



# BibleProject Podcast

## Biblical Trust Isn't Blind Character of God E13

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- Jon** Hey, this is Jon at BibleProject. Today is our last episode in what's turned out to be a really long series discussing the character of God. We've been looking at five attributes that God actually gives Himself in a verse in Exodus 34. "Yahweh, Yahweh, a God compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loyal love and faithfulness. Today, Carissa, Tim, and I are going to look at that fifth and final attribute of God—His faithfulness, or in Hebrew Emet. 00:00:00
- Carissa** "Emet" means trust, trustworthy, faith, belief. So it encompasses all of those ideas, but it's rooted around this idea of trust or trustworthiness.
- Jon** God is faithful and trustworthy.
- Carissa** This is a really important word for the Christian faith. If we think about what it means to trust in God, that's usually how we define what it means to be a Christian.
- Jon** Right. If you ask most people what it means to be a Christian, they'd likely say to have faith in God or more specifically to have faith in Jesus. Sometimes this begins to feel like a cliché. "Just have faith. Just believe." 00:01:00
- Carissa** Something I noticed when looking at this word throughout Scripture is that trust is not blind trust. I think a lot of times our modern notions of trust or faith involve trusting in something despite the evidence, belief despite evidence. But in the biblical story, trust or belief relies on evidence of that trustworthiness.
- Jon** So today, our final episode on the character of God, God is faithful, he's trustworthy, he's stable. Or as the Psalmist like to say, God is our rock. Thanks for joining us. Here we go.
- We are going to continue this long journey through Exodus 34:6 where God describes Himself in five different ways. We've been looking at all of these and we're at the last one. 00:02:00
- Tim** Yes.
- Carissa** Wow.

**Tim** We'll land the plane.

**Jon** Yahweh, Yahweh, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, overflowing with loyal love, and...

**Carissa** ...emet.

**Jon** Emet. And emet.

**Carissa** And emet. Actually, it's emet, not emet in Hebrew. So I met means trust, trustworthy, faith, belief. So it encompasses all of those ideas. In this verse, it was translated as faithfulness, but it's kind of rooted around this idea of trust or trustworthiness. To be honest, this has been kind of a hard script for me to write and a hard topic to research because, one, this is a really important word for the Christian faith. If we think about what it means to trust in God, that's usually how we define what it means to be a Christian.

**Tim** In fact, you used the word Faith.

**Carissa** Christian faith, yes. Actually, it can be used that way in it's New Testament Greek translation too, as this like body of belief. So it's an important word for that reason. It's also an important word in the context of relationships. I think, for me, and probably many others, trust can be kind of hard. As I've been writing this, I've just been asking a lot of questions about what does it mean for me to trust humans? What does it mean for me to trust God? What does it mean for God to be trustworthy? What does faith look like? All of those ideas come out of this one word. Is it blind faith? What is it based on? All of those kinds of questions?

00:03:00

**Tim** This is a good example of Christianese. This is a type of idea that becomes so common. Look at this matrix of words. Truth, true, trust, faith, faithful, and belief are all different English words that stem out of this one Hebrew word. And it's kind of related.

**Carissa** This word also occurs a lot in the Hebrew Bible. 329 times.

00:04:00

**Tim** Wow. What did you say for loyal love?

**Tim** Oh, loyal love was almost 250.

**Carissa** So yeah, similar. This one's very common. In the New Testament, it's Greek translations "pistis" and "aletheia". Pistis occurs 604 times.

**Tim** That's the word faith.

**Carissa** Yeah, faith or belief or faithfulness. To believe or to trust. And then Aletheia Truth, and its related verb. So overall, this idea occurs over 1100 times, which is wild.

**Tim** Wow. Wow.

**Carissa** So I think that's why it can get flattened out too. It's like it's a very common word that we're used to using, so it's hard to really think about what it means to trust or to have faith or to be trustworthy. The noun forms, the primary ones are emet and emunah. Those typically carry the connotation of trustworthiness, faithfulness, or truth. Then the verb forms can mean a person is trustworthy, either being trustworthy, or it can be somebody recognizing somebody else as trustworthy or trusting and believing them. So you can kind of see the interaction between the noun and the verb. So the noun being trustworthy and the verb trusting a person who is trustworthy.

00:05:00

**Tim** I mean, we actually have a variety of English words that's doing what this variety of Hebrew words is doing all from this root. Because, you know, you can intuit that trust, true, trustworthy is all coming from the same...

**Carissa** Idea.

**Tim** And true, right, there's a T-R-U in all those. So it's the same way.

**Carissa** Yeah, you can feel the relationship between them.

**Tim** Correct.

**Carissa** Something is true, it's trustworthy, so I'm going to trust it.

**Tim** That's right. The same way in Hebrew, what you're saying is there's a network of Hebrew words that all come from the Hebrew root. Emet is just one of those words. There's a whole network.

00:06:00

**Carissa** Another one of these words that we're probably most familiar with is "Amen." So that's a particle, a Hebrew particle just meaning That's true.

**Jon** Oh, and it's from emet.

**Carissa** Yeah.

**Jon** Wow.

**Carissa** So that makes it easy.

**Jon** There it is.

**Tim** I think it's actually the opposite. I think Amen is the three letters of the Hebrew root, and then emet...

**Jon** A derivative.

**Tim** A derivative of Amen.

**Carissa** So the three letters are aleph, mem, nun. All of the verb forms, all of the nouns and particles come from that.

**Tim** That's right. "Amen" means that's true.

**Jon** That is true. I remember learning that early in life, and that felt like a little hack. Because it's just one of those words you only use in prayers and you have no idea what it means. And then you learned, like, "Oh, that means true." Then I just thought of Amen as true dat.

**Carissa** Yeah. For some reason, I always had thought it meant "let it be." Amen— Let it be. Have you guys heard that? No? I don't know where that came from. But maybe that is a similar idea though. Let it be true. Let it be so. 00:07:00

**Tim** Yeah, that's right.

**Jon** So in the same way that "amen" is the root, it's always derivatives. In English we have true, trustworthy, all these...

