

**Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight.** (Proverbs 3:5-6)

So, where did we leave off last Sunday? We left off with a definition, a challenge, and a promise. The pastoral staff wants to reflect with you this winter on the Christian doctrine of the heart. In the Bible your heart means what you love and what kind of person you are becoming because of what you love. We want to reflect on the power of Christ to redirect and restore your power to love that is simply the greatest power in the human soul.

The challenge grows out of the powerful idea that **the Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.** (1 Samuel 16:7) The outward appearance does matter. We care, rightly, about how we come across to other people. In fact, we are suspicious, when people say they don't care what others people say about them.

But if you want to know Christ, if you want Christ to be formed in our soul, if you want to imitate your Father in heaven, then care about your heart as much as you care about your outward appearance. Care about what you love and what kind of person you are becoming because of what you love. Care about it, because God cares about it.

Our promise is that over the next ten weeks we will consider some of the tools the Lord uses to redirect and restore the power of love in the human family. We will try our best to show you what some of those tools are and how they can work effectively in your life. They have the power to redirect and restore what you love and what kind of person you are becoming because of what you love. I hope you won't miss a Sunday.

The tool we talk about today is trust. **Trust in the Lord with all your heart.** Most of this sermon is about what it means to **trust in the Lord.** But we can't talk about those four words unless we also talk about the next four words: **with all your heart.** How can I make sense out of that for you? What parable shall I use for it?

It is like a Honda Civic that you buy new from the dealer's show room. Let's say it has a 127 cubic inch engine. It can go fast. It doesn't strain hard to do 75 MPH on I-95. But there are guys, who can take that very car, put a new engine in it and big tires on it, and that Honda Civic will become a racecar that you would be proud to take to some of the clandestine drag strips in Philadelphia. Go fast with all your car can do means go fast with all the power your engine can put out.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart means trust Him with all the love you have for Him. But what if you don't have much love for Him? Well, you won't trust Him very much, will you? And that's okay. Do you hear me? That's okay. You start with what you've got. All of you have some love for the Lord, or you wouldn't be here. Use what you have, and trust Him as much as you can right now. One of the secrets of Christ is that using what you have, even if it's tiny, will make your love for Him grow, and the bigger your "love engine" is, the more you can trust Him.

Trust As Devotion

Okay, so let's talk about what it means to trust in the Lord. First, trusting in the Lord means devotion to the Lord. I want to start at the far end of the spectrum and let you

hear from someone whose heart had a big “love engine.” It’s from the Apostle Paul, and he wrote it in Philippians 1:20. **I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.**

You may say, “That’s beyond me.” Cheer up! That intensity of devotion is beyond most of us. But devotion is not beyond any of us. Let me give you an example of trust that is within reach of us all. Amy Khine is a member of this congregation. Amy can’t be here this morning, but she gave me permission to tell her story in this sermon.

Amy grew up in Burma in a Chinese Buddhist household. Her mother was especially devout. Amy immigrated to the United States, and she married an anesthesiologist, and they lived in Wilmington. Somehow, she started going to a women’s Bible study here at BVBC. At some point she began to believe in Jesus Christ. I knew none of that until one day 20 or more years ago, Amy made an appointment to see me in my office.

She said, “Pastor Bo, I would like to be baptized.” Well, I was excited about that and was ready to set up a date for the baptism. But she said, “I have a question. We have brought my mother from Burma, and she lives with us in our home. She is a very devout Buddhist, and I want to know if I can be baptized as a Christian and have anything to do with my mother’s Buddhist worship in our home?”

I said, “Amy, no one every asked me that before. I need some time to think about that, and I would like to talk to some of my friends from Asia to get counsel from them.”

Amy’s response to that was to say, “My son, Apollo, lives in New York City, and he’s a Christian. I will ask him what he thinks.” I thought that was a great idea, and we both went away to have our conversations.

I spoke to Chinese Christians, who had grown up in Hong Kong in non-Christian backgrounds. I also spoke with two missionary sisters, who had lived in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China for 35 years. These two groups never spoke to each other, but they gave me the same counsel. It was okay for Amy’s mom to practice her Buddhist worship in their home, and it was okay for Amy to buy what her mom needed for that worship. But Amy should not participate in that worship.

I asked why. They said it was for two reasons. First, if she participated in Buddhist worship, no Chinese friends who knew her would take her profession of Christian faith seriously. Second, someone would put another test in her life in an effort to show that her profession of Christ was not real. “And,” my advisers said, “when you talk about this, be sure you don’t offend her or anyone else in her family.”

Do you ever think how old the civilizations of Asia are? How many thousand years did Amy’s ancestors go back? And here she was, the first in her long, personal legacy to step outside the traditions of Buddhism to follow Christ. I felt weight on my shoulders. We got back together. I told her what I had learned, and I shared with her the great saying of Jesus: **“Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”** (Luke 14:33)

Amy did not immediately respond. Then, she said, “I talked to Apollo.” And what did Apollo say? She said, “Apollo said, ‘Mom, Jesus is a jealous God. You can’t be baptized and worship with your mom.’”

I said, “What do you want to do, Amy?”

She said, “I want to be baptized.”

