodness of God instead of the ugliness of the world, the greater our hope will be! God will be faithful to demonstrate His goodness in our everyday lives.

Here are a few questions to help you lean into hope as you contemplate God's goodness in your everyday life.

**What are some practices or habits in your life that help you remember God's goodness? How are they bolstering your trust in God?**

**Choose one of the challenges you are currently facing and listen for what God has to say to you about it. What would it look like for you to trust God in this situation? Where can you identify the goodness of God in this situation?**





What are some ways you have seen God work in your life in the past? How is God inviting you to trust Him in this season? Is there something God is inviting you to consider, do, or become?

List ten ways you see God's good provision in your life right now.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Finish this phrase, "If I truly understood how good God is and how much He loves me, I would/would not \_\_\_\_\_."

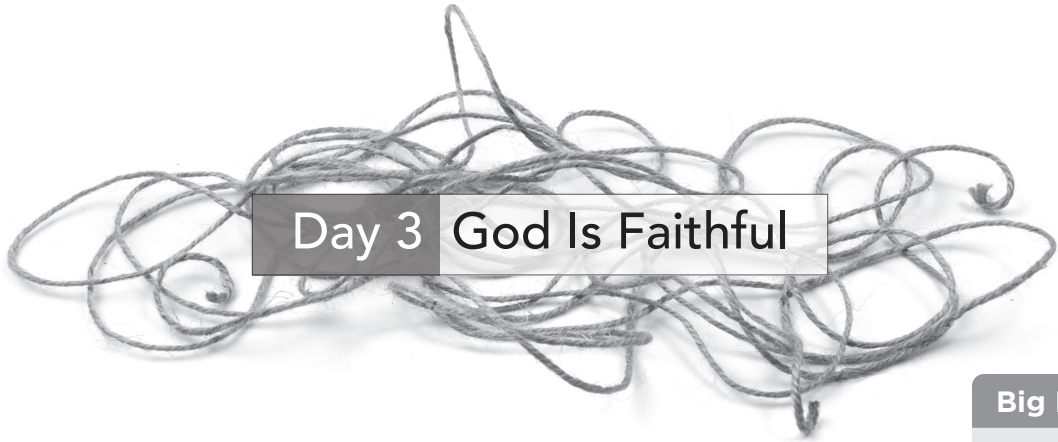
How does worry take your eyes off Jesus? How can you release your cares and refocus your gaze on Jesus? What happens to your worry when you do this?

### A Practical Next Step

Make a list of what you are thankful for in your life, noting why each is a good gift of God. Gratitude turns on the relational circuits of the brain, which enable us to feel safe and build trust. By giving thanks, you are reminding yourself of God's goodness, deepening your relationship, and increasing your trust in Him.







## Day 3 God Is Faithful

### Jesus's Question:

*"Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"  
(Matthew 6:27)*

**The Question We Ask:**  
*What's going to happen?*

### Big Idea

God is faithful to take care of all that concerns me.

### Leaning into the Question

**A**s I write this, I am waiting for my skin cancer tests to return. Just days ago, my dermatologist removed a small chunk of my back to send in for testing. My dad died of skin cancer at the age of fifty-one, so it gave me lots to think about at age fifty-two.

Now, I wait. With every phone call, message, and email, there is a side-order of dread. I self-diagnose my illness and begin a mental train of thought that completely derails me.

*How will Scott make house payments without my income?  
Where will he and the kids live?  
How will this affect their spiritual lives?  
Will they be mad at God for letting me die?*

But then, I am back to reality. My logic kicks back in, and I talk myself off the ledge by making true statements about the situation.

*The chances of dying are slim.  
Medical advances have made great strides.  
I am blessed to live in a time with incredible technology.  
As I rehearse these truths, I feel my heart rate slow, and I take a deep breath. The peace lasts only a minute before I am back on the same crazy train.*



Technology costs a lot. So do hospital bills. How will we ever pay for my recovery?

*Will we lose the house?*

*Will we be able to spend time with our grandkids? (We don't even have grandkids yet!)*

*Will we lose any hope of retiring before we both die from exhaustion? (Wow, it got morbid quickly!)*

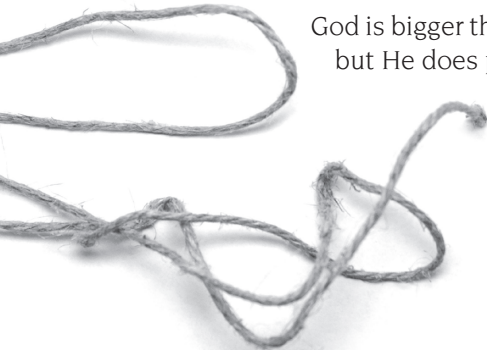
Although the test results came back negative for cancer, the damage of my worry and stress did damage to my heart and mind.

When we face uncertainties, questions can serve as a healthy tool to help us process what we are going through, but only when the questions are grounded in the truth of God and His character can they transition us from panicked questioning to peace.

**Do you have a particular challenge that is plaguing your thoughts right now? If so, what is it?**

**What questions related to this challenge run through your mind repeatedly?**

**Are these questions grounded in the truth of God and His character?**



God is bigger than skin cancer. He has never promised that I will not have skin cancer, but He does promise throughout scripture to be with me, no matter the diagnosis or circumstance. God is bigger than the heartache of rebellious children, lost jobs, aging parents, crashing stock markets, car problems, organizational buyouts, bickering in the church, doubt, disappointment, disillusionment, and stressful diagnoses.

