

The Importance of Trust

by Tom Marshall

Trust is essential to life in society. It is a necessary condition for the formation of any type of personal relationship. Because all relationships involve trust, it is necessarily involved with God, because we relate to God in much the same way as we relate to others.

The more important the relationship is, the more vital trust is to that relationship. The more intimate the relationship, the more costly the commitment of trust becomes. Trust lies right at the heart of marriage, parenthood, and positions of leadership.

What is Trust?

To trust someone is to voluntarily make yourself dependent on that person for some outcome or other, or for some result or consequence. It is a reliance on the integrity, strength, ability, and surety of a person or thing.

Qualities of Trust: To be Trusted I Must Be Trustworthy

- Confidence: Trust that has been proven right so often that there is a settled assurance.
- Loyalty: I remain committed even when the going gets rough.
- Reliability and Dependability: I can be relied on to do what I said I would do without the constant need to be checked up on.
- Consistency: I live by my principles and not by my moods.
- Faithfulness in Promise Keeping: I keep my word even when it is inconvenient or costly to do so.
- Honesty: I mean what I say and say what I mean.
- No hidden agendas. There must be a commitment to building transparency in oneself and one's relationships.

Ways in Which Trust Can Be Broken

- Breach of Confidence: "You couldn't keep a secret."
- Disloyalty: "When things got bad, you weren't there as you had promised."
- Betrayal: "You sacrificed my trust for your own personal gain."
- Unfaithfulness: "You broke your promise."
- Dishonesty: "I can't believe what you say."
- Moral Weakness: "I trusted your integrity and you let me down."
- Uncertainty and Indecisiveness: "You can't make up your mind."
- Unreliability and Inconsistency: "I can't depend on you."
- Moodiness and Emotional Instability: "I'm not sure you'll feel the same way every time."
- Unfairness or Injustice: "You have a hidden agenda. Your responses are influenced by partiality, favoritism, discrimination, prejudice, etc."
- Carelessness or Thoughtlessness: "Your mind is not on what you are doing."

Restoring Broken Trust

Once trust is broken, it is very difficult to restore. Because restoration of trust is such a serious matter, every breach of trust must be treated as a grave offense. An apology that is flippant or shallow does not heal.

Restoring Broken Trust Involves Four Stages:

1. **Repentance:** a clear understanding by the offender of what he or she did, why it was wrong, and what should be done about it. Acknowledgement of personal guilt must not contain excuses or rationalizations.
2. **Restitution:** is a making of amends or fair reparation for the wrong done. It may include a public apology if the reach of trust has affected a body of people.
3. **Redemption:** The Cross is where we find the resource we need to restore trust. Christ, alone, can provide a way towards forgiveness. His grace gives us confidence to trust again and his grace can restore the capacity to be trustworthy again.
4. **Reordering:** Rebuilding the flawed area of our lives: deliberate discipline, treatment, accountability and supervision when necessary. Healing of spiritual and emotional wounds of betrayal; guarding against bitterness. Exploring reasons for broken trust – what important lessons might there be? Spiritual or moral issues? An opportunity to gain wisdom and insight and to grow in the grace of mercy as well (Luke 7:47-48).

For damaged people to safely venture out in trust again they need a relationship with someone who is trustworthy and who can be patient, understanding and respectful of the small steps taken to be vulnerable againhumbly letting the other set the pace.