**Tim** Truths.

**Jon** Truths.

**Carissa** And trust. Sometimes they're translated in this verse as faithful. It works in a similar way in English. Faith and faithful. So if somebody's faithful, you can have faith in them.

**Jon** How much trustworthy you can trust them.

**Carissa** Yeah, exactly.

**Tim** You got it.

**Jon** And if something's true, it's trustworthy.

**Tim** Yeah. And if someone is amen, then you can...

**Jon** Emet.

**Tim** ...then they display emet. And you can put your amen in them.

**Carissa** And then you can say amen at the end of that statement. So emet can mean truth. But when it's applied to people or when it's used to describe a person, it typically means trustworthy, faithful, or reliable. 00:08:00

**Tim** In English, it's odd to say that someone is true.

**Jon** Unless you're using it for measurements or something. Like, "Give me a true line." Or people use like, is this board true?

**Tim** Oh, that's right. For a thing.

**Carissa** So an object. Yeah. I think in the Hebrew Bible too.

**Jon** Like straight.

**Carissa** Yeah.

**Tim** But what I'm saying is a person you wouldn't use true for a person.

**Carissa** At its most basic level, though, this word can be used to talk about someone who tells the truth. So not just a faithful or trustworthy person, even though this is a component of that, but someone who says the truth, who tells the truth. So proverbs 12:19 says, "Truthful lips, or lips of emet endure forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment." So part of being trustworthy is telling the truth. And that makes somebody worthy of trust. 00:09:00

**Jon** The truth is dependable and it lasts forever.

**Carissa** Right, yeah. It has a stable quality or a reliable quality. That involves more than just truth-telling. It also involves that faithfulness, reliability of a person that somebody can put their trust in. I have a verse here. 2 Kings 20:3. Hezekiah's second dying, this is a good example of emet being more than just truth-telling or truthful. He says to God, "Now, O Lord, please remember how I've walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart and have done what is good in your sight." So in other words, he's continually constantly been oriented toward God and his heart he says, and in what he's done.

**Tim** You know that metaphorically like, Jon, what you just mentioned, if you look at a board, it's straight, you could say, in common English, it's true. Meaning it's consistent. Right? 00:10:00

**Jon** It is how it's supposed to be.

**Tim** Yeah. It's true.

**Jon** I'm trying to think. In Old English, I think they use the word true that way more.

**Tim** Yeah. So here in this example, Hezekiah proves true to God. Maybe that might be a way we could get the idea. 00:10:25

**Carissa** Right. But in English, we would rather say he has been faithful. We wouldn't really use the words trustworthy or trust there. Maybe he trusted God as a part of that. But in English, I think the best translation would be faithful.

**Tim** Yeah, that's right. So yeah, we rely upon a network of two English roots. The T-R-U and the F-A-I-T.

**Jon** The true comes from Dutch troost. Trost in High German means trust or fidelity. Germanic root? Is that what you call them? 00:11:00

**Tim** Yeah. But in this example of Hezekiah, Charisa, he walked in emet.

**Carissa** Yeah. And that's defined as his heart's disposition and also his actions. The point is just that it's more than just telling the truth or a concept being

true. It's this quality of a person. And Yahweh is described as this way too, as full of emet here in Exodus 34. But the idea is that He's worthy of being trusted. This idea is also found all over the Psalms, just like chesed.

So there's just one example I have here. Psalm 136. The psalmist says, "Into your hands, I commit my very breath, save me, O God of emet." So the psalmist is saying that God is trustworthy and faithful and that he can depend on Him to help him. That He's reliable, He's consistent, He's trustworthy.

**Tim** Trustworthy. Or faithful. So faithful doesn't mean full of faith if you break the word apart in English. 00:12:00

**Jon** It could though.

**Carissa** If it's referring to like Abraham's faith and being faithful, then it depends how you define faith, I guess.

**Tim** Yeah, that's right. If we had an animation studio, to make an illustration, there's a directionality. If I have faith in you, it's about me acting towards you in some way.

**Jon** Like you're stable.

**Tim** But in that scenario, you're the one who's faithful. If I'm trusting in you, it's because I consider you faithful. But then there's...

**Jon** And in that sense, you're using it as "reliable".

**Tim** Correct. That's right. That's more about you as the object of my faith. But then there's this other meaning where it's actually something about me. 00:13:00

**Jon** That I am putting my faith in the thing that's reliable.

**Tim** Oh, well, no. Then there's the other person's object. Like Hezekiah is a person of truth. So there it's he's faithful for God. God can put His trust in Hezekiah. The grammar terms I think are subjective versus objective.

**Carissa** Yeah. Although I think the thing you're drying out is that this relationship between faith, faithfulness, maybe trustworthiness, and trust, these are also describing reciprocal relationships. So if somebody is faithful, or let's say God is faithful, someone wants to put their faith in Him, they also simultaneously could be called faithful to Him. Like those two concepts shouldn't be quite separated.

**Jon** But it's different types of faithfulness. One is being the dependable person, and the other type of faithfulness is being the person who trusts in the dependable person. 00:14:00

**Carissa** But it also has the connotation of consistently or dependably acting with faith. So I think there still is...

**Jon** Consistently trusting someone's faithfulness is a type of faithfulness.

**Carissa** Because you couldn't be faithful if only sometimes you are faithful.

**Tim** Oh, okay. Sorry. Let's make this concrete. Jon, you're sitting in a chair.

**Jon** Yeah.

**Tim** This is kind of a famous sermon.

**Jon** I'm putting trust in this chair.

**Tim** That's right. So you have faith in the chair.

**Jon** I have faith in the chair.

**Tim** So in that scenario, the chair is the faithful one.

**Jon** Yes. But I am also the faithful one.

**Tim** But you demonstrate your faithfulness to the chair's faithfulness by sitting in it.

**Jon** Which is an act of faith.

**Tim** Which is an act of faith.

**Jon** So we're using the same word in three different ways there almost. Yeah, that's too complicated.

00:15:00

**Tim** I didn't mean to comp...I just realized that, for me, I always have to go through this exercise when it comes to this word because there's these different directions.

