

Two Solo Cups (Trusting God) (God's Love) (God Provides)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. Proverbs 3:5

The Basic Bible Truth

Trusting God completely with every aspect of our lives can be a daunting idea. It goes against our human nature to place our lives under someone else's control. This verse is actually written in poetic form. Hebrew poetry does not rhyme as we might often expect in our culture. Here we see an example of a thought expressed, followed by a second phrase that is very similar, but with subtle differences. I choose to break this verse into its two parts and address them separately. First, *Trust in the lord with all your heart*. When life is going lickety-split and our troubles seem far away, it is often quite easy to trust God. But when life gets tough, the second half of that verse kicks into high gear. *And lean not on your own understanding*. I personally struggle with this part of the verse. I am someone who is wired with the desire to understand everything going on around me. I want to figure things out before I step out and follow Him. But there are times in life when God asks us to just trust and blindly follow Him—in spite of any circumstances that might be telling us to hold back.

The Object

2 Plastic Cups
A Small Amount of Water Gel (Sodium Polyacrylate)
A Bottle of Water



I prefer to use solid colored plastic cups for this lesson. These usually have a white interior face, which helps to hide the presence of the water gel powder from your volunteer. Clear cups may show the powder and the chemical reaction that will be taking place inside the cup. The water gel is sodium polyacrylate, the standard ingredient in baby diapers. It can be obtained from many places on the internet. I get mine from the Steve Spangler Science website. This demonstration is quite simple. Before hand, you will place a tablespoon or two of the powder in the bottom of one cup. That cup is for your volunteer. The second is left clean and will be yours. I highly recommend testing your powder to water

ratios before hand. I usually work with an inch of water in each cup. It allows for the water gel to activate easily and lessens the risk of failure and a messy clean up. You will find that not enough gel will leave water that is unabsorbed that may dribble out when the cup is turned upside down. Too much powder can be even worse. If enough water is not present to completely get the powder at least partially wet, it may not stick sufficiently to the sides of the cup and will come falling out when the cup is turned over.

The Lesson

I usually begin this lesson by introducing the verse and grabbing a volunteer from the audience who has a good nature and nice hair. I make a big issue about the fact that near perfect hair doesn't happen by accident. I then make a solemn promise to them that no matter how bad things might seem, no matter how impossible it may be, "I WILL NOT MESS UP YOUR HAIR TODAY!" And I make a point to ask them if they trust me. It is probably best that they not be in on the trick here. An honest reaction to what follows is usually priceless. I introduce the verse's basic concepts and then begin to explain them with a demonstration.

1. I start by having the volunteer hold their hands out in front of them, creating a "c" shape with their fingers and thumb to grip each cup. I place the cup with the water gel powder into the hand furthest from me and the empty cup into the hand closest to me. The volunteer will probably not notice any difference between the two cups.
2. I then explain that there just is not much risk in holding two empty cups, so I introduce tension into the situation by pouring about an inch of water into each cup, commenting on how this is working out well. The volunteer is holding disaster in the palms of their hands, not three feet away from their hair, and it is still not messed up. I again ask if they still trust me.
3. We then take that declaration of trust a step further. I explain that God, in His love, stepped down out of Heaven and came to where we are and experienced all that we do in our lives, but without sin. He has first hand knowledge of our struggles with trust, and has promised to be with us always. I then take from my volunteer the cup nearest to me, the one without the water gel, hold it out at an arm's length, and inform my volunteer that from this point on, we are in this together.
4. Now I test their trust, by demonstrating to them the following chain of events. I explain that we will simultaneously hold the cups directly above our heads, close our eyes, and slowly turn a full 360 degrees, all the while holding the cup above our heads. Upon finishing the rotation, we open our eyes and place the cup once again out in front of ourselves at an arm's length. I ask again if they trust me. And we then proceed to follow through with the planned exercise. But while my volunteer has their eyes closed and their back turned to the audience, I sneakily turn around to the audience and drink the water from my cup, all the while not letting my volunteer in on the secret that my cup is now empty and theirs is not.
5. We finish together and place our cups out in front. At this point I explain that what we have witnessed so far is simply the first part of that verse-*Trust in the Lord with all your heart*. But that the real tests of life involve the second half of that verse.
6. I then explain that our final test of faith will be to simultaneously place our cups above our heads and on the count of three, turn them upside down on our head. At this point, the volunteer typically will be showing signs of doubt and distrust. I take that and run with it, explaining that trusting God implicitly with every aspect of our lives is not always an easy choice. I again assure them that they can trust me.
7. Placing the cups above our heads and beginning the countdown, I stop mid count and casually mention that there is one more piece of information that I feel that they should be aware of. I then explain what I have done and that my cup is empty and theirs is not. I then ask for an audience vote of confidence in what the volunteer's next choice should be. Usually, everyone wants them doused with water, so it is always a resounding "do it!"

8. I then remind my volunteer of the solemn promise that I made to them earlier that no matter what happened, no matter how bad things might look, I would not mess up their hair today!
9. We then place our cups above our heads and, on the count of three, dump them over. By this time the water gel powder should have had plenty of time soak up the water and the gel will have adhered to the bottom and sides of the cup and will not come out, even with mild shaking.
10. A final reminder of what we have talked about and we are done.

I personally struggle with this verse. Oh, I do OK with the first part, when life is going along lickety-split and things are falling into place, I can trust God just fine. But there are times when life makes no sense and I am still supposed to trust Him.

I am the type of person who is always wanting to know why something is the way it is. I'll bet I drove my mother crazy asking "Why?" as a little child. I need to understand, I need to figure things out, I can't just accept a "because" answer. When I turn on a light switch, I don't just assume that the light will come on. I look at the location of the switch in the wall in relation to the light fixture and my mind immediately goes to how the wiring must have been placed, the gauge of the wire, wondering if it is in conduit or not, or maybe it's one of those RF switches that doesn't use wire and simply sends a radio signal to the light telling it to turn on. Have they updated the light fixture to use LED bulbs, what color (kelvin scale) is the bulb if it is LED, how bright (how many lumens) are at eye level in the room—I have a huge list of things that I look for in life. I want to understand before I jump into anything.

And that is a good attitude often. We should not be careless and risk hurting ourselves and others. But there are times when God simply says, "Follow Me." That is where I struggle the most. I know what the Bible says I should do, but I keep asking, "why?" And when God says, "Because I said so," I do not need to ask anything more. I must simply follow, and I have difficulty doing that.

I find myself wondering if I could have been like the 12 disciples and simply dropped everything and followed Jesus on His command. I am afraid that I would have had too many compelling reasons to stay home and let someone else go with Jesus and take the risk. But I would have missed so much.

God can be trusted. He has shown Himself faithful always and in every circumstance.