

Developing trust or confidence is not something that can be accomplished by reading a book or an article online. If we are to have a faith in God that is greater than simply a mental assent to the notion of his existence, then we will need to take some action! If we wanted to develop confidence in a new airplane that we had built, we would first run the engine, then taxi back and forth on the runway, then fly at low altitude, and finally we would do some acrobatic flying. If at any point along the way we stopped taking action, our confidence in our newly built plane would begin to evaporate. This week is focused on increasing our trust and confidence in God by being obedient to his word.

## Day 1

### Service

Jesus lived a life of service to others and continues to serve us in love as he is seated at the right hand of the father. Jesus also left on earth his church, so that we might be the manifestation of his serving love to meet the needs of those around us. Serving can be difficult for numerous reasons including: feeling like we lack the time and skills, or being afraid that our service will be rejected or ridiculed. If it has been a while since you have served those around you, start by asking yourself a few questions. When was the last time you used your skills to serve those around you? What needs are you aware of around you? What would it take to make a small contribution to meeting those needs? What are your fears in trying to help meet those needs? Are these fears rational? What could you do to mitigate them? Are you allowing a falsehood to cause you fear and anxiety? What is the truth you need to meditate on? What are the skills, abilities, gifts, and talents God has given you? What areas could benefit from those? Here are some verses that encourage us to serve one another: Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10-11; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Spend some time this week meditating on God's call to service. Put at least one idea for service into action this week.

## Day 2

### Forgiveness

Matthew 18:21-35 conveys the parable of the unmerciful servant. Forgiveness is obviously a big theme in the New Testament in general and in Jesus' ministry specifically. Why is forgiveness such an important part of Jesus' ministry? This seems like a question with an obvious answer but spend some time thinking about it. What is the whole purpose of creation? Why did God create the cosmos instead of just living for all eternity in the community of the trinity? What went wrong with the plan? How does it get back on track? What part do we play? Having confidence in our salvation and forgiveness by God can be very difficult. What part does forgiving others play in building this confidence? Is there someone you haven't forgiven? Is there someone who thinks you have wronged them (Matthew 5:23-24)? This can be very difficult but don't play it safe. We cannot increase our confidence in God while failing to take his word about other areas of our life seriously. If you decide to put the call to forgiveness seriously, keep a few things in mind. Act in good faith. Don't inflict more wounds and don't defend yourself endlessly. Listen to what the other person has to say and try to see things from their point of view. Use discernment about bringing up something that the other person considers resolved and buried. Do this for the benefit of the other person rather than for your peace of mind. If something cannot be hashed out with the other person, either because of creating new wounds or perhaps the other party has passed away, then resolve the situation by going to God in prayer. Also keep in mind that forgiveness does not mean foolishly trusting someone who's current character does not warrant that trust. Forgiving someone for past offenses does not mean signing up for new ones. What if you don't know whether someone who has claimed to change should be trusted? Read Matthew 25:23.

## Day 3

## Confession

James 5:13-18 contains one of the most uncomfortable exhortations in the bible. It tells us that we should confess our sins to one another, and that we should pray for the sins of our brothers and sisters. What could be the purpose of such an exhortation? Is it still something that should be practiced today? I find that the call to confess our sins to other believers is one of the most terrifying exhortations in scripture for most believers and one that can easily go sideways. First, the call to confession does not mean to share all your most intimate information with strangers or with those who are gossips or generally untrustworthy. For confession to work as it should, we need to develop strong relationships of trust with one another meaning we must not be gossips or generally untrustworthy. When someone confesses to us we hold their trust in our hands and we must use it to bless them. Forgiving them, praying for them, not slandering them either out loud to others or in our minds. In short, their confession to us should be a physical manifestation of their confession to God. They will learn to trust in God more as we manifest his love and grace to them. This act of confession then builds trust in God and builds an intimate and strong community. To see an example of this at work visit an AA meeting or speak to someone who has participated in the program. How do you begin the practice of confession? Develop a trusting relationship with someone who is wise and trustworthy. Be gracious in your speech to this person and build a relationship where confession would “fit”. Realize that you are not alone, that we all sin and fall short and that your problems are not as unique as you think they are. Understand the benefits that come with confession: freedom from pride, freedom from fear of exposure, freedom from image management, and closure community as well as greater trust in God. Begin by confessing your sins to God and accepting his grace in your life.

## Day 4

### Stewardship

When we start to speak about stewardship in the church many people automatically think about tithing and little else. This is understandable, as we pastors have largely created this problem by reducing the idea of stewardship to giving ten percent of our money to the church. Stewardship is a much larger concept that when put into practice can greatly increase our trust in God. So, what is stewardship? In the Old Testament there was a call to the Israelites to bring a tithe to the priests in order to honor God. In fact, there were a couple of different tithes and sorting it all out can be a little complicated. In the New Testament there is a dramatic shift. Matthew 16:13-20 recounts the story of Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Christ and the church’s receiving the keys to the kingdom. Basically, Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, everything on the earth is his and he leaves us in the church as stewards. This means that all of creation belongs to the church, and you as a part of that church have been given some of that to rule over and use as Christ sees fit. So, what do we do? We use what he has given us to expand the kingdom. We use it as Jesus would to glorify him, to make those in the kingdom more blessed. Matthew 25:14-30 tells the story of the parable of the talents, a real lesson for the church in stewardship. After reading and meditating on that parable, think about these questions: What are the assets of the kingdom of which Christ has made you steward? Are you using those assets wisely to receive a return for Christ’s kingdom? What does a return for Christ’s kingdom look like? Are there any assets you have that are under-utilized? Is there any fear that is keeping you from the greatest return possible? What is that fear? What lie is it based on? What is the truth? How do you implement a plan to become a better steward?

## Day 5

### Evangelism

Most Christians would probably see this week's discipleship guide getting more challenging every day and most Christians would see evangelism as the most terrifying command that Jesus gives. We are beset with fears when it comes to being obedient to the command to make disciples which is why most Christians never make a single disciple in their lives. After reading Acts 2:1-41 make a list of your specific fears regarding evangelism. What has kept you from making disciples? Are these fears founded on truth? What is the worst thing that could happen if everything went as wrong as it possibly could? Watch this video of atheist Penn Jillette recounting the time someone gave him a bible <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6md638smQd8>. Does it surprise you that a strident atheist would react that way? Make a list of things that could address these fears including a list of truths to combat the fears that are irrational. Do you have any non-Christian friends or acquaintances? If not, how could you make some? What are some ways you could use some relational and friendship skills? If so, how could you be a good enough friend to talk about important things and be heard? Have you created trust with this person such that they would give you a hearing and realize it was for their good? Who could you begin to pray for in regards to evangelism? What is your next step in being obedient to the call to make disciples?