

The Trust Test

By:
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Some of us have an impediment known as distrust. Distrust becomes an obstruction in our relationships with people and/or God when interactions are defined by fear. Fear of losing something directs us in our relationships. We lack the natural motivation to live by desire and transparency. We cannot find a way to be at ease with ourselves and/or someone else. We lose openness to remain ourselves. Our ability to remain vulnerable and genuine diminishes. Most likely, most of us do not recognize we possess this hindrance though we live restricted and confined by fears, unyielding comfort zones and past hurt. Either way, it's time you took a test. Relax, you will not be graded nor will you have to study. This examination is for your own personal edification and development. This article is not designed to be an accurate analysis of yours or my ability to trust though I hope it may provoke you to meaningful contemplation and self reflection on the subject of trust.

Trust implies several things but I would like to focus on two definitions I found pertinent to this article. Both are taken from Webster's College Dictionary. The first description reveals trust is *a firm belief or confidence in the honesty, integrity, reliability, justice, etc. of another person or thing; faith; reliance*. The second and closely related definition identifies trust as *a confident expectation, anticipation or hope...* People who fail to trust most likely acquired the all too familiar barrier through earlier life experiences, exchanges and relationships. Distrust can pop up in someone who is self sufficient, fearful and insecure, has a low sense of self worth or in one who is overly aggressive. Of course, the list goes on.

We can lose our ability to trust people when they disappoint, hurt, threaten, or consistently stay inconsistent with us. Possibly you have endured broken relationships or experienced abandonment. Maybe you vulnerably asked someone out for a date only to be rejected or dismissed. Your trust level would certainly be negatively impacted if you discovered your close companion and mate was seeing someone else behind your back. Maybe you were shamed and humiliated by someone, stuck with no ability to recover or return to joy. Many of us have experienced theft, robbery and crime that instill suspicion and/or prejudice in our minds toward other people. Whatever the case, how well we recover from a past upset is revealed by how well we presently trust others, even God. To clarify, I make a distinction according to Biblical principles between wisdom and foolishness, between trust in God and trust in the flesh (or something else). For example, the book of Job contains several accusations against Job concerning who, what or where he placed his trust. At one point Bildad accuses Job of hoping and trusting in his house and riches rather than God. He explains to Job, *So are the paths of all who forget God; and the hope of the hypocrite shall perish, whose confidence shall be cut off, and whose trust is a spider's web. He leans on his house, but it does not stand. He holds it fast, but*

*it does not endure...*¹ Trust in this section of Bildad's speech is the Hebrew word *mibtach*, which implies Job was placing his confidence in something other than Almighty God as a refuge, source of security or assurance. The shattered or misplaced trust I am specifically referring to can occur when unresolved pain, grief or brokenness from past relationships leaves us depleted, guarded and frightened rather than peaceful and secure. Unresolved, unsettled relationship ruptures will impact our ability to live from our heart as well as our aptitude to trust other people.

I remember this specific episode as though it occurred yesterday. One particular wintry, January day was cold and overcast. A light breeze blew while the sun fought to break the cloud cover. The forecast said today would have a possibility of snow flurries in late afternoon. The air was frigid. I noticed the ground was covered with a thin layer of snow. My friend James and I were outside climbing hills and playing in a local park. Every breath I inhaled reminded me how pleasant a cup of hot chocolate would taste. My nose felt numb from the cold wind and my throat ached. James and I were two naive but keen 11 year olds seeking adventure. We were exploring what we thought was uncharted territory. As any eleven year old would, we felt free, independent and autonomous running around by ourselves. There were no distractions, no people to interfere with our excursion. In our hunt for exploration we stumbled upon a frozen creek bed. This ice-covered water bed blocked our conquest to further our exploration of the unfamiliar frozen landscape. We were faced with a decision. Turn back or cross this frozen water puddle. We did what any inexperienced eleven year-olds would do in this situation, we pressed forward then thought about our actions afterwards.