**Carissa** There are different directions. I think maybe in English we do have too many distinctions between the different ways these words express meaning. We're going to do a whole nother video on the Greek meaning of the word Faith. But in Hebrew, at least, I think the distinctions aren't as strong. So in other words, being trusting and trustworthy maybe describing the same thing. And they both relate to this idea of constancy, stability, and they both occur within a relationship.

### **Section Break**

00:16:36

**Carissa** There's this example that will be in our video on this topic in Exodus 17 that really highlights this idea of stability or steadiness. It's when the Amalekites are fighting against Israel. In Exodus 17, Moses is holding up his hands and he's trying to keep them steady or emet.

**Tim** Oh, yes.

**Carissa** And his friends are helping him. So they put a rock under him and they support his hands so that they remain emet, they remain steady. So the idea is that emet has to do with constancy and steadiness. It can also be used to describe a political setting. So to say the political situation or this kingdom is steady, it means it's secure and it's stable and constant. Nothing is threatening it. 00:17:00

**Jon** Just so I'm clear then, emet then is about the object being reliable. When you put your faith in a reliable object, do you also use the word emet? Or is that different?

**Carissa** Yeah, yeah. Usually, it's the verb form from the same root. So ne'eman or...wait. Is it?

**Tim** Actually, this narrative gives a great image. So let's put a pause on it for a moment. You have Moses up on a hill. He's holding his hands for hours...

**Jon** He's got to keep them up.

**Tim** Yeah, he's tired. So they're going to become unfaithful. 00:18:00

**Carissa** Not constantly. Maybe wavering or unsteady.

**Tim** That's right. He wants them to stay in the same space, same position.

**Jon** But they're not dependable.

**Tim** Yeah. So once he has two friends to help him, then his hands become emet. True.

**Carissa** Stable. True.

**Tim** They become true. So just like the chair that you sit in could be said to have emet, his hands have emet. They're true.

**Carissa** That's one quality of what this word group means. And God has described this way too, especially when the author describes Him as a rock. So you can kind of feel that same idea there.

**Jon** Rocks are very emet.

**Carissa** Yeah, stable and sturdy, reliable, constant.

**Tim** They don't really do anything. They just are there. Rocks don't change.

**Jon** Within a Hebrew Bible.

**Tim** Yeah. This is kind of...



**Carissa** Something I've been thinking about is, because faithfulness is the last word in this description, so God is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, and then overflowing with loyal love, and faithfulness, it almost seems like it's functioning to say God is this way all the time. We can count on His character to always be the same. 00:19:00

**Jon** I was thinking about that in terms of the pairing of loyal love and faithfulness, is that loyal love does have a faithfulness in it. The sense of faithfulness in it. It's the loyalty part of it.

**Carissa** And the promise-keeping.

**Jon** So it almost seems a little redundant to me to add faithfulness after loyal love. But when you think of it in terms of like saying a strong period in the end of like all of these things about God are trustworthy.

**Tim** Yes, they're true.

**Carissa** I've been trying to figure out what the difference is between loyal love and faithfulness because they both have to do with promise-keeping and the steady commitment. They both are covenantal commitment type words. and I think that faithfulness really has to do with this reliable, stable consistency. Chesed seems to have to do more with generosity... 00:20:00

**Tim** And promise-keeping.

**Carissa** And promise-keeping. But I think faithfulness has to do with promise-keeping a lot. So maybe it's the generosity aspect of chesed that's a little bit different. Maybe it has a more emotive aspect. I don't think faithfulness in itself has that emotive aspect. It's just the stability.

**Tim** When Moses is up there on that hill and his hand display emet, he's not keeping a promise, he's not being generous. They're just keeping his hands in the same position. That reliable location of his hands is what displays emet.

**Jon** Again, it makes the rock a great image.

**Tim** Yeah, that's right. The rock.

**Jon** The rock.

**Carissa** So Yahweh, in Deuteronomy 32:4, he's called the rock. And one of the ways He's described her is faithful. That's a great song that occurs at the end of the whole Torah just summarizing all of what's gone before. 00:21:00

So I found it really interesting to look at how this word group works in the story of the Bible, and how to view the story through this lens of emet or its related verbs. So the first time we come across

these words in the Bible is in the story of Abraham. I think what this means is that he's the paradigm or the example of what it means to have trust. That's also what Paul says in the New Testament.

**Tim** Yeah, because you could argue in the storyline of Genesis, Adam and Eve, there's a moment, are they going to do what God asked them to do? Which is a way of trusting, but that's not the main focus there. It's kind of trust is implied. But because the word isn't present, it's not the focus. The story of Noah building a boat, that's an act of trust. You're saying when the word gets first introduced to develop a character, it's Abraham. And it becomes a drama of trust.

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**Carissa** Right. I think because it's the first place the word is used, we can ask the question what it means there, and then how that is developed or used later.

**Tim** Yeah, that's good later.

**Carissa** Abraham's trust becomes really important in the story.

**Tim** Yeah, that's right.

**Jon** Can I back us up to? I want to make sure this is clear in my mind. To me, there are two different meanings. That you're trustworthy, meaning you are the rock, or you're trusting, which is I rely on the rock. It seems like in Exodus 34, God is saying the first. "I am the rock." Then now we're going to look at Abraham. Are we talking about the other type, which is, what does it look like to be the kind of person that relies on the rock?

**Carissa** Well, if we change those words, though, too, let's say the rock is faithful, God is faithful...

**Jon** Okay, the Rock is faithful.

**Carissa** And then Abraham puts his faith in the rock...

**Jon** He's full of faith.

00:23:00

**Carissa** And he also acts faithfully. So he demonstrates faithfulness. So they're not totally distinct.

**Jon** To me, that feels like the third aspect. So you've got the rock that is faithful, you've got the person relying on the rock, which is full of faith, and then you've got the person consistently relying on the rock over the long term, which means that they are...

**Carissa** Faithful over the long term.

**Jon** Faithful. Almost in the way that the first...

**Carissa** Yeah, constant or steady.

**Jon** To rely on something true for the long haul makes you true.

**Tim** Yeah.

**Carissa** We can just stick with the ideas of trustworthiness and then putting trust in the trustworthy object for now. We'll do a whole nother...