And she was. And a few years later, she called me to say, “My husband and I built a new house in West Chester, and I would like you to come and dedicate our home to Christ.” What did her husband, Dr. Khine, think about that? Her mother was still a devout Buddhist. Exchange students from China would be there. Did they know what I was coming to do? They did. I went along with many other people from BVBC, and we dedicated their home to the glory of Christ.

Amy is elegant and restrained in public displays of emotion. But she exemplifies trust as devotion to Christ. Are you devoted to Christ? Have you, like Amy, been willing to say publicly, “Jesus is Lord?” That’s where devotion starts. As someone empowered to speak on behalf of Christ, I urge you: Believe in Christ. Say publicly to your family and your friends, “Jesus is Lord.” Say it at our next baptism service in March.

That’s how you trust in the Lord with all your heart, with all the love for Him you can muster, even if it is small right now. You who have been Christians for a long time have a bigger “love engine” that drives how you trust in Christ. Don’t stop growing. We want to run the race well to the very end.

Trust As Obedience

Now, we need to talk about trust as obedience. There is a funny thing about devotion. When you are devoted to someone, you want to do things for that person. The more you are devoted, the more likely you are to make sacrifices for that person. Parents do it for their children all the time. Devotion to Christ works like that. As I did with trust as devotion, I want to start out at the far end of the spectrum and let you hear the possibilities of trust as obedience.

These are the words of Jesus from Luke 9:23: **“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”** Before you bolt for the exits, let me walk you through what you just heard. First, it is extreme. Jesus had a way of being extreme. He did that, because He was the greatest vision caster who ever walked the earth. He knew people always see the world too small. He wanted to waken people to the possibilities of a life that is fully alive.

But who lives like that? Maybe missionaries. Maybe occasional pastors. Maybe Catholic Religious with their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. So, what about the rest of us? If we have devotion in our hearts for Christ, even a little, we will look for self-denying ways of following Him in the middle of the everyday distractions and temptations that threaten to throttle or devotion to Christ. Here are three examples that are within your reach, but they will stretch you.

First, worship Christ every Sunday. Doing that will require all the self-denial many of us can make in 2015. Excuses not to worship will never be in short supply, and every excuse appeals to our creature comforts. That’s why worshiping Christ every Sunday is an act of self-denial. Being here is not about being seen. It’s not even about meeting your needs. It’s about God. What happens here every Sunday offers a refuge from the selfishness and distractedness that eats people alive, and it gives them a consistent way to give glory to God.

Second, give away your money. I’m not talking about putting a \$20 bill in the offering plate or texting \$10 for disaster relief. I am talking about serious giving. If this idea is new to you, you should pick a month in 2015 and give away a tenth of your gross income for that month. Jesus said, **“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be**

also.” In other words, show me what you do with your money, and I’ll show you what you love. Remember: our challenge for 2015 is to care about what you love and what kind of person you are becoming because of what you love. What you do with money will show you what you love as surely as an x-ray will show you bones.

Third, stay married. Don’t tear apart what God joined together. I read an essay in early November called “This Marriage Thing is Beautiful (Hard As Hell).” Here are some excerpts from the essay. “We have been given to believe in the unreal. That love is all pleasure and no pain. That we should have what we want. That we have rights that precede responsibilities. That loneliness is unlivable. That freedom is easy and entails liberation rather than sacrifice ... it dawned on me that this marriage thing these days is hard ... And that few people perhaps realize how exactly hard it is ...

“Hard ... to realize that more is at stake in marital union than one can even imagine.

“Hard ... to love when love is hard to believe in, or when it betrays.

“Hard ... to love when love asks for all; hard as hell to persevere when freedom seems the easy way out of misery.” (<https://incarnationandmodernity.wordpress.com/2014/10/22/this-marriage-thing-is-beautiful-hard-as-hell/>)

Denying ourselves, taking up our crosses, and following Christ everyday in marriage exemplifies trust as obedience like few other matters in ordinary life. It is hard, and people do it every day for years, including people in this congregation, whose shoes the rest of us are not worthy to shine. Sticking with your marriage will make your love engine bigger.

Trust As Perseverance

Finally, we need to talk briefly about trust as perseverance. Jesus put the issue on the table when he said, “**He who stands firm to the end will be saved.**” (Matthew 24:13) Sooner or later, for people of faith, a moment may come when the whole superstructure of our faith seems implausible. It may be brought on by the suffering of innocent children or when **the wicked freely strut about** and **what is vile is honored among men** (Psalm 12:7-8) or when your life falls apart. Trusting in the Lord with all your heart in those moments will sometimes be to hold on to your devotion and obedience with your fingernails. We pray that such moments don’t come our way. **Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.** But those moments do come. We can see them as meaningless nonsense, or we can see them as God’s discipline by which we partake in His holiness (Hebrews 12:10). And we persevere.

Take Aways

Trust in the Lord with all your heart is one of the tools Christ uses to redirect and restore our power to love what is beautiful, good, and true. None of us can do all at once all we have talked about today. But all of us can do something with something we have talked about today.

Stretch yourself. Don’t be happy with the minimums.

Talk and pray with people you trust about what you need to do with what you’ve heard today. Remember: Our Lord is renovating the whole house. We can help each other.