

THIS WEEK'S KEYWORD

TRUST

My wife and I have a knack for finding ourselves in situations that require us to sell homes when the market is less than stellar. I was a newspaper editor who changed careers when I heard the call to full-time ministry, and that required a move from Southern Utah to Lincoln, Nebraska.

The housing market in our area had not yet recovered from the Great Recession of the first decade of the 2000s, so we took a loss on our home. Needless to say, the sale wasn't a good real estate deal.

But it pales in comparison to just how bad the real estate deal God's prophet enters into in Jeremiah 32. The only way Jeremiah could have entered into such a deal was that he truly had trust in the God he served.

That plot of land sits just outside the holy city of Jerusalem. And the entire region was under siege by the Babylonians. In fact, by the time Jeremiah's relative comes to him offering the plot, it's quite clear to many people that Jerusalem is going to be overtaken. The fate of the people is not yet clear, but it's a certainty that property will be pillaged.

Yet, Jeremiah enters into the contract to buy a field, and he does so because he has full trust in God, who has not only told Jeremiah to make the purchase, but that the land one day will be restored to Israel. Jeremiah 32:44 says:

“Fields will be bought, and deeds will be signed, sealed, and witnessed in the land of Benjamin and in the outlying areas of Jerusalem, in the towns of Judah and in the highlands, in the towns of the western foothills and the arid southern plain; for I will bring them back from their captivity, declares the Lord.”

(Common English Bible)

But there's a hitch we need to be clear about. Jeremiah is never going to see the return on that investment. The people of Judah — the Southern Kingdom — are about to be taken into exile. It will be 70 years until the people will be allowed to return.

So Jeremiah had not only to have trust in God, but he also had to be willing to make a financial sacrifice for future generations. The trust wasn't just for his own peace of mind, but was a show of faith that God not only would preserve the people but that God would give them the means to prosper once they returned.

This week's readings are all about trust — showing trust, forgetting to trust, being challenged to trust. All are concept we struggle with each and every day of our lives. Interestingly enough, we show trust in people we don't know behind the wheels of powerful automobiles each time we come to a traffic light. Will that person stop at the red light as we cruise through the green? We assume so. Yet, we struggle to trust the God we do know, the one who made provision for us by providing the Son, Jesus, to die on our behalf on the cross.

This week features some of the greatest narratives in scripture. A young David shows a nation what it means to trust in God by taking on a giant Philistine. A woman with a debilitating physical ailment trusts so much that she puts herself in danger just to touch a piece of Jesus'

MONDAY

Facing Giants

Scripture — 1 Samuel 17

Questions for Reflection

1. How do you think a boy had more bravery than an entire army of people? What gives you strength and courage each day?
2. King Saul tried to dress him in armor, but David knew that wouldn't work for him. The Christian group Casting Crowns has a song titled "Nobody" with lyrics that say, "David brought a rock to a sword fight." How did that decision show trust in God?
3. We all face giants that seem impossible to overcome in our lives — an issue at work, illness, relationship problems. What is your biggest giant to face right now. Write it down and pray for guidance in helping overcome it.

TUESDAY

When Troubles Seem Too Big

Scripture — Numbers 13

Questions for Reflection

1. Can you relate to the doubts the spies had upon seeing the people of Canaan? When was that and how would you handle the situation differently?
2. Have you ever been the Joshua or Caleb in a situation? What gave you the courage to speak up against the ideas of a group of people?
3. The people, basically, were given an opportunity to trust God. What is a circumstance today in which God may be giving you an opportunity to show trust?

WEDNESDAY

Testing God

Scripture — Judges 6-8

Questions for Reflection

1. Gideon asks God for a sign. When was a time you wish God had given you a sign?
2. Sometimes trust is measured. Gideon did what God instructed in pulling down the altar of the false god Baal, but he did it at night while others were asleep out of fear. When have you hidden something you did out of fear of what others think? Why do you think you did so?
3. God kept thinning the ranks. What lesson do you take from the way God reduced the number of soldiers in Gideon's army?

THURSDAY

Just Like Everyone Else

Scripture — 1 Samuel 8-9

Questions for Reflection

1. Corruption prompted the people to demand a change in leadership. What parallels do you see to our world's leadership today?
2. Why do you think God gave in to the people's request? Think of a time you gave in to someone else's request, even if you knew what they asked for wouldn't work. Why did you allow for them to make the mistake?
3. Why was Saul chosen? How do we make decisions on leadership now? In what ways do you wish it were different?

FRIDAY

Golden Calf

Scripture — Exodus 32

Questions for Reflection

1. It often stuns us today to think of how the people strayed so quickly and easily. When was a time you knew not to do something but did it anyway? What were the consequences?
2. Why do you think Aaron gave into the request? Put yourself in his shoes. What would you have done differently?
3. We may not have golden calves in our homes, but we certainly have things that we put ahead of God on our priority lists. What is something that could be your golden calf? How can you ensure it will not come between you and God?

SATURDAY

Just a Touch

Scripture — Luke 8:40-48

Questions for Reflection

1. Women who were menstruating were deemed unclean and weren't allowed to be among other people in society. How did the woman break that rule? Why do you suppose she had so much faith in Jesus?
2. Why do you think Jesus stopped to point out that she touched his clothing? What message do you think Jesus was trying to share with the crowd?
3. How did life change for the woman? In what ways would you like to feel the power of Jesus today?