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EDINBURGH

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# Total Trust

## Philippians 2:19-30

**Philippians 2:19-30** exemplifies trusting Christian relationships. Paul commends two individuals to the Philippian church as being completely trusted by him to act on his behalf (when he himself is immobilised through his imprisonment). Their character models for us what trusted people look like.

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### Case Study 1: Timothy

*"I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you."*

#### **Trusted is earned through honest feedback:**

Paul longs to hear news of the Philippians church to know that his *"labour was not in vain"* (2:16). Trusted people see the importance of giving good feedback to those who invest in them. They recognise that anyone in any leadership role needs encouragement and honest observations and are willing to volunteer that.

#### **Trust is earned through observable behavior:**

*"But you know that Timothy has proved himself."* (22) He was widely respected, not just sucking up to Paul!

How did they know him?

- 10 years earlier he was there in Acts 16: *"A disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek. The believers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him."*

- He was the son of a Christian mother: *"I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also."* (2 Tim 1:5)
- He was invited to come on a mission trip with Paul and Silas (on the condition he was circumcised).

### **Trust is about relational connection:**

*"I have no one else like him."* *"He's my kindred spirit."* He'd learned Paul's heart and Paul's methods. Of all Paul's relationships, this was unique.

### **Trust is earned through faithfulness in small things:**

Turning up is important! Timothy was part of Philippian church plant team as a silent partner. See parable of the Talents.

### **Trust is about concern for people not just task:**

How we do it as important as what we do. *"I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare."* (20)

### **Trust is about working together:**

*"But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel."* (22) Paul and Timothy's relationship was like that of a father and son. In eras gone by, your family was identified by your trade. If your surname was Smith, you were a blacksmith, Bakers made bread, Masons built walls. Now Timothy has joined the gospel family - Paul's father and son team. Where there is strong relationship, it helps us resist the temptation to be independent.

Timothy is trusted because of his 'teachability', his love of Paul and Jesus and those he serves, and his willingness to do small things that were asked of him.

## Case study 2: Epaphroditus

Epaphroditas was named after Aphrodite, the goddess of sexual love. His name meant handsome and charming. But he's not just a pretty face! 'Lovely locks' has nearly died on account of his zealous work for Christ. Epaphroditus appears to be an activist, always doing stuff and risking all for doing the right thing. When the Philippians need a volunteer to go to Paul, it's him.

*"But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs."* (25)

### **Faithful with the message: The Messenger**

Are you a faithful messenger? He got good at doing his thing! Trust is built through repeatedly doing a reliable job.

### **Faithful to fight when necessary: The Soldier**

He may have faced danger in travelling to deliver assistance to Paul. He wasn't afraid of conflict. We usually are! Some people are more like this naturally.

### **Faithful to his loyalties: The Brother**

Epaphroditus was relational and soft-hearted. He was distressed because others were worried about him! *"For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill."* (26)

### **Faithful to the mission: The Co-Worker**

He gave his own resources to the mission. *"He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me."* (30) Trust is built when we use every resource at our disposal (even at personal cost) to get the job done.

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## God's Circle of Trust

By our own sin, every human being has found themselves outside God's "circle of trust". God trusted Adam & Eve with a fruit tree and they couldn't cope with that. All of us since have been the same.

Jesus is God's trusted person. He's in God's circle. When you put your faith in Christ God brings you back into his circle of trust. Although we may still disappoint, he entrusts us with his Holy Spirit and his gifts. He entrusts us with his Gospel message. We can squander those gifts, we can grieve his Spirit, but he never gives up on us.

Church is a place where we increasingly learn lessons of trusting others and being trusted, knowing God's wonderful entrustment to us.

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# Questions

- Would you describe yourself as a trusting person? What makes you feel that way?
- What lessons of trust have you learned since being a Christian?
- What character traits of Timothy and Epaphroditus can you most identify with?  
Which traits do you find challenging?
- Feeding back: Do you find it easy or hard to give honest feedback/encouragement to people. What problems does it cause if we don't offer feedback. What problems does it cause if we constantly offer feedback?



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