**WEEK THREE** – Action Plan #1: Start Trusting

**Action Plan #1: Start Trusting**
- We are great at trying
- We are great at doing
- But we struggle with trusting
- Trust is in short supply today
- Yet we are called to a life of trust
- It was Jesus’ call to the disciples

_Do not let your hearts be troubled. _**Trust in God; trust also in me.** _– John 14:1 (NIV)_

- As you read in Psalms 37
  _Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He will do it._ – Psalms 37:3-5 (NASB)

- Solomon wrote:
  _Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths. Don’t be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the LORD and turn your back on evil._ – Proverbs 3:5-7 (NLT)

Trust in the Lord!
But instead, we trust in anything and everything but the Lord

- **We trust in ourselves**
  _The one who trusts in his own heart is a fool…_ – Proverbs 28:26 (NIV)

_batach_ – put their confidence in
- **We trust in wealth**  
  *They trust [batach] in their wealth and boast of great riches. Yet they cannot redeem themselves from death by paying a ransom to God.* – Psalms 49:6-7 (NIV)

- **We trust in power**  
  *Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.* – Psalm 20:7 (NIV)

  *zakar* – remember, depend on, rely on

- **We trust in money**  
  *Trust [batach] in your money and down you go! But the godly flourish like leaves in spring.*  
  – Proverbs 11:28 (NIB)

- **We trust in people**  
  *Do not trust [batach] in princes, or in human beings, who cannot deliver!* – Psalm 146:3 (NET)

- **We trust in our own achievements**  
  *[To Moab] For because of your trust in your own achievements and treasures, even you yourself will be captured…* – Jeremiah 48:7 (NASB)

  We put our trust in things that never have **earned** our trust

- **The Reliability of God**
  - When the Psalmist says, “Trust in the Lord”
  - When Solomon says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart”
  - They are calling us to turn our belief **about** God into action

  **The essence of trust:** To be convinced of the reliability of God

  The basic premise of biblical trust is the conviction that God wants us to grow, to unfold, and to experience fullness of life. However, this kind of trust is acquired only gradually and most often through a series of crises and trials. Through the indescribable anguish on Mount Moriah with his son Isaac, Abraham learned that the God who had called him to hope against hope was eminently reliable and that the only thing expected of him was unconditional trust. The great old man models the essence of trust in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures: to be convinced of the reliability of God. – Brennan Manning, *Ruthless Trust*
trust in the Lord – means to be fully confident or sure; to be bold in action

with all your heart – means with the center of your being, at the deepest level, fully and completely

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. – John 14:1 (NIV)

So trust him absolutely, people; lay your lives on the line for him. God is a safe place to be. – Psalm 62:8 (MSG)

• What keeps me from trusting God?
  1. I distrust Him (to regard with doubt or suspicion)
     - I doubt…
       ... His power
       ... His love
       ... His mercy and grace
       ... that He really cares
     - I lack confidence in Him…
       ... because I’ve failed to see Him at work around me
     - I’m suspicious about His motives
       ... He wants to punish me
       ... He wants to make me do something I don’t want to do

  2. I don’t appreciate His timing
     - He never seems to come through on time
     - Everything seems to happen at the wrong time
     - He didn’t answer when I needed Him to

  3. I don’t like some of the things He’s done in the past
     - He’s let me down
     - He’s hurt me

  4. He’s failed to do what I’ve asked Him to do
     - He seems to drop the ball a lot
     - He completely ignored my request

  5. His ways just don’t make sense to me
     - Noah being ordered to build an ark
     - Abraham being told to leave Ur
     - Abraham being commanded to sacrifice his
     - Jacob being told to return home to his angry brother
     - David being anointed king and then being hunted by Saul
     - Hosea being commanded to marry a prostitute
6. I haven’t tried Him!

- **The real issue**
  - This is an issue of trust, not trustworthiness
  - Whatever it is I trust in should be worthy of my trust
  - But there is always a first time to trust
    - whether it’s putting your trust in a chair
    - or in the confidence of a friend
    - or the trustworthiness of a parachute
  - You have to put your faith to the test and trust
  - Yet God has NEVER failed you
  - And we have an entire record of His unfailing faithfulness
  - But everything else you have put your faith in can and will fail you

All trust requires…
  - **vulnerability**
  - **risk**
  - **letting go**
  - **giving up control**
  - **submitting your will to another**

Trust is learned best during trial

We learn to trust by trusting

- **What are the results of NOT trusting God?**
  - Fear, panic, or insecurity
  - Self-preservation – we take matters into our own hands
  - Justification, compromise or rationalization (a little deceit never hurt anybody)
  - Revenge and retribution on our enemies
    - We don’t trust God to deal with them
  - Self-preservation & self-promotion
  - Control and power-grabbing
  - Not trusting God is walking by the flesh and not by the Spirit.