**Jon** We're going to focus on...

**Carissa** Trustworthiness usually of God...trustworthiness and then what it means to trust in God.

**Jon** We're going to talk about those two things.

**Carissa** Yeah. Or trustworthiness and the response of trust. Yeah. 00:24:00

**Jon** To go back up to the example you gave of Hezekiah, his faithfulness seemed to be that third one, which was he is not the rock but he trusts in the rock. And he's trust so much that his whole life now is full of...

**Carissa** Yeah. And maybe it's just that to really trust actually involves action and it involves the whole person. So maybe we don't even need another word for it like faithful again.

We can just say like, Hezekiah, he trusted. And what that meant was that it wasn't just that he cognitively trusted; he also did these acts throughout his life. He was faithful in many ways throughout his life to God. But that's what it meant that he trusted God. Same with Abraham. His trust of God meant that he followed Him. He was tested in various ways and eventually passed those tests.

**Jon** What could be a good third word? I want to get kind of nerdy about this and I want to keep calling the rock Faithful. 00:25:00

**Tim** The rock is faithful.

**Jon** The person who trusts in the rock is full of faith. The person who trusts in the rock over the long term making their life true is...

**Tim** They're demonstrating faithfulness to the faithful thing. But you want a third word.

**Jon** Just so I know, okay, that's the category we're talking in.

**Carissa** Maybe faithful. Maybe just faithful for that third...

**Jon** So it's back to faithful?

**Carissa** Yeah.

**Jon** That makes sense.

**Carissa** Because it's reciprocated. It's a relational term that God wants His people to also show Him.

**Jon** But it seems like an important distinction because when we get into—and I don't think we'll get there in this conversation—but when you get into pistis, we're talking about being faithful to something that is faithful, and not being faithful because you yourself are a rock.

**Carissa** Yeah. This conversation will be like the prequel to the question of what faith in the New Testament means.

00:26:00

**Jon** Okay.

**Carissa** So we'll have to...

**Tim** Do a video on that later.

**Carissa** Yeah. Yeah. That's a big topic and a big question.

**Jon** Okay. Thank you for letting me process this.

### **Section Break**

00:27:00

**Carissa** All right. So Abraham. In the story of the Bible, Abraham is the first one to have trust in God. So it's the first time that word is used.

**Jon** How about human?

**Carissa** At all.

**Jon** The first time in the Bible?

**Carissa** Yeah. God had promised to Abraham and Sarah that they'd have a big family and that all the nations would be blessed through them. But at this point in the story, it seems impossible because Abraham and Sarah don't have any children and it seems like they're too old to have any anyway. But Abraham trusts God, or he considers him to be trustworthy in the face of these challenges.

So Genesis 15:5-6, I think this is the NASB, God takes Abraham outside and says, "Look up at the sky and count the stars if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be. Abraham believed the Lord." Here it's translated as believe. He credited it to him as righteousness.

00:28:00

**Jon** That's it. Believe. That's the third word, right?

**Carissa** Now that's the second one, isn't it? To trust or to believe.

**Tim** To place your trust in a trustworthy thing.

**Jon** Well, to me “believe” seems more than just “in this moment, I’m going to trust this thing.”

**Carissa** So it seems more holistic.

**Jon** It feels like if I believe in something, I’m going to...anyways. Never mind.

**Carissa** Well, I think what you’re saying, well, it’s something that’s true. I think belief, trust, and faith should all involve the whole person. And if they don’t, in our understanding of them, we should think of them that way. So when Abraham believes God, it is more than just a momentary thing and it’s more than just a cognitive thing.

**Jon** Yeah.

**Tim** The history of English translations has Believe through Genesis 15:6—the first word.

**Carissa** And you know why probably is? Because that’s how it’s used in Romans when Paul reflects on this. 00:29:00

**Tim** Oh, sure.

**Carissa** So it would be really odd to translate it as “Trust.”

**Tim** I remember when I was learning Hebrew, this really struck me. When this word is used as a verb, the thing that you trust in, the thing that you always has the little preposition “in” attached to it. In other words, in Hebrew, you believe in someone. You trust in them. In English, we don’t need the “in” if you say I believe you. We could say “I believe in you,” but that means something different. 00:29:23

**Carissa** Have a different meaning. “I believe that you can do it.

**Jon** Or “trust in you.”

**Tim** I believe in you.

**Carissa** But to place trust in, you could use that phrase with a preposition.

**Tim** Yeah, that’s right. I just was looking. The King James has “and he believed in the Lord.” So all the rest of our modern translations just have “He believed the Lord.” So that “in” does something about that directionality of putting your trust in. Yeah, that’s all. I was just noticing. 00:30:00

**Carissa** Yeah. This verse in Genesis 15 feels really familiar I think because of how it’s used in the New Testament, and because of how Paul reflects on this as defining what faith in God is and how the whole human family becomes a part of Abraham’s family through this faith.

In Romans 4:18, he summarizes the story saying, "Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed..." That's the New Testament translation of this word. "And so became the father of many nations just as heaven said to him, so shall your offspring be..." Talking about the numerous stars in the sky. "...without weakening in his faith..." So that's the same word there as well. "...without weakening in his trust or his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead since he was about 100 years old, and that Sarah's womb was also dead." Those are very harsh words to describe humans.

00:31:00

**Tim** Yeah, dead.

**Carissa** "He did not waver through unbelief or lack of trust..." So that same word again. "...regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith or trust, and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had the power to do what He had promised." So Abraham considered God to be trustworthy. And Paul goes on to talk about how this is how all people enter into the family of God through this kind of trust or belief.

Something I noticed when looking at this word throughout Scripture is that trust is not blind trust. So I think a lot of times our modern notions of trust or faith involve trusting in something despite the evidence.

**Jon** Typically how we...

**Tim** Leap of faith.

**Carissa** Yeah, right. Right.

**Jon** ...think of it. "I don't understand it but I'm going to have faith."

**Carissa** Yeah, right. Belief despite evidence. But in the biblical story, trust or belief relies on evidence of that trustworthiness. And you can even see that in the form of the word. So God is trustworthy, therefore, people trust Him. That's how the words work. So there's a relationship there.

