

Love Always Trusts

1 Corinthians 13:7 and Genesis 15:1-6

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The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 13:7 that love always trusts. Loving people are trusting people. Trust is confidence and the opposite of trust is suspicion. Love cannot exist in a climate of suspicion. The Greek word for trust is *pisteuei*, also translated *faith*. Faith and trust are closely linked in meaning. It is interesting that the Latin word for trust is *credit*. What this means is that the global credit crisis is really all about a lack of trust: Banks no longer trust each other nor do they trust their customers and the customers don't trust the banks and so the flow of money is frozen because there is no trust. Rebuilding trust is a slow and complex process. We need trust for our economy to work. We need trust for our marriages to work. We need trust for life to work. How do we get it, keep it, or re-store it?

Trust begins with God. The game-changing verse in the Old Testament is Genesis 15:6, "Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness." There is only one alternative to trusting in the LORD and that is to trust in yourself. Abram had many reasons to trust in himself. He had done many good things: he had left his home and family in Mesopotamia to answer God's call. He had built several altars to the LORD. He patiently bore with the impudence of his nephew Lot and eventually gave him the choice of the best land, the fertile valley of the Jordan River. When Lot was captured, Abram mounted a rescue expedition, risked his life in battle to free Lot and then refused to take any monetary reward for it. Abram gave a tenth of all his possessions to the Lord. But none of these things made him righteous before the Lord. Abram did not go before the Lord as a negotiator to say, "Hey old man, you owe me for the stuff I've done for you!" The Lord did not count Abram righteous because he had earned it. This is to understand our relationship to God exactly "ack-backwards."

God made a promise to Abram and Abram trusted in God's word. Out of that well of trust then flowed all the good deeds of his life. Faith and trust came first and then the good works of his life flowed from that fountain head.

Romans 4:23-24 brings this home for us Christian believers: “The words ‘it was credited to Abram’ were written not for him alone but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.” Faith and trust in God means taking the promises of God in Christ and daring to believe them. Once we trust we then begin to act on that trust and so faith shows itself in the practice of love for God and neighbor.

God intended the church to be a community of trust. Romans 15:7 put it this way, “Accept one another, then just as Christ accepted you in order to bring praise to God.” Joe Paterno is the celebrated octogenarian coach of the Penn State football team. He said this, “Whether you are a sports team, in an office or a member of a family, if you can’t trust one another there’s going to be trouble.” Trust lies at the heart of being a team whether we are talking about a family, a marriage, a workplace, or a church. Without trust teamwork is impossible. Without trust we can’t work with God. Without trust we can’t work with each other. But with trust we can be more for God than we ever imagined we could be. We can release the power of God and energize the spirit of the church.

Trust in my family, my workplace or my church begins with me. I am a trustworthy person when my actions match my basic beliefs and values. Here’s the thing: I have to have to stand for something. People who don’t really believe anything and say that all values are relative can’t ever really be trustworthy.

I am a trustworthy person when I am humbly concerned for what is right and not in being seen as right. The constant need to be right is an indicator of pride, not trustworthiness. A wise man once said that a really good leader is right about 50% of the time. I’m still striving for that figure—just consult my family. I am a trustworthy person when I have the courage to do the right thing even when it is hard—because of criticism, loss of face or some other adversity.

Mike Mack was a good friend of mine in college. At the beginning of one spring term, I dropped by his room for a chat and to invite him to dinner. He had just gotten back from the bookstore and had a load of books for his classes that quarter. He was checking over his receipt only to discover that the clerk had not charged him for two of his books. To my astonishment he ended the conversation by getting up from his chair with the receipt and books in hand and leaving immediately for the bookstore in great

haste to correct the error. Two things happened that day, Mike taught me a lesson about integrity but more importantly he taught me that I could trust him. Trust is built by carefully attending to the little things over time. Jesus said in Luke 16:10, “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much...”

After testing nearly two thousand different materials, Thomas Edison finally successfully created the first incandescent light bulb. Everybody knows that story but what most people don't know is that after his successful test, Edison handed his newly created light bulb to a young boy who worked as a “go-for” in the lab. The boy turned to carry it upstairs, tripped and smashed the bulb all over the floor. It got real quiet but not much else happened except to make the boy sweep up the mess. A few days later, Edison put the finishing touches on a second bulb. Then he stood up and to the amazement of everyone in the lab, he called for the same boy and without a word, he handed him the second bulb and told him to carry it upstairs. There is no greater gift we can give to someone else than these four words: “I believe in you.”

Jesus gave that gift to Peter. Peter, who was Jesus' closest friend, denied him three times during his trial and crucifixion. When Jesus rose from the dead he said nothing about this but three times he asked Peter, “Do you love me?” and then three times he commanded him to “tend my sheep.” He gave Peter the gift of those four words, “I believe in you.” And that gift rekindled something in Peter's spirit that took him to the ends of the earth as the great Apostle and Evangelist of the church.

Jesus knows that trust must be combined with careful thinking. The Bible teaches a continuum of trust in three stages: suspicion-trust-gullibility. Suspicion is where there is no trust only cold calculations about other people. This is the place of loneliness and alienation. On the other hand gullibility is the place where there is no thinking only blind trust—this is a place of abuse and oppression. Jesus said think: don't give what is sacred to dogs or throw your pearls before pigs. Trust is that sweet spot right in between suspicion and gullibility. It's like softball; you want to connect not on the tip or by the hands but right in the middle of the bat. Jesus calls us to combine careful thinking with a deep desire to trust.

Trusting God is the game-changer in life. And giving the gift of trust to one another is the game changer in family or church or work. Love always trusts because love knows that trust empowers people to do great things for God.