- **The results of trusting God**
  - We learn that God’s timing is best
  - We discover His power is greater than ours
  - We learn to not judge based on the circumstances
  - We discover no manipulation or deceit is necessary
  - We become less fearful of our enemies allowing God to deal with them
  - We gladly relinquish control to Him
  - We’re free to put others ahead of ourselves
  - Trusting God is walking by the Spirit, not by the flesh
We’ve been talking about what it means to walk with God and have devotion for God. Our behavior or actions will come from a heart that is right with God. You can’t live a life that is pleasing to God if you don’t love Him and want to spend time with Him. Jesus said to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). This is about the inner man. What we do on the outside by way of actions must emanate from the inside – from the heart. And only God can change the heart. But that requires time with Him and submission to Him. This week try to concentrate on what it means to seek Him more so that you can serve Him better.

1. READ DAYS 15-21 IN “SIGNS OF LIFE” BY DAVID JEREMIAH
This section of David Jeremiah’s book starts out with the statement, “One of the reasons we’re so worn out from life is that our knees aren’t.” Prayer is an activity that is absent in many of our lives. But there’s more to prayer than simply asking. It involves reverence, submission, obedience, and trust. Check out these seven days worth of reading and see where God speaks to you. Pick up a copy this week in the Seeds bookstore, online at CBD.com.

2. MUST-READ ARTICLES
Take a few minutes some time this week to look over the following articles. I think you’ll find them thought-provoking and challenging. One is a little long, but both are worth your time.
- Trust For Life by Bill Lawrence
- Many Aspire – Few Attain by Emery Nester
- Obstacles To Trusting God – by Brenda Branson

3. THOUGHTS TO THINK ABOUT
“God is looking for those with whom He can do the impossible-- what a pity that we plan only the things that we can do by ourselves.” – A.W. Tozer

“Perhaps God brings us to the end of our resources so we can discover the vastness of His.” — Neil Anderson

“Faith is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace. It is so sure and certain that a man could stake his life on it a thousand times.” – Martin Luther

4. LISTEN TO OUR RESOURCE CDs
This week we have two messages from John Lynch. I think you’ll find his style insightful and entertaining. Listen to them more than once. Think about them. Debate them with yourself and then with a friend. Allow God to speak to you.
Imagine the marble turning to Michelangelo and saying, “My arms aren’t shaped the way I like. I’d rather you give me a smaller nose. I’d prefer to wear some clothes.” The sculptor never debates with the marble about what he’s doing. It’s absurd to imagine the marble arguing with Michelangelo about the shape it is being given.

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Whether we are talking about stone, canvas, or clay, artists have the right to design whatever they desire from their materials. Clay pots are a common metaphor throughout Scripture. The prophets chastised Israel for quarreling with the Potter over how He crafted them. Paul picks up this theme when he writes to the Romans, “But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, ‘Why have you made me like this?’ Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable use?” (Romans 9:20-21).

Yet we as leaders tend to trust our intuition over God’s direction. So, when we aren’t being formed the way we believe we ought to be – our position doesn’t quite have the prestige we think we deserve, the accolades aren’t arriving as we anticipated they would, our best laid plans fall apart, a job we want goes to a peer – we begin to feel that God isn’t looking out for our best interests. That’s when we fall captive to our own blind self-confidence. In short, we try to become both the potter and the clay. We want to call the shots on how we should be made and used.

Of course marble, canvas, and clay are inanimate objects, but Paul uses the picture of the clay pot to show us that we need to trust the God who created us so He can form us into His kind of leaders. Our responsibility is to trust rather than complain. In this session, we look at how we seek to wrestle control from God. Then we see the four symptoms of the Dreaded Leader’s Disease. By the end of the teaching time, we will stand in the tomb of Jesus and ask the question, “Can you trust the Artist with your life?”

**Symptoms of the Dreaded L.D.**

1st Symptom - Destructive Competition (Mark 9:30-34)
2nd Symptom - Power Plays (Mark 10:32-37)
4th Symptom - Blind Self-Confidence (Mark 14:27-30)

Why are we competitive? Why are we striving for power? Because there’s something in our hearts that’s missing, something that we seek to fill by overcoming others so we can feel superior to them. We think that’s leadership.
“They went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had gripped them.” – Mark 16:8

Key Points:
We follow the man who calls us to carry the cross on our backs to the tomb.

That’s leadership for us.
- We as leaders will do everything we can to please God, but will we fall into the trap of wanting to please ourselves at the same time?
- A radical biblical leader lives a death/life lifestyle. We put to death our core expectations and we find life when we trust Christ to raise us from the dead and give us what He wants us to have.

Probing Deeper:
1. Were you one of the ones protesting that you did not have a hardened heart? That you have done everything you can to please God? How do you respond to the call of the cross?
2. Of the three ways that we try to become God – determine our reality, define our identity, or decide our security – which one do you struggle with the most and why?
3. We looked at four symptoms of the Dreaded Leader’s Disease.
   A. Destructive Competition
   B. Power Plays
   C. Insensitivity
   D. Blind Self-Confidence

   Try and define each in your own words. Then describe how each symptom impacts your life. Apply this question to yourself, “Why do you struggle with these symptoms?”
4. Do you remember those core expectations from the earlier lesson? Have you taken them into the tomb and left them there?
5. Are you laying in the grave right now? Will you give up all control and trust Jesus to raise you from the dead? Will you say “yes” to the grave?

Transforming the Heart:
In the Old Testament, “form” is the root of the word “potter.” God prepares us as His clay, places us on the wheel, and gradually shapes us into the vessel of His choosing. God is intensely involved in forming us for an eternity of service.

