



## Trusting God Through The Changing Seasons Of Our Life Trusting God Through The Lean Times

Everyone experiences lean times in their life. This can come in the form of money, health, relationships. A lean time is when you don't have a lot or what you have is not very good.

The word lean is also translated to dry up(Job 28:4); to bring low(Psalms 79:8); made thin(Isaiah 17:4); emptied(Isaiah 19:6); fail(Isaiah 38:14)

Financially it may mean living from pay check to pay check with no savings.

Physically it may mean having a chronic health problem that takes away the quality of your life.

Relationally it may mean not having friends that you can really share life with.

Another word for lean is poor.

God has a lot to say in His Word about trusting Him during the lean times.

The prophet Habakkuk is one of 12 minor prophets in the bible. He lived in Israel when his nation became slaves to the King of Babylon. Most of the Jews were deported. He was one of a select few Jews that was left in Israel to work his land. He was a farmer, a shepherd, and owned a vineyard. But the Babylonians had stripped him of everything that he owned. As a man who made his living off the land, Habakkuk was experiencing a lean time when he wrote these words.

This has been called Habakkuk's hymn of faith.

**Habakkuk 3:17-19**

**17 Though the fig tree may not blossom,**

**Nor fruit be on the vines;**

**Though the labor of the olive may fail,**

**And the fields yield no food;**

**Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,**

**And there be no herd in the stalls —**

**18 Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,**

**I will joy in the God of my salvation.**

19 The Lord God is my strength;  
He will make my feet like deer's feet,  
And He will make me walk on my high hills.  
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In verse 18 the Hebrew word translated rejoice means to jump for joy.

In verse 18 the Hebrew word translated joy means to spin around in celebration.

Habakkuk was able to jump for joy and spin around in celebration because He had faith in God and His promises during a lean season of his life.

Based on God's Word He understood that this lean time was only for a season. Based on God's promise to Abraham He knew that God would restore the land to Israel. Based on God's promise to David and his descendants he knew that one of those descendants would always rule over Israel and eventually the whole world.

Because Habakkuk had faith in God and His promises he said he was like a deer that could run to the high places to escape his predators. God and His promises strengthened Him to rise above anger, depression, and despair during the most devastating lean time that his family and his nation had every experienced.

God wants us to be like Habakkuk. He wants us to trust and praise Him in celebration during the lean seasons of our life.

For us to respond to lean times this way...

- We must be like Habakkuk and know God and His promises.

Who is God?

The prophets declared that Jesus is God

Isaiah 9:6

For unto us a Child is born,  
Unto us a Son is given;  
And the government will be upon His shoulder.  
And His name will be called  
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
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The angels declared that Jesus is God

Luke 1:31-36

31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

34 Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

35 And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.

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Jesus declared that He is God

John 8:58

58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

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John 14:9

9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

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The apostles declared that Jesus is God

John 1:1-2

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

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To know God and have faith in God you must believe that Jesus is God. Then you must enter into a personal relationship with Him by accepting Him as your Lord and savior.

John 1:12

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

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To know God's promises you must know God's Word.

Rom 10:17

17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

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God has specific promises for every kind of lean time in our life.

For us to be like Habakkuk we must know God and His promises.

For us to respond to lean times the way Habakkuk responded....

- We must be like Habakkuk and trust God and His promises.

Every promise of God is true and amen. God's part is His promise and fulfilling the promise. Our part is to trust in God and His promise.

There are promises that God makes in His word that will occur on earth and in heaven no matter what human beings do. Jesus will return to judge all men no matter what any human beings chooses to do.

But whether or not human beings end up on the right side of the judgment will be determined by what human beings do. To receive the promise of eternal life in heaven, human beings must obey the gospel. The condition is receive Jesus as your savior and Lord.

The benefits of every promise of God are connected to a condition that we must obey to receive the benefit.

**Faith in the promise=Obedience to the condition connected to the promise**

God is faithful. Being faithful means He will always do His part.

But if we want to receive the promise during our lean times we must be faithful. We must trust Him by obeying His commandments connected to the promise.

If you are going through a lean time financially, you trust God by being obedient to God's commandments.

If you are going through a lean time physically, you trust God by being obedient to God's commandments.

If you are going through a lean time relationally, you trust God by being obedient to God's commandments.

To say that I am trusting God when I am being disobedient to the commandment connected to the promise is a lie. I may impress and fool other people but I do not impress or fool God.

Let me share with you one example from a lean season in my life.

When my late wife Debbie and I first married in 1977, we had a savings account of a few thousand dollars and no debt. Things were good. During the first year of our marriage, things got even better because of an inheritance I received from my father after his death. It totaled about 15k plus a car that was only 4 years old. Things were really good.

At that time, if you would ask me, I would tell you that we were trusting God in our finances but it was a lie. I was trusting in my savings account. I was not obeying God's commandments connected to His promises.

**Matthew 6:25-34**

**25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor**

gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? 28 "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; 29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

I was not seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness with our money and possessions.

Malachi 3:8-10

8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. 9 You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this, "Says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.

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I made some very unwise investment decisions in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of our marriage and we lost nearly all our savings. Then I made another unwise decision at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> year of our marriage that put us 24k in debt. Then someone broke into our home and stole all of our most expensive possessions. Within about one year the season of our life changed from prosperity to a lean season.

God used this lean time to get my attention and humble me. As I sought Him through prayer and His Word he revealed to me that I was not trusting Him. He revealed to me the pride in my heart and my unbelief in Him and His Word.

I repented and I made a commitment that we would trust God and obey what He commanded us to do.

