

## TRUSTING GOD WHILE MAKING YOUR OWN ADULT CHOICES IN YOUR CONTROLLING MARRIAGE

*Hi. This is Natalie Hoffman of [Flyingfreenow.com](http://Flyingfreenow.com), and you're listening to the Flying Free Podcast, a support resource for women of faith looking for hope and healing from hidden emotional and spiritual abuse.*

NATALIE: Recently I had to make a decision about something that involved COVID, my kids, and school. I won't go into any details, but one of my teens informed me that I probably wasn't a Christian because I didn't trust God. Now, this child was motivated by a strong desire for something that I wasn't giving her, and she was pulling all the possible arguments out of her toolbox to see which one might be the magic key that would turn the lock and get her mother to give her what she wanted.

Teenagers can be very astute when it comes to manipulating their parents. They instinctively know which buttons to push for the best effect. But they learned this from watching other grown-ups do it.

And when you hear your kids using Christianity or the Bible or principles like trusting God as manipulation tools to get what they want, you know they picked up those tactics from religious people.

You see, all the humans want what they want. Whether they are religious or secular. All the humans have their own rule books for how everyone should live and what others should and should not do for them or to them. You do. I do. Our kids do.

Religious people have thick rule books for themselves and others that are full of their own personal thoughts programmed into their brains from childhood and interwoven with Bible verses to give their manuals that holy flavor, and it gives the people holding their manuals a good feeling that they are right and everyone else is wrong.

But at the end of the day, our manuals for others are just ridiculous hogwash. And boy, do those manuals cause a lot of heartache for all the humans.

Manuals are simply our brain's justification for getting up in everyone else's business. "Well, I need to let them know because I CARE about them." When in reality, we really just want the other person to do and believe what we do and believe.

I know this from personal experience both having a manual for others myself as well as being beaten over the head by the manuals of many others. I'm spending the rest of my

life becoming aware of my own manual, trimming it down to bare bones, and dismissing the manuals of others. Someone else's manual doesn't mean anything until we give it meaning. So when my daughter tells me I'm not trusting God because I won't give her what she wants, I don't have to make that mean anything other than she really wants something bad enough to sling mud.

It reminded me of another time when I sat across from an older man, an elder, who told me I didn't even KNOW God because I was leaving my husband. I wasn't living according to his manual, and so he believed he was justified in slinging mud.

But I got to thinking about this whole idea of trusting God. What does it mean to trust God in a pandemic? Do we just live our normal lives and say *que será, será* to whatever happens? Do we take in information and make informed choices? Is that trusting God? Or is that trusting in ourselves? Do we go to the doctor if we are sick or do we stay home? Which one is trusting God the most? And who decides? Should I let my two-year old play by a bluff or maybe a freeway and trust God that He will protect my child?

These are the kinds of questions that came up a lot in my prior marriage. There was a lot of confusion over what trusting God meant, and because I tended more toward learning from the things I read as well as from my own experiences and the experiences of others, I made some decisions that others decided were not the "Trusting God" type of decisions. According to their manuals, I was trusting myself. And they told me so.

Jesus tells a story about a business owner who goes away and leaves different portions of his business with three different employees. Two of the employees invest their portions, which means they had to take a risk, make decisions, and trust that they were acting in the best interest of their employer. Were they trusting their employer or trusting themselves? Did it matter?

But one didn't want to take a risk. He didn't live from a stance of love. He lived from a stance of fear. He didn't trust himself or his employer's instructions. And he buried his portion to keep it safe.

Reading this story, already knowing how it ends, our brains assume the two investors just knew they would succeed. And that's why they invested and were successful. But how could they know if they would succeed or not? If investing was a sure bet the last one would have surely done the same. But there was risk involved. A decision had to be made, and the last employee was unwilling to make that decision.

The way some Christians think today that man was trusting God. Whatever happened, it wasn't his responsibility because he was trusting God.

But when the employee came back that man was punished. Why? Because it was his responsibility. He made a decision even though he didn't. He decided not to decide. And then he chose not to take responsibility. And that was his downfall.

What if trusting God is simply trusting that He is our Abba Father, and we are free to make decisions and fall on our faces sometimes? We are free to stub our toe on a rock while we are running through the fields of grace, and we trust that He loves us no matter what. We are free to make mistakes and get messy as the Frizz says on the Magic School Bus. Because we have a Creator who knows that making mistakes is how we will grow the most.

What if perfection isn't the goal but the glorious journey is?

What if we had such audacious trust in God that we could ALLOW THE OTHER HUMANS TO BE WHO THEY ARE, and we could drop our manuals for them? What if we could commit them to Jesus and then just love them? I wonder what kind of world that kind of trust in God would create?

What if that elder knew who God was and knew that our God is so much bigger than a dysfunctional marriage? That our God can make beauty out of ashes and that our God wraps His weeping children in His arms and accepts them just as they are? Even when their faith is failing because churches kick them out of the gates and slam the doors on their faces?

What if our brothers and sisters in Christ trusted God enough to lay down their control of everyone else? What if we trusted God enough to stop trying to change our husbands so we could be safe with them and we just accepted that they are who they are. And they get to be. And that we also get to be who we are, and we get to be safe if we want to be. We can leave if we need to. We can leave without shame because we are loved and accepted, and we all trust our Abba Father to be with us on our way out of hell.

I think trusting God looks like all of that and more. So stop analyzing whether or not you're trusting God enough. And go out and live your life using the tools God gave you. Your brain. Your experience. Your body. Your education. Your wisdom. Your relationships. And your love. Go out and take the risks you need to take and make a choice to mitigate other risks you don't want to take.

Let's weigh things out and make decisions knowing that God wants us to do that. And we are safe in doing that. And there isn't always a right or wrong to many of our decisions. There is just a choice to be made, and God can be trusted in all those choices.

Think about a chess game. God can play an infinite number of chess games all at the same time, and He knows all the moves. There is no move you can make that is outside of His knowledge or ability to continue playing chess with you.

People can't figure this out and when they try, it's only because they aren't trusting that God's got this.

I'd like you to consider the idea that maybe trusting God means living your life in freedom and love because you know He's got your back.