Whatever is taking up bandwidth in your mind and heart right now, you can trust God with it. Even when it feels scary and uncertain, He can be trusted.



## Leaning into the Scripture

In Matthew 5, Jesus is preaching to thousands of men, women, and children in His most recognizable sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. He is giving His followers practical wisdom and instructions for life, often using the “props” around Him to articulate the lessons, including birds that may have been flying overhead at the time. These birds were beautiful examples of the care of God.

*<sup>25</sup>“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? <sup>26</sup>Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? <sup>27</sup>Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?”*

(Matthew 6:25-27)

This series of questions is mind-boggling and faith stirring. It is a rapid succession of powerful, gut-wrenching, heart status-type questions. I don’t know about you, but maybe some mind-boggling and faith stirring are exactly what I need to get my train of thought off my fears and back where it belongs!

I love that Jesus prefaces the trust question—“Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?”—with the value question: “*Are you not much more valuable than they?*”

As we truly embrace just how much God loves us and allow that love to heal and transform us (which is a process that happens over time), we become less inclined to say and do things that cause harm to ourselves and to others.

As we come to know and believe we are beloved children of God, we become less likely to seek affection, approval, comfort, or courage through people and activities we know aren’t good for us—and more likely to reach out for help when we find ourselves in trouble.

As we come to know and embrace the grace and forgiveness of God, we’re not as prone to say hurtful things or condemn the behavior of others, especially on social media where it’s easy to hide behind a screen.

As we begin to realize how fearfully and wonderfully we are made and experience how much our Creator delights in us, we’re less likely to mistreat ourselves and practice self-loathing.

But along this journey of transformation—and despite the fact that we know Jesus died on the cross for us—we still hurt others, devalue ourselves, and forget that we are valuable to God.

Knowing this, Jesus is both assuring and reassuring his listeners when he asks the question “*Are you not much more valuable than they?*” He wants the people to know that they are precious in the eyes of the One who made them, shaped them,

When we face uncertainties, questions can serve as a healthy tool to help us process what we are going through, but only when the questions are grounded in the truth of God and His character.

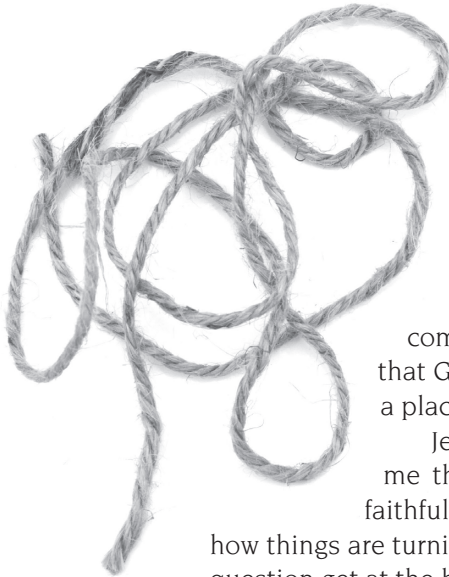


gave them life, breathed air into their lungs, and—out of His great love—provides for them.

Right after the reminder of our value, Jesus gently—or perhaps not so gently—reminds us of the corrosive power of worry: “Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?” Worry takes our eyes off Him.

If we were to examine what we worry about most, it might serve as a litmus test of our faith. Where we worry is probably a good indicator of what we treasure and where we put our hope.

### Leaning into Hope



When I hear Jesus’s question, my mind goes straight to our house. We bought a house a few years ago, and I love it. I know that it was a bit of a stretch for us, but I feel so blessed that God has given us the opportunity to live there. But whenever finances get tight, my mind goes directly—do not pass Go and do not collect \$200—to whether we will be able to make the house payment at all.

My mouth says my hope is in the Lord, but my worry communicates otherwise. If I truly believed in my heart of hearts that God values me and my family, I would trust that He will provide a place for us even if we were to lose the house.

Jesus’s question gets to the heart of the matter for me, reminding me that God is good even when my trust in Him is weak. He is faithful, even when my faith wavers. He is love, even when I do not love how things are turning out from my perspective. How about you? How does Jesus’s question get at the heart of the matter for you?

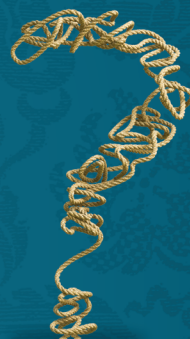
**Where does your mind go first when you hear Jesus’s question: “Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life”? Do you think of the challenge you named earlier or something else?**

**What do the things you worry about reveal about (1) what you treasure, and (2) where you put your hope?**



# Your Questions Can Lead to a Deeper Faith and Trust in God

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**Amberly Neese** is a speaker, humorist, and encourager. As a featured speaker for the Aspire Women's Events and Marriage Date Night, two popular Christian events that tour nationally, she enjoys touching the hearts and minds and funny bones of people all over the country. With a master's degree from Biola University, Amberly is an adjunct professor at Grand Canyon University and the Master Connector for Inspiring Growth, equipping and encouraging growth in leaders and businesses. She is the author of two Bible studies, *Common Ground* and *The Belonging Project*, and one devotional, *The Friendship Initiative*. She and her husband, Scott, have two teenagers and live in Prescott, Arizona, where they enjoy the great outdoors, the Food Network, and all things *Star Wars*.

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ISBN-13: 978-1-7910-2874-9



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