00:32:00

**Jon** There's a reciprocal relationship.

**Tim** Think of how the difference in English between saying, I have faith in that, or I believe that versus I think that's trustworthy. That makes it sound like I thought about it, I have some reasons....

**Jon** I might even have an experience.

**Tim** I might have an experience.

**Jon** I've concluded that I could depend on it.

**Tim** Yeah, that's right. That's good. You're saying that gets across more with the biblical meaning of trusting.

**Carissa** Yeah. At least in the Hebrew Bible, though, when we come across the words belief or faith or trust, they typically always have evidence to support those acts. So here are a few examples. God offers evidence to the Israelites to help them believe in Exodus 4 when He's talking to Moses and is giving Moses all sorts of signs so that the people would believe that word is used there. 00:33:00

Then in Exodus 19, at Sinai, God says, "I'll come down in this cloud and talk to you Moses so that the people will believe Me and you." And at first, the people do believe. They believe when they see the signs, they believe in the Lord and servant Moses. When they see these signs and then when they cross the Red Sea and they experience the power of God, they believe.

**Tim** It's a response.

**Carissa** Yeah, it's a response to what they see and what they experience. Then we also see their lack of belief when they see and experience these giants in Numbers 14 when they come to the land. So the evidence is telling them, "Oh, how can we believe or how can we trust God?" So they don't believe in Numbers 14.

**Tim** So interesting. There's a professor, he's an atheist. He published a book...Oh, here it is. Paul Boghossian arguing that religious belief should be categorized as some kind of mental disorder. 00:34:00

**Jon** Oh.

**Carissa** Oh.

**Tim** It's essentially this. It's like there's no evidence. It's believing despite evidence. I know I'm not doing justice to his actual argument. His argument is actually pretty sophisticated when I heard him talk about it once. But that was my takeaway was that it's something wrong with your ability to discern truth. Because you're discerning truth with no evidence.

**Jon** Or despite evidence.

**Tim** Or despite evidence. That's really different than the portrait you're...

**Carissa** Right. So the biblical answer to that would be, yeah, that would be crazy to believe in something without evidence or trustworthiness.

**Tim** You shouldn't do that. Don't believe in something if there's no evidence.

**Carissa** I think that is instructive to us in our relationships with God and with people too. It's actually unwise to trust anybody without evidence of their trustworthiness as a person. 00:35:00

**Tim** Yeah, general rule of thumb. That's very intuitive. It seems silly that it needs to be said in one sense, but somehow religious belief has come to have this meaning in our culture.

**Carissa** Step out in faith.

**Tim** Yeah, blind faith.

**Jon** It might be because while in these stories people are having first-hand experiences being rescued from Egypt, all these different stories, then, yeah, you've seen it, and you know "I can trust this thing." But in many modern religious contexts, there isn't those kind of events or signs or symbols. So I can see why you would start to just go, "Just believe it. I know you haven't experienced the trustworthiness, but you can still believe it." And that's why it's called faith. I could see how you would get that. 00:36:00

**Tim** I can too. Yeah, I can too.

**Carissa** And that's where I think it's important to see the trustworthiness of God play out through the story, because that does become... Evidence is kind of the wrong word. But that does become the basis for trust when you see how He consistently fulfills his promises, and know His character and that sort of thing. Even today, we might not experience these events in history. They're revealed as these acts of God in the same way that they were then, but we still would found our trust on the story or the character the way God is portrayed.

### **Section Break**

00:37:29

**Carissa** So I mentioned earlier that met is a covenantal word, a lot like loyal love. So they occur and these relational contexts or describe the quality of the commitment between God and humanity. This has implications for us in our own relationship with God and also the commitments we make to close people in our lives. With God, with partners, with family.

So in the Bible, God makes this covenantal commitment with Abraham and He desires Abraham to reciprocate that faithfulness. He makes it with the people of Israel and desires Israel to reciprocate that faithfulness. And He makes it with the king and desires the king to reciprocate that faithfulness. Those words are used in all of those covenantal context. So you see God's faithfulness or trustworthiness and the covenant partners being called to trust and to be faithful to God in return.

So I just want to skip down to the king and the covenant that God makes with David, because this becomes a significant moment in the story. So when we meet David, we meet this young man who trusts Yahweh



in the face of a giant, Goliath. The story of trusting in the face of the giant is meant to contrast with that previous story of the Israelites who don't trust God when they encounter giants at the edge of the land.

So because David trusts God here, God also chooses David and says that He will be faithful to Him forever. So he makes this covenant with him in 2 Samuel 7, and he says, "Your house, David, and your kingdom will endure." And that's the word ne'eman from that same word root as emet. "...forever before me."

00:39:00

**Jon** Yeah, that makes sense.

**Carissa** It'll be constant; it'll be faithful before me.

**Tim** Like Moses' hands.

**Carissa** Yeah. It'll be stable, steady. It will have emet.

**Jon** It'll last.

**Carissa** Your throne will be established forever.

**Tim** So your house and your kingdom will...NIV does endure, will last.

**Carissa** I think these are all from the NASB.

**Tim** NASB. I'm trying to think of is there an English word connected to the true, trust?

**Carissa** Will be faithful.

**Tim** Your house and your kingdom will something forever.

00:40:00

**Carissa** I don't think we have a good word connected to faithful or true. I mean, true is probably the closest.

**Tim** So yeah, it's hard in English to see the connection to all this. But in Hebrew, it's clear because it's from the amen root.

**Carissa** So it's the idea that God is saying He will always be faithful to this covenant to David and there will always be a Davidic King on the throne whose kingdom is faithful or constant forever. So God will be faithful to make the kingdom endure or be faithful.

**Tim** Yeah, faithful. That's right. And then it hinges on the people and the leaders of that kingdom themselves being faithful.

**Carissa** Right. Right. Remember that this is a covenant relationship. So God is desiring reciprocation on the faithfulness. But He has made this promise. So now there's attention of God being faithful to His promise, what happens when His people aren't faithful or His king isn't faithful.

