

Establishing and Maintaining Trust

Overview: Mature character integrity goes beyond just “being nice” to people. It is able to understand and connect with the needs of others, thereby building bonds of trust through empathy. It is able to make a way to people’s hearts through extending unmerited favor to people, and also through being appropriately vulnerable. It is also able to engender trust in people through proving to be dependable and faithful.

1. Where there is a failure in empathy and understanding, trust is not built. People who devalue other people’s thoughts, feelings and opinions do not get inside their hearts. We must listen, validate, hear, and communicate that we have heard someone before we try to tell them “what is right.” Listening first causes that to happen.

In business, marriage, friendship, or any other arena, trust is built when someone has the capacity to really listen to the other person’s reality and value it. When bosses listen to employees, or to customers, loyalty is built. When spouses listen to their spouses instead of getting defensive and telling them what reality is, intimacy is deepened. When parents listen to their children, they get inroads into their hearts. When negotiators listen to the other side, they are able to resolve impasses.

Prov. 20:5 The purposes of a man’s heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out.

Prov. 18:13 He who answers before listening— that is his folly and his shame.

Insert Illustration: Possible Illustration: Bush at ground zero, listening and connecting with the firefighters and hearing what it was like for them. He gained a lot of trust at that time. Or, take a look at the Michael Dell example in this chapter of the Integrity book where he listened to employee feedback and made a huge change.

When people do not listen, and invalidate other people’s opinions or feelings, the other people will disconnect, find someone who will listen, and often turn against them. Key examples: Spouses whose feelings are not “heard” sometimes go find someone who will listen and disconnect, and an affair results. Employees go and find another company. Kids go find counter-culture group that “understands” them better than the parents who don’t try to, but just preach at them.

Rooted in a God who listens. He hears.

Psa. 5:3 In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.

Possible Insert of Biblical Example of God Hearing, (i.e. Abraham’s prayer of Gen. 18)

2. Trust is built when there is true involvement in the other.

People know when we are really interested in them for who they are. To seek out what someone feels, how they are doing, be interested in them, builds strong bonds. To want to know about their lives shows care and builds trust. To value them as a person lets them know they matter to us.

Possible Illustration: Use one from your own life or someone else's that shows how someone stopping and really taking interest in the "other" built trust where there had been none before. Or, from the Integrity book, use the CEO who called his CFO and told him he wanted to go off site for a day and just hear out his concerns. Or, the example of the layoff where the person getting fired told the CEO that getting laid off did not bother him as much as the CEO passing by his office for six months and never once saying more than "hello." He had never once asked how he was doing.

This quality is rooted in God. He cares, he looks for us and seeks us out. He wants to know our innermost being, and values us as His children and cares about every single aspect of our lives:

Luke 12:7 Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Psa. 139:0 ¶ For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

Psa. 139:1 ¶ O LORD, you have searched me and you know me.

Psa. 139:2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

Psa. 139:3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

Psa. 139:4 Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.

Psa. 139:5 You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me.

Psa. 139:6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

Psa. 139:7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

Psa. 139:8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

Psa. 139:9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea,

Psa. 139:10 even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.

Psa. 139:11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,"

Psa. 139:12 even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Psa. 139:13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

Psa. 139:14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Psa. 139:15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,

Psa. 139:16 your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Psa. 139:17 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

Psa. 139:18 Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.

Psa. 139:19 If only you would slay the wicked, O God! Away from me, you bloodthirsty men!

Psa. 139:20 They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name.

Psa. 139:21 Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD, and abhor those who rise up against you?

Psa. 139:22 I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies.

Psa. 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

Psa. 139:24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

3. Trust is built through extending grace, or “unmerited favor” to people.

Most people operate on an “I’ll treat you well and you treat me well,” basis. That is “fair.” It is just. “As long as you are good to me, I will be good to you. But, if you are not good to me, then I am not going to do much for you.” That is the way the world works, as Jesus said. Even sinners love those who love them (Lk. 6:32) That is the essence of the “win-win” mentality. And it works as long as everyone performs. But, if they don’t, then things can get nasty as people turn against one another.

Trust is built when we treat others well, regardless of what they can or can’t do for us. Trust is built when we treat them well and look out for them, even when it does not even benefit us. Trust is built, in short, when they know we are “for them.” That is the essence of “grace.” It does not mean that we let them use or abuse us, but it means that we always try to do what is best for the other person, and they know we “have their back.”

It means that people get the sense that we are “for” them and not “against” them, no matter what their performance. When there is a conflict, or a failure, we will not turn against them, but try to redeem the situation. That is what the God of grace does.