What does it mean to you to have God as the Potter in your life? What does it mean that He is forming you into the kind of clay pot He wants you to be?

Have you ever had feelings of dissatisfaction because of the type of clay pot God is forming you to be? Do you ever feel like you’re a water pot when you would really like to be a decorative urn or a Ming vase? What impact do these feelings have on you personally? On your marriage and parenting? On your leadership?

We’d prefer to be a precious piece of ceramic, even a beautiful umbrella stand in some grand entry hall. But not a water pot, and, God forbid, never a chamber pot.

So in our disgust we, the clay, decide to become the potter and make ourselves something nobler. We want to make God’s hands our hands and wrestle control away from the Potter. We seek to determine our reality, define our identity, and decide our security. Whether it’s through money, image management, safety, or superiority, when we try to put ourselves in ultimate control, we’ve fallen into idolatry. Only God can determine reality. And God has already defined our identity. Most of all, God alone is our security. So, we strive foolishly to become the Potter and in the end we create idols and turn ourselves into worthless heaps of useless clay.

**Renewing The Mind:**

*But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hardpressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.*

– 2 Corinthians 4:7-9

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Many Aspire - Few Attain
By Emery Nester

War has plagued mankind from the dawn of time. The carnage of the twentieth century alone is unspeakable. We also fight a war in which conflicts between nations are merely a symptom. We wrestle in war day after day. We fight a spiritual conflict. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in the high places” (Ephesians 6:12). This war, which we who serve Christ have fought for centuries, is escalating.

When I was at Wycliffe Bible Translators’ jungle camp in Mexico many years ago, we used to go on survival hikes into the jungle. I loved camping out, building campfires and sleeping around them in lean-tos. We built big fires because fire drove the wild animals deep into the jungle. If, however, you happened to wake up during the night as the campfire dwindled, you would observe that the lower the fire got, the braver the animals became and the closer they would come. They often formed a circle around the camp, and you could see pairs of eyes looking at you. Those eyes gave us a strong incentive to throw another log on the fire, not because it was especially cold, but because we didn’t know exactly what lurked behind those eyes or in the darkness.

In many respects, evangelical Christianity today faces the same encroaching ring of malevolent eyes. Our society is becoming increasingly amoral. As the fires of evangelical Christianity grow dim through a diminishment of biblical preaching across the nation, the people, even those among the Church membership, increasingly give themselves over to sin, greed, the affluent life, permissiveness, a temporal hope, and other selfish pursuits. The eyes of the Evil One come closer and closer to our camp.

As a result of our abandonment of standards of ethical and moral behavior coupled with a repudiation of the inerrancy of scripture, we can see this encroachment of evil in ways not witnessed by past generations. Witchcraft, demon-worship, Eastern religions, worship of “mother earth”, and the New Age movement, for example, have become prevalent in our society. Although in existence fifty years ago, these manifestations of Satan’s work lurked beneath the surface then, but now have boiled over into everyday life. Demons, demon- possession and sorcery are very, very real. When you dabble in things like astrology and Ouiji boards, you give expression to something which is not a figment of human imagination, but things against which the Bible, throughout its pages, warns us of. The devil is like a roaring lion, and his objective is to devour us. He seeks to do so through drugs, through promiscuity, through the pursuits of unbiblical goals and objectives.

Because of this, we live not only in perilous days, but in days of unprecedented opportunity. The glimmer of hope given us is that “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20). Our involvement in the spiritual battle is a voluntary one. In ancient Israel, before going to war, the officers said to the people, “What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted”? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren’s heart faints as his heart” (Deut. 20:8). We may elect not to fight in spiritual warfare as well.
The apostle Paul writes that a soldier must endure sufferings and hardship if he plans on getting into the battle (2 Tim. 2:3). The spiritual battle is a battle for keeps. Count the cost. Don’t enter it unless you plan on winning. Don’t enter it unless you plan on giving your life totally to it. Don’t enter it unless you plan on suffering and enduring hardship because your adversary and his legions of demons play dirty. They fight rough. They give no quarter.

Remember, however, that Christ who is in you is greater than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4). You fight on the winning side. You can take consolation and refuge in that, but it is a bloody campaign nonetheless. The deeper you get into it, the uglier and nastier it gets. The attrition rate in the Christian life is absolutely horrendous. In the final analysis, many aspire, but few attain. Many begin well, but precious few end well.

You can climb on the shelf and render yourself ineffective for God in many ways. You can sign peace treaties with Satan and let him go his way while you go yours. Satan willingly holds the ladder for any who want to climb onto that shelf and hang up their swords. You have that option.

Recruiting people to the battle is not easy. People have given themselves to mediocrity, compromised and gotten fat with self-interest. Even so, many people would love something for which they could give their lives.

After recruiting the idealist, however, it’s an uphill climb from there. The older a person gets, the more he feels like quitting because victory is always an indefinite goal somewhere in the future. It’s not just around the corner. People also tend toward complacency as they realize that progress in the spiritual fight is often intangible.