**Tim** Okay. All right. I've got a metaphor. When I was a teenager, my dad is a car guy, like hot rod cars. I think we must have had a new and different car every six months to a year. He would trade in cars. Anyway, when I was a teenager, my dad was so thrilled to help me get my first car. So he helped me get my first car, which was the Volkswagen bus that he helped me restore. It was a big project. 00:41:00

**Carissa** That's a cool car.

**Tim** It was amazing. It was so awesome.

**Carissa** Did you say that was your first car?

**Tim** Yeah. We restored it. It was awesome. So my dad was demonstrating his faithfulness to me through love, generosity, being there. Right? What he hoped was that I would reciprocate faithfulness to maintenance the car. It was reciprocal. "Hey, I helped you restore this, now take care of it," in the hopes that the car itself would be faithful for me...

**Carissa** endure forever.

**Tim** ...as a mode of transportation. What I ended up not doing was not maintenancing it. I lacked faithfulness, therefore the car broke down all the time. 00:42:00

**Jon** And it was unreliable.

**Tim** And it was unreliable. So God's faithfulness is being shown to David and his line. Those people need to show faithfulness for the kingdom to be faithful. That is, to last. In Hebrew, you can do this with all one word.

**Carissa** Yeah. Though, I think there's this element in this promise given by God to the king and the people where the people are depending on God to be faithful no matter what. That seems like part of their expectation or part of the...Maybe it's part of the promise, that there will be an enduring kingdom. Because part of this promise says that if the kings are unfaithful to me, I'll punish them. But there's still this hope in this one faithful King, and I'll never take my love from Him. It's almost like if your dad would have said, "I will always get you a new car if it breaks down." 00:43:00

**Tim** Yeah, interesting.

**Carissa** "They'll keep breaking down if you don't take care of them, but there will be one car. And that one car will last you forever."

**Tim** Yeah, that's right. That's good.

**Carissa** I don't know if that analogy breaks down.

## Section Break

00:44:32

**Carissa** David does, for the most part, take care of his VW van. And at the end of his life, it said that he did walk in emet before God. But the kings that follow Him, none of them trust God the way that David did. So eventually this leads to exile from the land. They trust in their own plans, in their own wealth, military power or the power of other nations instead of God. So, at this point, the Israelites are out of land and out of a king, and there's this memory of a promise that God had made to David that a righteous king from among his descendants would reign on the throne forever. There's still this promise of God's faithfulness. I thought we could just look briefly at Psalm 89 because it's such an interesting psalm.

Psalm 89, the first half of the psalm recounts God's faithfulness. His chesed too. That He shows chesed and faithfulness to His people and recounts the covenant that He made with David. The words for faithfulness are used throughout.

**Tim** So interesting. The representation of what God said to David here in Psalm 89 is chesed will be built up forever, loyal love will be built up forever, in the skies you will establish your emunah. "For you," God said, "I've made a covenant with my chosen one, swearing an oath to David."

00:46:00

**Carissa** Yeah, so God's faithfulness in the Psalm is really connected to the promise to David. The psalmist is saying, "You are faithful God. We know you're faithful. All the way to the heavens you're faithful. And you've said that you have established this covenant. You've been faithful throughout all time." So it sounds like this praise of God's faithfulness. But then midway through the psalm, the psalm takes this turn to the psalmist accusing God of violating His covenant.

**Tim** Remember that thing happened when Babylon came to town and poked up son of David's eyes?

**Carissa** Yeah. So in verse 39, the psalmist says, "You have renounced the covenant with your servant. You've defiled his crown in the dust." And he goes on to describe the desolation of Israel, and then says, "Where is your chesed of old which by your emunah you swore to David?" So the psalmist is saying because Israel has been destroyed, has been exiled from the land, it looks like God's promise, His faithfulness no longer stands. The Israelis have no dividend king on the throne.

00:47:00

**Tim** Evidence is now speaking to the contrary.

**Carissa** Exactly.

**Tim** The rock doesn't seem so trustworthy anymore.

**Carissa** So how can you place your trust in a God who doesn't seem faithful or trustworthy?

**Tim** Let's just pause and recognize that the Bible is both advocating Yahweh is trustworthy, but then also acknowledging this moment in Israel's experience, where it seemed like God wasn't trustworthy. There's a poem about somebody who's struggling to trust God anymore. That's just remarkable to me. Both of these things are in the same scriptures.

**Carissa** Yeah, it's a very human experience of our circumstances and how that relates to how we see God.

**Tim** I think for anyone who's had the experience of being in a church community and they're told to just believe, you can also kindly respond, "Oh, like the poet of Psalm 89?" He was quite vocal about his struggle to not believe. So is it okay if I am too?

00:48:00

**Jon** Is it okay if I am confused about whether or not I can trust God right now?

**Tim** My point is just the biblical story is very sympathetic for people who struggle to consider God's trust.

**Carissa** I think the Israel's exile was very tragic because of what happened to the nation and because of what they had to experience. It also was a tragedy as far as it was a reflection on God's character and His faithfulness. I think sometimes we don't think of it that way.

**Tim** Yeah, it was a crisis of God's trustworthiness.

**Carissa** This story continues in the New Testament. The first page of the New Testament in the Gospel of Matthew opens to show that God is trustworthy, that He's faithful, that He will continue to be trustworthy to His promises. This is the first line of the New Testament. This is the genealogy or the lineage of Jesus Christ or Messiah or King, the son of David, the son of Abraham. The claim here is that Jesus is the promised Davidic King to come, and He fulfills this promise to Abraham as well. In other words, God is faithful through Jesus.

00:49:00

**Tim** So you're highlighting the fact that Matthew is highlighting Jesus as God's response to the two great promises in the Hebrew Bible, Abraham?

**Carissa** Yeah.

**Tim** Where word is used for the first time and then to David, which is a big focal point in the Psalms and prophets about the trustworthiness of the promise. That's the links and the chain that you're looking here.

**Carissa** Right. These are the promises that the nation of Israel was relying on. These are promises that were to affect all of humanity. So the very first line of the New Testament, the Gospel author is saying that Jesus is the fulfillment of these two major promises. 00:50:00

**Tim** Maybe it's because it's the first line of a genealogy. Maybe that doesn't always land for everyone.

**Carissa** Totally. It's not exciting.

**Tim** I mean, it's a really profound statement being made just by that opening sentence linking together Jesus with David and then Abraham. But you have to know the story I guess for it to land.

