

September: Trust God

Introduction

The theme for this month is trusting God, and it's an idea that's right at the heart of the gospel. Many of the other themes in the Big Year could be pulled off quite successfully by non-religious people, but not this one. You can be humble without being a Christian, and many people are. You can love your neighbour well, and many non-churchy people are great at this. You can create margin in your life, you can reform yourself, you can live with simplicity and generosity, and there are even a lot of non-religious people seeing the importance of setting apart regular days of rest. But trusting God is a little different.

It's not even enough to believe that God exists. Many people believe God exists, but not all of those people trust God with their day-to-day lives. There is a difference here between belief and trust. Have you ever done a trust fall? The simple idea is that you stand with your eyes closed with a person behind you. Then you let yourself fall backward and the other person is meant to catch you before you hit the ground. Sound like fun? (Why don't you find someone to try it with now?)

This is a good way to illustrate the difference between trust and belief. Suppose you're a child standing in front of your dad. You believe he can catch you. He's certainly strong enough, and he's good at catching things. But do you trust that he will? Maybe you've got some strong but dodgy mates. You know they could catch you, but you'd never trust them in a million years. You just know you'd end up on the floor. Maybe you'd trust your dad but not your uncle. Maybe you'd trust your older sister but not your older brother. What about your Big Year crew? Who would you trust to catch you out of those people?

Trust is the "put your money where your mouth is" part of belief. When Jesus talks about trusting God, this is what he's talking about. Sure you believe in God, but do you trust God to catch you when you fall? Do you trust God to look after you when you're worried about the future? Sure you believe that God has limitless resources, but do you trust that he will provide what you need? Would God really look after you if you gave so much that it hurt? Do you trust Jesus when he says that giving up your life is the way to gain life to the full?

When it comes down to it, it's about relationship. Think about the trust fall again. Which people would you allow to stand behind you? It's the people who you know care about you, the ones who love you, the ones you trust. Is this how you see God? Some people who believe God exists think he's just an old dude up in the clouds somewhere who doesn't really care about what happens to us little people on earth. But the Bible tells a different story. God really does care about us, and he really does care about even the little things in our lives. As Jesus points out in Matthew 6, "Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are?"

The act of baptism shows how this works. We are called to bury our self-trust, and to give up our desire to control everything. We acknowledge that we can't fix the world ourselves - not even our tiny part of it. Then we come out of the water a new person, like we've been born again, but this time we've placed our life in God's hands, trusting God to sort it all out. Trusting that God knows what's best for us, and that Jesus' way of life is the one worth following - even if it sometimes leads us into difficult and dangerous situations. It also means trusting God to sort out other people's lives instead of trying to fix them ourselves (maybe this is the most difficult bit for you!). And trust leads to patience, when we learn how to wait for God to act, knowing that even when it doesn't look like it God is still working and still present.

God asks us to trust him, trusting that he does know what he's doing, trusting that he will look after us today and tomorrow, and trusting that he will deal with the issues of the world in his own time and in his own way. It's a bit difficult to do sometimes, so the challenges this month are designed to help you practise this art. This month you are invited to find ways to trust God more fully....to transform belief in God to a trust that God will work for what is best. Our role is to work alongside of Him, and to do whatever He asks of us. Just like an apprentice, it's about learning to trust the master when He tells us to do a certain thing, even if we don't know why He is asking or what the final result will be in the larger scheme of things.

Challenges

There are challenges listed for each version of a Big Year. Please select the challenges that best suit you and your group or family. Also, feel free to rewrite the challenges, or create new challenges to better reflect Jesus' teaching in your day-to-day setting.



ADULTS



MONK

- Write out the verses in Philippians 4:6-7. Underneath this, write a list of 5 things that you are worried about. Ask God to help you trust Him concerning these things. Re-read the list regularly and see if anything has changed.
- Name one area of your life where you struggle to trust God? Make a plan to actively move against your fear to see if God really can be trusted. For example: if it's finances - give some money away, if your job/study feels overwhelming - work half an hour less each day, if it's finding time to fit everything in - put aside 8 hours to helping others this month. See if God is really able to look after you.
- Set aside time this month to consider if you really do trust God with your life, whether you have really surrendered control into his hands. If you have, then consider the effect that this decision has had on your life. If you have never been able to do this, think about why that might be. If you think you are ready, talk to someone in your Big Year crew about being baptised.



CHEERLEADER

- With your Big Year crew, discuss the idea that "power is perfected in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9). Share a weakness with your crew and pray for each other to trust God, even in your weakness.
- Make a list of four people who are the most reliable people in your world. Send a message to each of these people to acknowledge that they have made it possible for you to trust other people and to trust God.
- Think about a time in your life when you got to the very end of yourself - the point where you felt you were no longer able to control your own life. Where was God in that moment? Reflect on that moment and express how you felt – write a letter to God, write a song or poem, paint/draw, photograph or film something.



ACTIVIST

- Every Sunday night, consider what the major concerns are for you in your work. List all the things you imagine someone who really trusted God would do if they were involved in the situation. Experiment with some of your suggestions.
- Many of the world's problems are bigger than any one person's ability to solve. Take a bit of time to do this exercise to help you gain some perspective.
- Do something that's out of your comfort zone.