Standing at the creek's edge and we both took a deep breath. Perhaps it was my hesitation or James's adventurous spirit, but my daring comrade stepped forward. I watched, unsure of what to expect as my friend carefully stepped across the ice. Unnerving cracks echoed. Unrelenting, James continued bravely traversing the frozen creek. Landing safely on the other side, he turned and grinned. I knew it was my turn. Cautiously, I proceeded to walk across the ice. My heart pounded as I tip-toed across the ice. Seeing the end in sight, I sighed with relief. Just then a symphony of cracking noises reverberated below my feet. Looking down, I suddenly realized in shocking amazement that my feet, or possibly my whole body, would soon be wet and very cold. Knowing time above the ice would be short, I picked up my pace. My frosty foundation abruptly crumbled beneath my feet. Within seconds my feet then my legs sank into the icy water. A fleeting moment of panic filled my mind, WHAT AM I GOING TO DO? I wanted to make it to dry land, without delay. I gasped at the cold piercing my clothes and enveloping my body. Much to my relief, I felt my feet touch the creek bottom, just as the icy water reached my thigh. With the help of adrenaline and a strong desire to solve this problem, I managed to remove myself from the chilly water. Though it seemed like an eternity, within thirty minutes I found a warm place, dry clothes and that cup of hot chocolate to savor.

Besides surviving the experience and gaining an entertaining story for my friend and I to recollect, I acquired a profound respect for frozen water. It would be safe to say I am

¹ Job 8:13-15, NKJV

vigilant when walking on ice; however this childhood incident does not stop me from doing so. It just so happens I lived on a lake for several years. There were times in winter I marched out on the frozen lake, either to fetch my runaway Labrador or observe the ice fishermen. Out of wisdom, I did pay attention to weather and check the ice to ensure it was thick enough to hold my weight.

One can say I have confidence to press on by the grace of God and not avoid ice or anything of the like even though the incident proved upsetting. Another can conclude I have fully recovered from the traumatic experience while yet others may deduce I repressed the incident. Irregardless, there are different levels and types of trauma a person can face. My episode, though frightening, could have been more serious and taken a larger toll on my mind or body. I am thankful my incident has only refined my knowledge and understanding rather than defined my actions and behavior. Trust repaired means relationships restored, reconciliation established and peace experienced. Let's take a test, shall we. I encourage you to use a journal. To reiterate, this questionnaire to reflect on is merely suggestive for purposes of consideration, not a definitive or conclusive measurement of trust or the lack thereof.

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Questions for Consideration

1. *Have you ever felt betrayed or rejected by someone?*
2. *Are there current feelings or sensations which come up as you contemplate this event? If so, describe what you feel. Also, try to remember how you felt during this time (i.e., thoughts and feelings).*
3. *How did this event impact your ability to trust again? Do you feel this event has tainted any of your relationships or produced fear bonds for you? (for a definition of fear bonds, look in the Life Model, Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You)*
4. *Were you able to forgive the person (s) who wronged/hurt you? (this may need to be done more than one time) If you are unable to 'let go' or forgive, consider writing the person (s) a letter in your journal (not to send but for your own processing) telling him/her anything you would like to say or express.*
5. *If someone does something kind for you or goes out of their way to bless you, can you receive it with joy or do you question their motivations or intentions toward you? If/when someone does something kind on your behalf do you think they want something from you? If you do not or cannot receive with joy this may suggest a need to reexamine your betrayal/rejection issue and give it some attention. (of course, it's always possible others have unrighteous intentions toward you therefore wisdom and caution is needed)*
6. *It is important to remember grieving or processing a hurt this takes time. Give yourself grace if you need to grieve or process any left over 'residue' from your life event.*
7. *How could this experience impact your relationship with God? How could it impact your perception of Him?*
8. *How could this experience improve your relationship with Him? How could your life event negatively impact your walk with God?*
9. *Can you find any examples in Scripture to help you with a trust issue?*

If you find you have a trust issue, the first step is an acknowledgement and identification of the problem. Next, seek the Lord with your situation and pray He will heal any old wounds and strengthen you to be vulnerable (but wise) in your relationships. Ask Him to help you step out on faith and give you opportunities with safe people to learn to trust again. If your situation is severe, I would encourage you to seek a knowledgeable person to support you during this process.