**Carissa** And the tragedy of the unfulfilled promises or the lack of God's faithfulness for that to really land. I think that's true. In Romans, Paul says that Jesus has come on behalf of God's aletheia—that's one of the Greek words for faithfulness—to confirm these promises, the ones made to Abraham and to Israel so that the nations would glorify God. So the New Testament authors recognize the continuation of this story of God's faithfulness in Jesus. That He's trustworthy, that He's consistent, that He's reliable. 00:51:00

**Tim** Okay. I think people are pretty common with there's a claim in the New Testament that Jesus fulfills, like the promises of God. But this is keying it into this trustworthiness language.

**Carissa** Yeah, right. That God is trustworthy because of this fulfillment.

**Jon** This is the way God is being trustworthy.

**Carissa** Yeah, right. It's not just a cool fact about Jesus fulfilling promises, and so it shows that He is the Messiah. It's actually more about the trustworthiness of God I think.

**Tim** The thing that we trusted in. But then we have this crisis of faith because the line of David and whole kingdom crumbled around us made us wonder if God was in fact trustworthy. And then think, then for 500 years, you just have tyrants...

**Carissa** A long, long time.

**Tim** ...ruling over these people. And it's the crisis of trust. So the claim here is it's like a vindication of God's trustworthiness. That's what Paul is saying here. This is in Romans 15. 00:52:00

**Jon** In order to confirm the promises given the Patriarch, which during the exile and then this whole period before Jesus would have been very easy to be like that psalmist and just say, "I don't know if you're trustworthy."

**Carissa** Right. And it was all based around that promise that God made to David. The problem was that the kings following David weren't faithful to God. So what's happening here and in the person of Jesus is that he is showing Himself to be the true faithful King who fulfills that Davidic role. The author of Hebrews makes this connection between 2 Samuel 7 and Jesus when He says, "But of the son, God says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.'" So that really echoes the promise made to David that there will be a descendant who reigns on your throne forever.

00:53:00

**Tim** It would be like my dad becoming me to be the faithful son...

**Jon** To take care of the car?

**Tim** To takes care of the car. Because that's true. If he was me, he would have taken care of the car. It would in general make these noises and I would just do nothing. I'll just be like, "It'll be fine."

**Jon** I hate taking care of cars.

**Tim** And then it would just not work, and it'll be dead.

**Carissa** I feel really convicted right now.

**Tim** It doesn't work. And he'd be like, "Well, what was going on? Well, it's making this noise." I remember this. He was like, "What did you do?" Well, I just drove it the next day. Anyway. You're feeling what? You're feeling guilty about your car?

**Carissa** My engine lights on all the time. Please don't tell your dad.

### **Section Break**

00:54:30

**Carissa** So we've been talking through the storyline of God being faithful or trustworthy, and how that leads to people putting their trust in Him. So let's talk about trust in the New Testament. Just like in the Hebrew Bible, trust in the New Testament is also portrayed as something people do despite great obstacles. Remember in the Hebrew Bible, Abraham and Sarah believed...

**Jon** They were old. Their obstacle was...

**Tim** It wasn't blind faith...

**Carissa** It wasn't blind.

**Tim** ...but it was a struggle of faith.

**Jon** When you're 100 years old, having a baby is an obstacle.

**Carissa** It's an obstacle. Or having a great nation come from your body when you have no children and you're 100 years old.

**Tim** That's right.

**Carissa** Right. In the New Testament, I think the obstacles we can imagine people were facing when they saw Jesus were that Jesus doesn't look like a king. So to believe or trust in Him as the Davidic King requires this transformed imagination. And then just the practical obstacles of illness, of low status, and of the immense amount of trust it would take to ask Jesus to heal even the worst diseases to death itself.

I think we see all of these examples of trust in the New Testament held out to us despite great obstacles to inspire and empower readers to do the same. So the gospels are full of these people who place their trust in Jesus despite great odds. I'll just list who these people are so we can get an idea of what kinds of people are trusting Jesus and what message that communicate.

00:56:00

In Matthew 8, a Gentile centurion or a leader asks Jesus to heal his paralyzed servant.

**Tim** That's surprising in that this is a person of high status.

**Carissa** Right. Gentile of high status.

**Tim** A non-Israelite who is of high status within Roman culture, and then coming to a low-status person who's subject to him. That's surprising.

**Carissa** It's surprising and also it communicates that point of trusting in the face of obstacles. There's definitely going to be an obstacle.

**Tim** Totally. It's an interesting obstacle because it's about somebody of higher status trusting in somebody of lower status. I guess the whole point of the story is what he says is, "I'm not worthy for you to come to my house." So he doesn't think of himself higher status. Anyway.

00:57:00

**Carissa** Or thinks of Jesus as of very high status.

**Tim** Yeah, that's right.

**Carissa** Another example here from Mark 5. A Jewish synagogue leader. So two leaders now here: a Gentile leader, a Jewish synagogue leader. His daughter was dying...

**Tim** Jesus tells him to trust.

**Carissa** Yeah. Jesus says, "Trust." Then he actually raises the little girl from the dead because she had died. In Matthew 9, a woman who would have been deemed unclean because of her bleeding for such a long period of time reaches out to touch Jesus, and He heals her. And the words for faith or trust are used in all of these stories.

Then this final story in Matthew 9. I really like this one. Two blind men who are the only ones in the story to actually see that Jesus is the Davidic King. So there's this irony there. They ask for mercy and he says, "Do you believe?" Or "Do you trust?" So these are just a few examples of where people trust Jesus from within their difficult circumstances.

00:58:00

**Tim** This is striking me. I've considered this theme. This is a major theme—people trusting in Jesus. Of course, it's very intuitive in a Christianized culture. Trusting in Jesus is kind of...

**Jon** It's really central to what Christianity...

**Tim** When you think about in 1st century, for Jewish people to write these stories and compile them, for a culture whose foundation texts of the Hebrew Bible are all about stories about whether or not people will trust in Yahweh, and then they compose these accounts of Jesus, and a major theme is whether or not people trust Jesus, it's very clearly the way that Israel is now going to show their trust in Yahweh is by trusting and just showing trust in Jesus name. It's just kind of striking me when you stack up all the stories to each other.