Fighting this war will take the rest of your lives and consume every ounce of your energy. I often talk to men in their thirties, forties and fifties who were fighting this battle when in their twenties. When I tell them that the objective of my life is to conquer the world for Jesus Christ, they become benevolent towards me. They pat me on the back and say, “That’s idealism for you”. When you encounter such a person, you will know that you’ve met someone who aspired, but did not attain. These people started well, and ended poorly. You have met a man who started out like you, but somewhere along the road opted for mediocrity.

Unfortunately, most Christians do the same thing. The cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of unholy things enters their lives, choking out the Word. Their lives become unfruitful. They begin to give themselves to big screen TVs, BMWs, trips to Europe - to the acquisition of things. They begin to think in terms of retirement, the stock market, and wealth. They become encumbered with junk and are happily involved in it.

If you want to avoid becoming like so many of these people you’ll encounter, if you want to attain as well as aspire, you’ll have to make some resolutions in your own soul. You cannot give yourself or the enemy any quarter. Even Paul showed concern about this in his own life when he said, “...lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27).
As a Christian in the battle, like Paul, you’re in the business of reaching out to others. And like Paul, you must commit to not being a castaway. The following, although not an exhaustive list, are some suggestions to help you attain this goal and avoid being cast away. (These are not necessarily in the order of their importance.)

1. **Have a heart for God**
   “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple” (Psalm 27:4).

   David writes, “One thing I ... seek,” not, “These forty things I dabble at.” God commands, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deut. 6:5). This means with everything you’ve got. Stop now and evaluate your own life. Do you have a real heart for God? Do you love Him with everything you have in you? Do you find that your life is consumed with the desire to follow Him? I’m not referring to emotionalism or sentimentality. I’m talking about a resolute spirit. Have you committed to following God with all your heart, soul and mind?

   The world is filled with many Christians, but very few godly people. There is a big difference between the two. Long before I was married, I prayed, “Lord, if you ever want me to marry, I don’t want a Christian girl. Give me a godly woman. ‘Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised’ (Prov. 31:30). Lord, that’s what I want. A woman who fears You.”

2. **Hate sin**
   “Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good” (Rom. 12:9).

   Close your eyes for a moment and think of something that really nauseates you. That feeling is the word that Paul uses when he says “abhor”. God wants you to view sin like you view the thing you’re thinking about right now. That is what God wants your attitude to be. You hate sin so much you almost gag.

   Do you have a hatred for sin? Do you find that you abhor that which is evil? We are all plagued with sin, but some Christians don’t hate evil. Some have sin that they embrace to their bosoms. These may be secret sins with which they pet and play. No one else may even know of them - no one but God.

   Have you ever thought about the fact that people will do in the presence of the living God what they would never do in front of other people? We are all guilty of this. We do things in front of God that we would never let others see. We think thoughts and commit acts of sin in privacy that we would never think of doing in front of someone else.

   God says, “I want you to hate sin. Abhor it.” If there are sins you have embraced, if you have allowed them to rule in your life, if you have never dealt the victory blow to them even though God has given you the power to do so if you'll just appropriate it,
you will not survive the battle. If you don’t want to give up the sin because you enjoy it, you will never make it. You’ll end up being one of the casualties of the war.

3. **Hunger for the Word**

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2).

The third way to lose in the spiritual conflict is to lack a hunger for the Word of God. The Bible, throughout its pages, emphasizes the importance of hiding the Word in your heart. “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16). “Thy words were found and I did eat them” (Jer. 15:16). “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee” (Psalm 119:11). “For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper that any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12). Your only chance of survival is to take the Word of God and to hide it in your life. The Word cleanses. The Scriptures give you the life and character of Jesus Christ. The Word of God gives you power and the ability to do the will of God.

How well are you hiding the Word of God in your life? Has the Word become perfunctory for you? Are you doing Bible study or are you studying the Bible? There’s a big difference between the two. Most people do Bible study rather than actually studying the Bible. Are you really devoting time to study the Word of God?

I can fill in the blanks in a Bible study outline in about five minutes, but it takes me about twenty hours to really study a chapter of the Word. I can show up to a study with only a few minutes of preparation all the blanks filled in and look and sound pretty good. I have not, though, actually studied the Bible.

If you are not hiding the Word in your heart, if it isn't as milk and honey to you. If you do not regularly drink deep from its well, you won’t make it. You, like so many others, will have started well, but finished poorly. You will not survive.

I run across people in the Christian community again and again who say to me, “You now, Henrichsen, you can’t be legalistic about these things”. They’re absolutely right. They also say things like, “When I’m around people like you, they kind of squeeze me into their mold”. I know exactly what they are talking about. “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man” (1 Cor. 10:13). Remember, however, if you have that attitude, it's not the fault of your Bible study leader or those trying to encourage you in our faith. The fault belongs to you. It's the result of the coldness of your heart and your lack of hunger for God’s Word.

Yours is not really a legalistic problem, but a spiritual one. The Bible encourages our daily study and meditation of its passages. When we encourage one another in this we are not being legalistic, unless we go beyond God’s admonitions and manipulate others into following our rules, or unless, of course, you feel that you are gaining merit with God because of your effort.

