



MONTH 7

TRUST: WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

Proverbs 3:5-6 NRSV

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."

OBSERVE

When we talk about faith – especially for those of us who have walked with Christ for a long period of time - it is a simple assumption: **we trust God**. For many of us, it is as natural as breathing. Trusting God is how we live our lives.

Developing a foundation of trust happens through our experiences, from verifying the truth of God's word in our own lives over a period of time, to recognizing God's faithfulness to us in times of challenge and celebration. When we take God at his word and then confirm it through our experiences, trust begins to grow. We also begin to grow in trust and faith when we recognize the trustworthiness of God. We trust God because we recognize that an all-powerful, all-knowing, sovereign, and ever-present God is worthy of our trust.

Based on your current reality, how would you rate your trust in God to direct your path (on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being high)?

What is an example of God proving trustworthy in your own life?

When have you experienced or observed the breaking of trust?

IDENTIFY

Barbara Smith

"Trust is to human relationships what faith is to gospel living. It is the beginning place, the foundation upon which more can be built. Where trust is, love can flourish."

Leadership is based on relationships. **Relationships** are based on trust. **Trust** is based on character.

When people willingly follow a leader, it is usually because of a connection with that leader. The connection might be personal or it might be from a distance, but followers connect and relate to a leader on some level. As trust grows, that connection deepens and strengthens.

And, as a leader proves to be trustworthy, trust continues to grow. And the trustworthiness of a leader increases as confidence grows in a leader's character and competence.

Leadership cannot be detached from trust. **Trust** cannot be disconnected from trustworthiness. Trustworthiness cannot be separated from **character**.

Three areas that build the character of a spiritual leader are:

- **Integrity:** *living true to my values and beliefs*
- **Spiritual maturity:** *living with a high level of commitment*
- **Credibility:** *what I am and what I do are consistent*

A leader's trustworthiness is put to the test daily in the choices she makes and how those choices align with her values. It is visible in how a leader honors the time and schedule of others, how a leader takes responsibility for her actions, and how a leader values the people around her and their contributions. Small character compromises can have a ripple effect on the depth of trust in leadership.

In what areas do you find people trusting you most as a leader?

What are some instances where you have been tempted to compromise your character?

APPLY

In his book *The Speed of Trust*, Stephen Covey identifies ways that a leader can build trust. By identifying specific trust-building behaviors, he provides a profile that allows a leader to assess her actions and see how they help increase or decrease the level of trust both in their leadership and within the organization they lead.

Read through these behaviors and rate yourself on how consistently you execute them. (10 = Always, 5 = Sometimes, and 1 = Never)

- ___ 1. I keep promises and commitments.
- ___ 2. I acknowledge and apologize for mistakes.
- ___ 3. I am loyal to all people, even those not currently present.
- ___ 4. I seek to understand others' needs and concerns.
- ___ 5. I say what I feel in a way that shows respect for others' opinions.

- ___ 6. I am not defensive when someone offers feedback.
- ___ 7. I encourage others to openly contribute ideas and opinions.
- ___ 8. I involve people in decisions that affect them.
- ___ 9. I behave and communicate consistently, regardless of the situation or the person's authority and influence.
- ___ 10. I communicate clear expectations.
- ___ 11. I honor confidential and sensitive information.

What takeaways can you glean personally as you reflect on your responses to these trust-building behaviors?

Now, go back and rate these statements for your church staff or the staff of the organization you lead.

Where are there trust gaps between your behavior and the behavior of your organization? How is your behavior reflected in the way your organizational staff functions?

(Find a summary of *The Speed of Trust* at www.speedoftrust.com/how-the-speed-of-trust-works/speed_of_trust_transformation_process.)

NEXT STEP

Charles Handy, a British management consultant, author, and fellow of the London Business School, wrote an article in *Harvard Business Review* describing the **rules of trust**. These seven principles provide a more comprehensive understanding of how trust is cultivated and how it can be deepened in the relationship between followers and leaders. Handy's principles are adapted here.

- 1. Trust is not blind.** We need to know the people with whom we're working and to whom we're ministering.
- 2. Trust needs boundaries.** We need careful definition of goals, desires and needs.
- 3. Trust requires constant learning.** Every individual must be capable of self-renewal.
- 4. Trust is tough.** We must learn to deal firmly with those who break confidences.

5. **Trust needs bonding.** The goals of the part must gel with those of the whole.
6. **Trust needs touch.** There must be ways to connect with one another.
7. **Trust has to be earned.** There must be consistency in action.

Of these seven principles, which are the two where you have the most room for improvement as you work to grow trust in your leadership environment? How can your accountability partner help you improve in this area?

If you sense a lack of trust in your leadership, do you think it is caused by a character issue or a competence issue? What focused improvement could create greater trustworthiness in you and your leadership?

What obstacles are hindering greater trust in your leadership currently? What can you do to overcome those obstacles?

REFLECT

Stephen R. Covey

*"In the last analysis, what we **are** communicates far more eloquently than anything we **say** or **do**...There are people we trust absolutely because we know their character."*

Edith Hamilton

"Love cannot live where there is no trust."

John 14:1 NLT

"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me."