
Introduction

Trust Changes Everything!

God has given me the opportunity to see trust in action as a ministry staff member and as a practicing CPA serving ministries—I have been on both sides of the desk.

Serving on many ministry boards has provided insights into the innermost workings of boards—a total of 110 man-years of board service. (Only try to equal this number of years if you are serving on multiple boards simultaneously!)

While serving with ECFA, I have had the opportunity to make one-day, on-site visits with hundreds of Christ-centered ministries. I have met with top ministry leaders, board chairs, independent accountants representing the ministries, and more. Those visits were the richest experiences of my career.

Looking back on a career of serving Christ-centered ministries, I have often observed the ebb and flow of trust and how the presence or absence of trust impacts ministries.

The power of trust—trust that a ministry is reliable, good, honest—based on the truth of God’s Word is undeniable. Christ-centered ministries positively impact the lives of millions of people every day. As these ministries experience

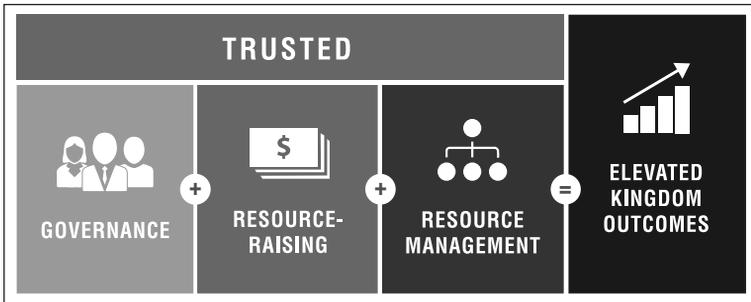
high trust, their impact grows exponentially. Trust changes everything.

My premise is simple:

Christ-centered ministries with
Trusted governance,
Trusted resource-raising, and
Trusted resource management

Experience elevated Kingdom outcomes.

This premise is demonstrated by the connection between the foundational elements of trust from Scripture with the three aspects of ministry shown below.



Jesus Christ is looking for errand runners who are accountable to God (1 Cor. 4:1-2)—accountable in governance, resource-raising, and resource management. “Remember, our message is not about ourselves; we’re proclaiming Jesus Christ, the Master. All we are is messengers, errand runners from Jesus for you” (2 Cor. 4:5).

From God’s perspective, trust—even in small things—results in greater responsibilities (Luke 19:12–27). Trust elevates Kingdom responsibilities and outcomes. Without trust as defined in God’s Word, our efforts for the King are impaired. *Trust is essential.*

Ministries can and should be built on many characteristics, such as serving, courage, and perseverance—all of which are discussed in this book—but fundamentally, ministries are based on trust. Without it, ministries crumble.

Leadership is an achievement of trust.

Peter F. Drucker

“Leadership is an achievement of trust . . .

[Leaders] all have two things in common: they get things done, and you can trust them.”¹

Yet trust has given way to a nation of cynics. Over the last four decades, trust in the other person—a gut-level ingredient of democracy—has been quietly draining away. There is a trust crisis.²

Ministries—especially the largest—are the piñata of choice for atheists, religious skeptics, and certain bloggers posing as journalists.

Sadly, within ministries, there are far too many instances of fraud, misrepresentation, and misappropriation of assets in addition to various criminal violations, civil liability, and more.

There is a strong propensity to highlight the litany of misdeeds in the ministry world.

What the Bible Says About Trust

“I hate all this silly religion—but you, God, I trust.”

Ps. 31:6

“Trust God absolutely, people; lay your lives on the line for him.” Ps. 62:8

“Far better to take refuge in God than trust in people; far better to take refuge in God than trust in celebrities.” Ps. 118:9

“Trust God from the bottom of your heart. Don’t try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go. He’s the one who will keep you on track.” Prov. 3:5–6

“A gadabout gossip can’t be trusted with a secret, but someone of integrity won’t violate a confidence.”

Prov. 11:13

“It pays to take life seriously; things work out when you trust in God.” Prov. 16:20

“Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own moral muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. Those who trust God’s action in them find that God’s Spirit is in them—living and breathing God!” Rom. 8:5

“How can people call for help if they don’t know who to trust? And how can they know who to trust if they haven’t heard of the One who can be trusted? And how

can they hear if nobody tells them? And how is anyone going to tell them, unless someone is sent to do it?”

Rom. 10:14–15

“God, who got you started in this spiritual adventure, shares with us the life of His Son and our Master Jesus. He will never give up on you. Never forget that.” 1 Cor. 1:9

“Now God has us where He wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. Saving is all His idea, and all His work. All we do is trust him enough to let Him do it. It’s God’s gift from start to finish!” Eph. 2:7–8

“When we trust in Him, we’re free to say whatever needs to be said, bold to go wherever we need to go.” Eph. 3:12

“The One who called you is completely dependable. If He said it, He’ll do it!” 1 Thess. 5:24

“If we give up on God, he does not give up—for there’s no way He can be false to himself.” 2 Tim. 2:13

Other missteps involve conflicts of interest, misallocation of resources, or inadequate accountability and transparency.

When it comes to earning trust, a few ministries are outliers—there always have been; there always will be. In spite of the efforts of some skeptics to portray outliers as the norm, nearly every Christ-centered ministry provides a sound basis for being trusted.

Yet we must do better. If we expect believers to be obedient in stewardship of their resources, time, and talents—including biblical care for the poor and the needy, it will require a

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Joel Belz

strong demonstration of truth-based, absolute trust. We need the kind of trust that will catch the attention of the world at large, just as it did in the time of the early church.³

Billy Graham tells of his meeting with Cliff Barrows and Grady Wilson in the early days of his evangelistic campaigns when

they discussed the poor image of some evangelists. They had a shared commitment to uphold the Bible's standard of absolute integrity and purity for evangelists. Their first concern was money. They determined to do all they could to avoid financial abuses by developing a ministry based on trust.⁴

Trusted ministries bless the world's people groups. And God the Father graciously prolongs Messiah Jesus' return so that all they can be brought into the harvest.⁵ Are you ready to enhance trust and elevate Kingdom outcomes at your ministry?

Part One of this book begins by explaining the foundations of trust for Christ-centered ministries.