- We gave all our money and possessions to God. (Psalm 24:1)
- We gave a tithe (10% of our income) to our local church. (Acts 2:44-45)
- We shared our possessions with others. (Acts 2:44-45)
- We opened our home to strangers. (Hebrews 13:2)
- We prayed specifically for what we needed. (Philippians 4:6)
- We lived by a budget. (Romans 13:8)

We gave at least 10% to our local church because...

- The tithe was a moral law.  
Jesus said He agreed with the tithe.
- The tithe was used to provide for the daily functions of the temple and those who provided the religious service for the nation.  
Paul said that those who work hard at leading our religious services are worthy to be compensated, especially those who work hard at teaching us the Word of God. Wherever the church meets is the house of God.
- The tithe was used to provide for those in need.  
This included the widow and the orphan.  
The local church has the responsibility of providing for those in need. The local church has the responsibility of providing benevolence for others and for missions.

Debbie passed away 25 years after we made the decision to trust God with our finances. The next 25 years after we made that commitment, things were lean.

- We had 8 children.  
We decided to have all the children God wanted us to have.
- We were a one income family.  
Because of all of our children and because we home educated our children, Debbie did not work outside the home.
- I was on staff of an inner-city church in one of the poorest areas of OKC.  
There are not very many white collar professionals attending our church and there never has been.
- We lived from pay check to pay check.
- We ate a lot of oatmeal, sandwiches, and pinto beans.  
My 8 children would tell you that it was rare for us to go to out to eat except to Mazzio's on Sunday night. We could feed everyone for 20 dollars and the drinks were free. That is two dollars a person.
- We did not make enough money to save for our future needs.  
We put money in an emergency fund for car repairs but we did not have enough money in our budget to save for medical bills, cars, clothing, furniture, vacations, or retirement. Debbie's best cloths were all gifts or hand me downs from others or her older sister Carol. The suits that I wore were all gifts.

For family vacations, we went tent camping during the summers because that was all we could afford. We could take our food budget for a week, our gas budget for a week, and pay 10\$ a night for a campsite for 5 nights without going into debt for a vacation.

But in spite of this lean season of our life, we were very happy. We celebrated God like Habakkuk celebrated God because we had faith in God and His promises during this lean season of our life.

We were not perfect in obeying God. No one is perfect in obeying God. But God looks at our hearts.

As we trusted God and we sought to obey His commandments, God fulfilled His promise to us in some wonderful ways and He still is to this day. He not only fulfilled the promise but He gave us more than we requested.

- 1.** The landlord story(3k)
- 2.** The car story(25K)
- 3.** The gifts stories
  - The Dorrows (13k)
  - The Haywood's(5K)
  - Mike Mullet's mom (500)
  - The man who needed his cycle repaired (100)
  - The Hills(12K)
  - 3 other gifts of 5k(10K)
  - Many other gifts of 1k or less that I cannot recall.
- 4.** The trips stories
  - The Mission trips
    - Mexico(1k)
    - Brazil(2K)
    - Spain(4K)
    - Africa(6K)
  - The trip to Hawaii(2k)
- 5.** The house story(259K)
- 6.** The CHA Story(94k)
- 7.** The Kimray Story(150k)

Since Debbie and I gave all our money and possessions to God and we started trusting God, over the last 35 years, I have received over 600k from gifts above the salary I have received from the churches I have served. This is not counting over one million dollars in gifts we received through Christian Care Medi-share to cover our medical expenses after Debbie was diagnosed with cancer.

Before Debbie passed away, she said to me, "I have had a great life." That really broke my heart because I wished that I could have done so much more for her. But the truth is she was right. We both had a great life though times were lean because we trusted God. Together we experienced God and I would not trade it for any amount of money or worldly pleasure.

For you to trust God like Habakkuk during the lean times of your life...

- You must be like Habakkuk and know God and His promises
- You must be like Habakkuk and trust God and His promises.

Are you in a lean time right now?

- Financially
- Physically
- Relationally

Are you trusting God?

Will you trust God during this season of your life? Will you obey His commandments?

- Leans times physically

James 5:13-16

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.

14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

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- Leans times relationally

Ephesians 5:17-21

17 Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.

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is a character trait just like patience. Having a lot of patience does not mean that you have a supply of patience within you that you tap into when you need it. Having a lot of patience simply means that patience is what characterizes your responses to life in most situations.

The same can be said for faith. Having a lot of faith means that trusting God is what characterizes your life in most situations.

To develop patience in our life, God allows us to go through a lot of trying situations.

To develop faith in our life, God allows us to go through lean times.

So if we want to grow in faith we need to take advantage of these lean times when they occur. They are times of trial in which God wants to develop faith in us.

Apparently, some of us require a lot of work.

Faith is also like patience in that it is connected to obedience to God's Word.

There was a time in my life when I never trusted God during the lean times. When I was growing up and things were lean I trusted in my Dad. I went to him with what I needed and wanted. I don't recall very many times that my Dad said no.

If there was something that I wanted and I did not believe he would give it to me, I would steal from Him.

This was before I met Christ. I was a thief.

After I became a Christian when I was 17, I had to learn how to trust God rather than my Dad during lean times.

Relationally, I did not have a lot of friends. I did not have very many friends in the church. I felt lonely even at church.

When you are going through a lean time relationally, what does God want you to

God uses lean times to develop our faith in Him.

God uses lean times to purify our hearts.

God uses lean times to expand our ministry to others.

What are the promises of God for your lean times?

If you are going through a lean time financially.

[Matthew 6:25-34](#)

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tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

If you are going through a lean time physically.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

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If you are going through a lean time relationally.

Hebrews 13:5-6

5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we may boldly say:

"The Lord is my helper;

I will not fear.

What can man do to me?"

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