I suggest three steps in an effort to help you use method to unlock the treasures of the Bible rather than becoming trapped in the web of method alone. First, spend a lot
of time in the Word. Second, meditate and think on it rather than doing a perfunctory ritual of the form. If you do, you can really make the Word of God come alive. Third, apply what you read to your life. After all, the Word of God was given primarily to change your life, not to increase your knowledge. Make sure you're a doer of the Word and not a hearer only.

4. Trust God

“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5).

You are going to have times in your life when the living God is going to take all the chips, to use a gambling analogy, and push them into the middle of the table. He’s going to say, “Friend, we’re going for broke on this one. Let’s see how you’re doing in your Christian life”. More often than not, people when faced with this scenario, start pushing all kinds of panic buttons on the console of life, and end up punching out.

If you really want to walk with God, you have to learn to trust Him. Trusting God begins by trusting Him in the little things, so that when the big things come along, you have established a habit of trust with Him. God will put your faith to the test. A day is going to come when the bottom is going to drop out of your life, the roof is going to cave in.

Are you trusting God in the little things? How about your finances? It’s tough to really trust God in this area. For example, it’s hard to give when you can’t afford it. Giving when you can afford it doesn’t require any faith. Faith comes when you give and can’t afford it.

You can do many things in your life without biblical faith. Without faith you can get married, have a home, even become millionaire. Without faith you can live a normal, relatively happy life. Without faith, however, there is something you cannot do. “Without faith it is impossible to please Him: (Heb. 11:6). If you’re planning on pleasing God, you have got to walk by faith.

God is in control of this world. All He wants from you is intelligent cooperation. Boiled down to one word, it means trust. Many will never make it simply because they cannot muster up enough courage and faith in their soul to really trust Him when the going gets rough.

5. Burn bridges and ships

“No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

You’ll never attain if you refuse to burn your boats. When Hernando Cortez took his men to Mexico, his objective was to march on Mexico City and conquer Montezuma. When he landed at Vera Cruz, he put all his men on the beach and sent demolition teams out to destroy their ships. As the men stood on the shore watching the ships burn and sink, they realized they could only go forward into Mexico. They could not turn back.
Have you burned your ships? Have you taken the avenues of retreat that your mind maps and maintains and destroyed them? Take, for example, your career. You began your career with a goal and a hope for the future. There’s nothing wrong with that. The problem only arises when the job becomes an end in itself. Have you given your vocational goals and the direction of your life back to God? If the marketplace is a mission field for you to accomplish God’s will, you have a biblical perspective. If it is a means for you to accomplish your own selfish ends, you are living in sin. God wants you to burn that boat.

Have you given your boyfriend, girlfriend or spouse back to God? Many people have trouble with this one. They never make it because they are unwilling to commit this area of their lives to God. Many people spend their youth searching for a spouse. If you are single, have you given your desire to marry back to God? This surrender is especially difficult because God may decide never to bring a partner into your life. Are you content to be single for the rest of your life if this is the will of God? Are you willing to wait ten or fifteen years before you get married? It is better to wait for the person of God’s choosing than to marry the wrong person just because you want to get married. If you are married, are you committed irrevocably to your spouse?

Sometime ago, some parents asked me to talk to their 18-year-old daughter. She was a beautiful young girl - sweet and attractive. She was in love with a fellow, and she wanted to marry him. I asked her if it was the will of God. She said, “No”. I asked her if she was willing to give him back to God. Again, she said, “No”. We talked about it until two or three in the morning, but she had made up her mind that she was going to marry this man, which she did.

About a year and a half later, I was talking to her parents, and I asked how their daughter was doing. They kind of dropped their heads and said, “Oh, fine”. I asked what she was doing. “Well, she’s got a baby girl...She’s living in an apartment by herself. Her husband left her. She’s divorced and doesn’t know what to do.”

“Be not deceived. God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). The only way you can avoid that terrible, terrible plight is to burn your ships and let God make those decisions.

6. Beware the road of no return

“But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me. And the Lord said unto me, ‘Let it suffice then speak no more unto Me of this matter’” (Deut. 3:26).

In this passage Moses is making his closing remarks and reviewing his life with the children of Israel. Remember, he spent the first forty years of his life in the palace, the second forty years tending sheep and squeezing sand between his toes, and the third forty years wandering around the wilderness with a rebellious people, waiting for a generation of them to die. Can you imagine the number of funerals Moses had to attend? Forty years of burying his own generation, and there was a slug of them. Now he’s reviewing his life and he says, “But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me”.
Why was God angry? In the wilderness, the children of Israel complained about the water (among many other things). God told Moses to strike the rock and water would come out. Moses struck the rock and, sure enough, water came out. The second time that the same incident occurred, God told Moses to speak to the rock and it would produce water. Moses, however, was angry because of the rebelliousness of the people, and he struck the rock instead. The water came out, but God said, “Moses, you’re all through. You will not go into the promised land”. Moses had lived over one hundred years of his life with one thing on his mind - getting into that promised land. Over one hundred years! Now he couldn’t go in because of one dumb mistake - not two or three or five, just one! Paul tells us that the rock was Jesus Christ, and that he should be smitten only once (1 Cor. 10:4). Because of that, God said, “You will not go into the promised land”.