It also means that we give to people from whom we require things. God has requirements for us, but He helps us to meet those requirements. Otherwise, it is just the law. Grace empowers us to get to the goal. This kind of person is the kind of boss who has requirements, but helps train the employees, or coaches them, or supports them to get there. Or, the kind of parent who has requirements for their child, but helps them learn how to meet those standards and empowers them to do it through support, encouragement, coaching, and discipline.

Psa. 103:10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

Rom. 5:2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

Rom. 5:15 ¶ But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!

Rom. 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us

Insert Illustration: Give illustration of a personal example or a relationship that you know that was turned around because someone extended grace towards the other person.

4. Trust is built through showing appropriate vulnerability.

We trust people who will show us their imperfections and do not lord over us with some sort of façade of “having it all together.” Leaders who share where they have had to overcome obstacles or are struggling with hard things are more easily followed than the ones who look like they never had to struggle. Parents who confess their failure and can say “I’m sorry,” are a lot more easy to identify with and trust. People who make mistakes are the same way. We cannot trust people who are too “perfect.”

Insert Illustration: (from real life or someone you know)

Jesus is this kind of person and model to us. The Bible says that he was a real person who was vulnerable to all kinds of things and because of that, is able to identify with us and we can identify with Him and follow Him. We trust that he really understands us:

Heb. 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.

He suffered, was rejected, was tempted, faced difficulty all along the way, yet continued to press on and make it. That is the kind of leader that we can feel like we can trust. He knows what it is like to be where we are.

Paul gives us the same kind of example as someone who was vulnerable:

Rom. 7:18 I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

Rom. 7:19 For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.

Rom. 7:20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

Rom. 7:21 ¶ So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.

Rom. 7:22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law;

Rom. 7:23 but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

Rom. 7:24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

Rom. 7:25 Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! ¶ So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

And with regards to facing difficulties:

2Cor. 4:7 ¶ But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

2Cor. 4:8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;

2Cor. 4:9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

So the biblical model of the integrated character who builds trust is one who reveals vulnerability, and yet overcomes. That is a trustworthy person that we can identify with.

5. Trust is built through strength also.

The kind of character who engenders trust in people is not only vulnerable, but strong as well. This is not the kind of strength that dominates people or controls them, but the kind of strength that comes through strength of character involving knowing what one believes, and being competent in what one does. It is the kind of person that people respect because they have developed their talents and have an expertise. From brain surgeons to good elementary teachers to good car mechanics to CEO's, we trust people who we can tell "know what they are doing."

Prov. 22:29 Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men.

Psa. 78:72 And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them.

We trust God because of his strength as well:

Psa. 20:6 Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he answers him from his holy heaven with the saving power of his right hand.

Psa. 20:7 Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.

Insert Illustration: (example of someone who is trustworthy because of their competence. Would you trust Tiger Woods to hit a golf shot for you?)

6. Trust is built through faithfulness as well.

We trust people who can be depended on to do what they have promised to do, and have performed well in the past. As they prove themselves faithful, we will entrust more and more to them. Faithfulness is a big part of trust. David, for example, trusted his personal self to faithful people who had integrity.

When we are developing the kind of character that people can depend on to do what we say we will do, they trust us. When whatever they have entrusted to us is safe, and when we fulfill promises, they can entrust more and more to us.

Psa. 101:6 My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; he whose walk is blameless will minister to me.

God entrusts us with more when we prove ourselves faithful with little:

Matt. 25:21 ¶ “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

1Cor. 4:2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

This all comes from the image of God, who Himself can be trusted with our futures because of how he has performed in the past. He has been faithful throughout the ages.

Psa. 111:4 He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate.

Psa. 111:5 He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.

Psa. 111:6 He has shown his people the power of his works, giving them the lands of other nations.

Psa. 111:7 The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy.

Psa. 111:8 They are steadfast for ever and ever, done in faithfulness and uprightness.

Psa. 111:9 He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever— holy and awesome is his name.

Conclusion:

Trust is not something that is freely given. It is earned by our behavior. A good character never feels “entitled” to trust. Instead, he or she feels like he must prove himself to be faithful and that someone’s trust is not to be taken lightly.

Challenge:

We must be developing the kind of character that people can put their trust in, and that takes diligent spiritual growth as we look at these issues in our lives. The benefit will be wonderful, as long-term, deep, loyal relationships are built through those kinds of bonds.

Also, our model is God. And this gives us a two-fold challenge. First, to trust His character through faith, as he has proven Himself to be faithful throughout the ages. Second, to be trustworthy people to him, proving ourselves to be faithful with what he has given us.