**Carissa** And how it just continues the story of trust really.

**Tim** That's right.

**Carissa** So these stories are meant to encourage readers to consider Jesus to be the expression of Yahweh, the one who is overflowing with faithfulness or trustworthiness, and then to place trust in Him. So yeah, it's a continuation of the story for sure. So it's not necessarily perfect trust that God is calling people to. At one point when a father brings his son to Jesus begging for healing from a demon, he says, and this is in Mark 9, "If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If you can, all things are possible for one who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe. Help my unbelief."

00:59:00

I really resonate with this because I feel that way a lot with God or with people. It's like I trust but I also struggle with not trusting, so help my untrust. I resonate that this can be my prayer as well and to not feel guilty about that.

01:00:00

**Tim** It's kind of this guy's story in the gospels is kind of like an analog to Psalm 89. The crisis of trust. The Psalm begins celebrating trust. But then at the end is like, "And where is your trustworthiness?" There's a kind of a similar dynamic here. I thank God for the story in the Gospels. This is like a lifeline to a lot of people. I feel the same way. You do, Carissa.



**Carissa** Yeah. And Jesus does heal him I guess I should say. He does heal the son.

**Tim** Yes, that's right. It's just such an honest acknowledgment. I believe but help my unbelief. There isn't any better way to say it actually.

**Carissa** Yeah. It's also cool to know that belief isn't absolute. It's not either you do or you don't.

**Tim** Oh, you're saying it's not binary?

**Carissa** Right.

**Tim** Yeah.

**Jon** "I have some but I don't have enough. Help me out."

**Tim** I've never thought of this. That's why it's beginning he says, "Have compassion." "I trust you, but it's hard for me to trust in you. So can you give me a little..."

01:01:00

**Jon** "Can you empathize with me?"

**Carissa** Interesting.

### **Section Break**

01:01:39

**Carissa** So maybe I'll just end with some takeaways or some things I noticed as I was studying this word. One is that relationships revolve around trust. We see this in the way the word is used in the covenant relationship. So close people and our relationships with God require trust. And trust requires trustworthiness. So that goes to that second point of trust being based on evidence. Trust in God or trust in humans is not blind trust.

01:02:00

**Tim** Yeah, if I trust in God, then I will display faithfulness. It's that dual dynamic where if I have faith in God, that He is faithful, in theory, my life should be characterized by reciprocal faithfulness. But then when you flip it over, it kind of makes me nervous. What does the evidence tell about my trustworthiness? When I think about my own life choices that way, what do they tell about my faithfulness? Anyway.

**Carissa** Even understanding what trustworthiness is from the study, whether it's reliability, it's truth-telling, it's consistency, those things I think are helpful to even evaluate personally, am I trustworthy? Or are the people that I'm around trustworthy? Am I being faithful to God? But also then maybe that's the moment we just ask for compassion too.

01:03:00

Two final points here. One from this study is that even when I fail, God is faithful. That's a personal application. But from God's faithfulness extending throughout the story, even though humans repeatedly are unfaithful. So that's comforting takeaway.

**Tim** Which is probably the common overlap with loyal love—God keeping His promises.

**Carissa** Keeping His covenant love. Then finally, in the gospels, like we just looked at, and actually, all the way back to the story of Abraham, even when I face obstacles, or especially when I face obstacles, God is calling me to trust and to re-center myself on His trustworthiness. So those are the things that I think, as I've studied this word, make the most sense for me to take away and live out.

**Tim** As I'm hearing you process, I'm also processing. When I was first introduced to Christian faith, the way faith was talked about was something that you were doing. And this is really shifting the center of gravity, where faith really it's about what you are coming to recognize about the one who is trustworthy.

01:04:00

**Carissa** That's good.

**Tim** It is about me, but I have to make a choice and recognize something. But what I'm recognizing is not something I'm mustering up. It's coming to see someone as trustworthy. That's helpful. I appreciate the way you set that up.

**Jon** Thank you.

**Tim** Yeah, it's great. Thank you. That was fun. We should put a just a note and pin in the fact that the meaning of having faith in someone, and then, therefore, displaying faithfulness to them, this is a hot topic in New Testament studies, especially in the study of Paul's letters. We just acted as if that debate doesn't exist in this conversation. So it does exist. We'll get to it at some point later.

01:05:00

**Jon** When we do that word study on pistis.

**Tim** Yeah, Greek New Testament words. But for now, it was good to have this conversation to just focus in on.

**Carissa** That's a good foundation for that conversation.

**Tim** Yeah, that's right. Second ending note. This is our last episode of our conversation in the character of God series.

**Jon** So we'll do one more Q&R. That'll be next. But otherwise, yeah, what a journey. That was a lot of territories to cover.

**Tim** On one verse of the Bible.

**Jon** On one verse of the Bible.

**Carissa** It's an important one.

**Jon** A really important verse. And it's opened my eyes to how much biblical authors riff on those attributes. I mean, it just sets the table and you're off to the races.

**Tim** Yeah, totally.

**Jon** Thank you guys for unpacking all of that and making that verse really meaningful. Thank you for listening along. We'll do a Q&R next week, and then we'll jump into a whole new series. Thanks for listening to this episode of BibleProject podcast. That's it. We finished our last conversation on this series discussing the five attributes of God in Exodus 34. If you've enjoyed this series, you will love the videos that we've made. We've made a video for each of these attributes. You could find them on our YouTube channel, [youtube.com/thebibleproject](https://youtube.com/thebibleproject), and you can find them on our website, [Bibleproject.com](https://Bibleproject.com). We're going to do a final question response episode next week, and then we're going to dive into a brand new series.

01:06:00

Today's show is produced by Dan Gummel, our show notes are from Lindsey Ponder, and our theme music is by the band Tents. BibleProject is a crowdfunded nonprofit organization. We're based in Portland, Oregon. We make free resources so we can all experience the Bible as a unified story that leads to Jesus. And it's all free because of you, and many people like you around the world. It's such a pleasure to work on this. Thank you for being a part of it with us.