Now Moses pled with God, “Lord, change Your mind. Give me another chance.” But, “The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said unto me, ‘Let it suffice then speak no more unto Me of this matter.’” In other words, “Moses, don’t bring the matter up again.” When God says, “Don’t speak to me again of this,” it’s best that we drop it.

The sixth reason why people don’t make it through the battle is that they enter the road of no return. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Although this is true, it is not the answer to some wrong decisions.

Take courtship and marriage, for example. If you get married and then wake up some morning and find out that you are lying next to the wrong person, 1 John 1:9 won’t get you out of your predicament. God says, and you’ve promised that this is, “Until death do you part.” It was an irrevocable decision. No amount of pleading with God can change it.

If you don’t make certain decisions in the center of God’s will, you will automatically become disqualified from the race. Like Moses, you’ll be all through. God warns us that we cannot accurately estimate the price we must pay for sin, and so we are best served by obeying God in all things.

7. Avoid an independent spirit
The seventh reason why people will never finish the race is they have an independent spirit. They are mavericks, loners. They want to serve God, but in their own way. Perhaps you are like the fellow I asked about the Episcopal form of government. He answered, “Well, I’m against bishops unless I can be one.”

A lot of Christians have that attitude. They are against spiritual authority and leadership unless they are the authority and leader. But God says He will not give you that which is your own until you have been part of that which is another man’s (Luke 16:12).

The prophet Elijah, as he was about to be taken out of this world, said to his follower Elisha, “Tarry here,” (2 Kings 2:2). Elisha answered, “No way, friend. Where you go, I
go. There’s no way you can get rid of me.” Where is the guy or gal you have committed yourself to in an Elijah/Elisha relationship? Where is your Elijah? Where is the person that you are going to lock into by the will of God, and go for broke with? You might say, “Well, God is my teacher. He can speak to me as easily as He can speak through someone else. After all, doesn’t the Bible say that you shouldn’t be like little tin gods?”

That’s true. Nobody is your lord except Jesus. But I’m not referring to lordship. I’m talking about your independent spirit. Do you remember the argument that Dathan, Korah and Abiram gave Moses (Num. 16)? “You take too much upon yourself, Moses. God can speak to us just as easily as he can speak to you. We don’t need to follow you.” Don’t we today say the same thing? Don’t we believe in the priesthood of the believer? Don’t our prayers get through to God? Can’t God speak to us? After all, why should we follow someone else’s leadership?

Moses, in response to this argument, said, “Well, let’s talk this over with God and see what He says.”

“Okay, let’s do it.”

So they went to God and He said, “Moses, step aside and let me show you what I think of that idea.” So Moses stepped aside, and God opened up the earth and Dathan, Korah, Abiram and all that belonged to them fell in. God closed the earth back up and then sent fire and consumed the one hundred or so princes that were with them in rebellion.

God then asked the children of Israel, “Any more questions?” The children of Israel got mad at Moses after that and said, “Moses, you dirty rat, you sicked God on us!” Thousands more died of the plague that day because of their attitude.

Again God asked, “Any more questions?” This time the children of Israel answered, “No, we got the point.”

God does not hanker to an independent spirit. You can be a maverick, you can be a loner and you can go your own way. It’s up to you. But that’s a quick way to climb up on that shelf. It is safer to have a servant’s heart and submit to a spiritual authority. We need to make ourselves accountable to others.

8. Be wholehearted
“And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart” (2 Chr. 25:2).

He did what was right, but one thing was lacking - his heart wasn’t right, so God couldn’t use him. Within a short time Amaziah, the man this verse refers to, was dead.

Some Christians create the impression that they are doing God and their Christian organization a favor by being around - that God Almighty is about the luckiest of the
lucky to have them on His team. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Perhaps you have this attitude. God is delighted beyond words over the fact that you are His. He loves you with an everlasting love. But never deceive yourself into believing that you are doing either God or anyone else a favor by being faithful.

It is easy to be wholehearted in the things you like doing, but it’s hard to be wholehearted in the things you don’t like doing. When I moved into a Navigator home, one of my responsibilities every Saturday morning was to clean the bathroom in the master bedroom. I can remember being on my hands and knees over the toilet bowl with the cleanser and wondering to myself, “Henrichsen, what in the world are you doing here? There are millions of places you could be rather than sitting here looking inside a toilet.”

It’s hard enough to clean your own dirt, but it’s even harder to clean other people’s dirt. How do you rate yourself in terms of your wholeheartedness in being a sergeant of God? I don’t mind being a servant of Jesus Christ. In fact, I delight in it. I also don’t mind you calling me a servant. You know what I do mind, though? I hate being treated like a servant.

Can you be wholehearted when people treat you like a servant of the Most High God? How about when you’re treated like the servant of others? “As you do unto the least of these, you do unto me” (Matt. 25:40).

9. Be faithful in the little things

“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much, and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16:10).

Many aspire, but few attain because they are unfaithful in the little things. Lorne Sanny, former president of the Navigators, has said that. Charlie Riggs was one of the few men he has ever worked with who could be counted on to carry through a request. Lorne could check it off as accomplished without ever going back to see if it was done. That challenges me tremendously, and I hope you also.

Can people say that about you? When you are given an assignment, when somebody’s asked you to do something, can they mark it off as being completed? No matter how small it is - whether it’s picking up a couple of postage stamps or mailing a letter - when people have asked you to do something, can they count on you to get it done? Are you faithful in that which is least? Jesus said there is no way He is going to give you greater responsibilities until you have proven yourself faithful in the little things.

Promotion, when it comes, doesn't come from others, it comes from God. “For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Psalm 75:6,7). Make sure you commit yourself to faithfulness in even the smallest areas of responsibility.

10. Avoid the root of bitterness
“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God: lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled” (Heb. 12:15).

The tenth reason many will never finish the battle is a bad attitude from envy, jealousy and bitterness - a lack of forgiveness. A bitter spirit, a spirit of resentment, poisons not only to you, but others.

A root of bitterness is the result of real or supposed ill-treatment - it doesn’t matter which one. You can get just as bitter thinking people treated you badly as when they actually do. Feeling hurt and sorry for yourself are bedfellows of bitterness. Self pity is the other side of the coin of bitterness. Have you ever felt sorry for yourself? Have you ever felt hurt over the way people have treated you? Then you are bordering on bitterness.

George Washington Carver once said, “I will never let another man ruin my life by making me hate him.” Those are profound words. When you hate, you destroy yourself.

If God is God (and He is), then no one can hurt you. No one. That simply means that anytime you are angry with another person, it’s not really the other person that you’re mad at - it’s God. God is the one who allowed that to happen to you. He brought it into your life for a purpose. Whenever circumstances don’t go the way you would like, and you become angry and resentful and bitterness begins to creep into your heart, remember your complaint is always with God, never with anyone else. There is no such thing as having a problem with another person. It doesn’t exist. Bitterness will destroy you if you let it. The lack of forgiveness is also inconsistent with a relationship with God. Again and again Jesus cautions us that if we do not forgive others, God will not forgive us.

11. Accept rebuke

“For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth” (Heb. 12:6).

Some people never make it because they can't take rebuke; they aren't teachable. I don't mind God rebuking me, but the fact of the matter is that God uses other people in his correction of me. Solomon said, “He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul” (Prov. 15:32). If you refuse to take instruction, you are despising and destroying yourself. Why? Because the rebuke God brings into your life is for your own good.

“Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee; rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee” (Prov 9:8). Don't rebuke the foolish because not only is it a waste of time, but they will hate you for it. But if you rebuke the wise, they will love you.

When was the last time someone rebuked you? When was the last time someone sat you down to help point you in the right direction? If it hasn't been recently, it's because people don't consider you to be wise. They think you are a scorner, and they are afraid that if they rebuke you, you won't be able to take it. Don't deceive yourself into believing that you haven't been rebuked lately because you haven't
needed it. You need it. The question is, are you getting it? You can tell whether or not people think you are wise by how often they rebuke you. Therefore, invite them into your life and thank them when they confront you.

Once, when a buddy and I were doing Bible study together, his application was to pray that God would send someone into his life to rebuke him at least once a week. What a challenge! How do you feel about praying this for your own life? Remember, the older you get, the harder this will be to accept.

12. Stay content

"Thus saith the Lord, ‘Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.’ But they said, ‘We will not walk therein.’ Also I set watchmen over you, saying, ‘Hearken to the sound of the trumpet.’ But they said, ‘We will not hearken.’ Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon the people even the fruit of their thought, because they have not hearkened unto My words, nor to My law, but rejected it” (Jer. 6:16-19).

Some people just want to be different - they don’t want to be pushed into any particular mold. So they vacillate from one place to the next. For example, many people are excited about The Navigators or other Christian organizations when they first become involved. It’s new; it’s exciting; it’s fresh. But then they become critical of the clichés and the traditions of the group. They like feeling unique and different.

When people seek change just for the sake of change, all they end up doing is exchanging one type of conformity for another. While God has created everyone individually and uniquely, He has also set standards and given Christians instruction on how to be the kind of people who will survive the battle and be able to move forward in Christ. The greatest tool He has given us in this endeavor is His Word. It doesn’t change with the seasons or conform to new thought patterns. It is applicable for all of time.

13. Stay in the People Business

With age and a myriad of things competing with your time, these things begin to become more important than people. What you have, rather than what God can provide becomes your security. We can easily push this to the extreme. One woman I know does not like to have people in her home because they mess it up. If your home, or any of your possessions, become more important than people, you are already out of the battle. God is interested in people, and when our security is in Him, what happens to things is no longer important. If your rugs, sofa and cut glass bowls are more important than people, you will never qualify for the battle.

14. Perseverance, keeping the heart for the battle

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1).
If you get used to seeing God do miracles, you quickly stop being thrilled and thankful. The things of God can become old hat, and you can fall into complacency. Remember the story of the hare and the tortoise? The hare started out great, but he was sidetracked along the way because it was so easy - success was assured, he thought. The tortoise, on the other hand, just kept plugging along, recognizing that in order to win the race, he needed to put all his efforts into it. And he won. He kept his eye on the objective and did not allow himself to be distracted.

Like the race between the tortoise and the hare, the battle which Christians face today needs to be won. It is for keeps. And also, like that fabled race, the racetrack today needs to be won. It is for keeps. And also like that fabled race, the racetrack contains many potential distractions. Have no doubt that Satan will try everything he can to disqualify you and get you out of the fight.

This list is just a few suggestions to help you from becoming a casualty of the fight, the war that is the Christian life. Too often, Satan is successful in taking believers out of the battle. While many begin well, few end well. Many aspire, but few attain. My prayer is that you may be one of those that attains.
Obstacles to Trusting God
By Brenda Branson

Ruthless trust is an uncompromising trust that God loves you, no matter what you have done or what you may do, and that God is good, whether or not He intervenes in the midst of your pain. It is a child-like confidence that God will never abandon you, that He is at work in your life, even when you don’t feel His presence or see His hand. Brennan Manning writes, “Uncompromising trust in the love of God inspires us to thank God for the spiritual darkness that envelops us, for the loss of income, for the nagging arthritis that is so painful, and to pray from the heart, ‘Abba, into your hands I entrust my body, mind, and spirit and this entire day—morning, afternoon, evening, and night. Whatever you want of me, I want of me, falling into you and trusting in you in the midst of my life. Into your heart I entrust my heart, feeble, distracted, insecure, uncertain. Abba, unto you, I abandon myself in Jesus our Lord. Amen.’”

The formula for ruthless trust, according to Manning, is “Faith + Hope = Trust.”

**Faith** is belief that God is; **hope** is believing that God will do what He has promised, and **trust** is living with absolute confidence in the Father’s acceptance and unconditional love, and totally abandoning yourself to whatever He asks you to do, even when it doesn’t make sense. When you realize you are powerless and helpless in your own strength, with absolute confidence in God’s love, then you will be able to totally surrender to His will. Manning writes, “Jesus needs nothing but our humility and confidence to work miracles in us.” It is easy to have faith, hope and trust when life is good, when there’s plenty of money in the bank, when friends and family are supportive, and when you aren’t defeated by a poor self-image.

But there are many obstacles that will make it hard to trust in God’s love and goodness. In his book Prayer is a Hunger, Edward Farrell lists amnesia, inertia and mañana as three greatest obstacles to trust. He writes, “We are all subject to forgetfulness of God’s faithfulness in the past, laziness to act on the divine promise, and postponing until tomorrow what Jesus is asking of us today: childlike abandonment in trust.”

Other obstacles to trust include:

**Pain and suffering**—Physical and emotional pain can keep you self-absorbed and unsure that God is reliable. Some have been so traumatized, bruised, battered, and betrayed they are barely surviving one day at a time. Manning writes, “Trusting in God’s goodness does not mean you will not get hurt. God’s goodness brings both pleasure and pain.”

**Evil**—People looking for justice ask these questions: “Why does God allow evil? Why doesn’t He intervene? Is He really there? Does He care?” Job struggled to find justice in his suffering. Manning explains, “Though Job is beset by suffering and loss on every side, his trust endures even when understanding fails. The story of Job implicitly states that we can endure the unwanted intrusion of evil when we have experienced a theophany—that is, an insight into the reality of God.”
Your own insecurity, inadequacy, inferiority, and low self-esteem—In the book *Inner Voice of Love*, Henri Nouwen writes, “For as long as you can remember, you have been a pleaser, depending on others to give you an identity. But now you are being asked to let go of all these self-made props and trust that God is enough for you. The root choice is to trust at all times that God is with you and will give you what you most need.”

Health & Wealth Religion—God has never promised that He will provide good health and unlimited wealth as a reward for our faith. He promises to be with us through our struggles, the disasters, and disappointments of life. If you are riding the roller coaster of “name it and claim it” (or “blab it and grab it” as Henry Cloud describes it), you may have difficulty trusting God when He doesn’t meet your expectations. God is not a genie in a bottle that grants wishes upon prayerful demand nor a vending machine deity that dispenses treats when you insert the coins of your good works. He desires your simple trust in His ability to work for your good, even through painful circumstances.

Fear—Many people fear what God would ask them to do if they surrendered to His call. They are terrified God might ask them to eat worms in the jungle or live in a cave in Afghanistan. Some worry that they would have to give up their manicures, salon appointments, and health club memberships. “If He would just let me stay in the temple of my familiar, I would entrust myself to Him wholeheartedly,” writes Manning.

God desires your complete trust. What are the obstacles that keep you from totally abandoning yourself to Him? Perhaps the greatest obstacle is not believing how much you are loved. “You will trust Him to the degree that you know you are loved by Him,” writes Manning. How incredible it is to be accepted and loved for who you are right now, instead of who you could be or should be! Do you believe that with all your heart, or are you holding back in disbelief that God is incapable or that you are unworthy?

In *Above All*, Manning writes, “Our response to Jesus will be total the day we experience how total is His love for us. Instead of our self-conscious efforts to be good, we should allow ourselves the luxury of letting ourselves be loved, not after we clean up our act and get all our ducks in a row, not after we have eliminated every trace of sin, selfishness, dishonesty, and degraded love from our resume, not after we have developed a disciplined prayer life . . . **but right now, right here . . .”**

Take the risk . . . it’s worth it!