



EXPLORATION

Trust

Readings



1. *Covenant: A Matter of Love*

by Rev. Preston Moore

A contract is a matter of law. A covenant is a matter of love. A contract speaks this way: if you do this, and only if you do this, then I will do that. It is hedged, cautious, risk-averse. Its most basic principle is “no surprises.” A covenant speaks this way: you and I will do whatever is needed to achieve our shared purpose. We will remember that our covenantal relationship is more important than any particular action we take or fail to take to serve its purpose. If either of us fails to honor this shared commitment, the other has permission to call the one who fell short back into covenant, to ask what is happening, to be demanding and supportive at the same time. In a covenantal relationship, there is an understanding that no one fulfills his promises each and every time. Sometimes you make a doubtful promise, and then put your heart into it, and then fail, and then you and your covenantal partners pick yourselves up and ask, “how shall we recover from this failure? How shall we keep going?” In a covenantal relationship, the message you get from your partners when you fail is as just as much an affirmation of self-worth as if the promise had been fulfilled.

Source: <https://www.uuberks.org/sermon/our-great-covenant>

2. *The Failure of Rugged Individualism*

by M. Scott Peck

The problem—indeed the total failure—of the ‘ethic’ of rugged individualism is that it runs with only one side of the paradox, incorporates only one half of our humanity. It recognizes that we are called to individuation, power, and wholeness. But it denies entirely the other part of the human story: that we can never fully get there and that we are, of necessity in our uniqueness, weak and imperfect creatures who need each other.

...In our culture of rugged individualism—in which we generally feel that we dare not be honest about ourselves, even with the person in the pew next to us—we bandy around the word ‘community.’ We apply it to almost any collection of individuals—a town, a church, a synagogue, a fraternal organization, an apartment complex, a professional association—regardless of how poorly those individuals communicate with each other. It is a false use of the word.

If we are going to use the word meaningfully we must restrict it to a group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some serious commitment....

Source: *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace* by M. Scott Peck

3. *No Longer Strangers*

by Anonymous

The process of recovery has been one of slowly allowing strangers to become friends to become trusted confidantes.

When I first entered the rooms of recovery, I thought I had nothing in common with the people around me. Turns out that is a very common story. So many of us come in with precon-

ceived notions of who seeks recovery. These prejudgments sometimes keep us from getting the help that we need.

As I kept listening, I kept hearing my truth and my story being told by others. I realized so many of us have common experiences. And how couldn’t we? None of us in that room was terminally unique. We all struggled either with loving others who lived with an addiction or with the symptoms and effects of our own addiction.

These strangers who I sat with slowly became friends. People I could call on when I needed help. Folks I could be honest with because they knew where I was coming from. As my recovery progressed, they became people who I would call in the midst of my struggles: people to be honest with, to pray with, and to ask for guidance in how to cope with what I was telling them about. These strangers are no longer strangers. They are me and I am them.

Source: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/no-longer-strangers>

4. *Faith and Belief*

by Rev. Julie Stoneberg

Religion comes from the Latin *re-ligio*, and means to bind together. So religion is that which connects us to one another...it is things like rituals, stories, traditions and set practices. Religion provides a larger container in which we hold our beliefs. In [James] Fowler’s words, religion is about what we do.

Belief, on the other hand, comes from the German, *be lieben*, to hold dear. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, one of the foremost historians of religion of the twentieth century, said that belief is the holding of certain ideas about something. ... [Sharon] Salzberg writes, “With their assumptions of correctness, beliefs try to make a known out of the unknown. They make presumptions about what is yet to come, how it will be, what it will mean, and how it will affect us.” So,



belief is what we think.

Now faith...faith comes from the Latin word *fides* which means to trust. Fowler used the word faith to mean our most fundamental orientation to the world—our basic images and core assumptions about how the world works and where our place is in that world. The kind of faith we have affects everything we do, how we respond, the quality and form of our relationships, and even our aspirations. Faith provides a backdrop of value and meaning in life. He calls the backdrop we create for ourselves the ‘ultimate environment.’

Source: no longer online

5. **Why Trust Matters**

by Jeremy Adam Smith and Pamela Paxton

Trust is an intrinsic part of human nature — the foundation of healthy psychological development, established in the bond between infant and caregiver....

Trust is most simply defined as the expectation that other people’s future actions will safeguard our interests. It is the magic ingredient that makes social life possible. We trust others when we take a chance, yielding them some control over our money, secrets, safety, or other things we value.

People trust other people when they hire a babysitter, drive their cars, or leave the house unarmed. And we must also trust large organizations.... Without trust, we would be paralyzed, and social life would grind to a halt.

When honored, trust promotes feelings of goodwill between individuals, which in turn benefits community. ... Other things being equal, neighborhoods, where residents trust one another, have less violence than those where neighbors are suspicious of one another. ...

...Trust is also essential to democracy, where people must be willing to

place political power in the hands of their elected representatives and fellow citizens. Without trust, individuals would be unwilling to relinquish political power to those with opposing viewpoints, even for a short time. They would not believe that others will follow the rules and procedures of governance or voluntarily hand over power after losing an election. If that trust declines, so does democracy.

...Once we recognize the role of trust..., we can appreciate why declines in trust can be so damaging to society.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/25204>

6. **The Essential Importance of Trust** by Dennis Jaffe

“To earn trust, money and power aren’t enough; you have to show some concern for others. You can’t buy trust in the supermarket,” His Holiness the Dalai Lama [reminds us.]

There are just a few elemental forces that hold our world together. The one that’s the glue of society is called trust. Its presence cements relationships by allowing people to live and work together, feel safe and belong to a group. Trust in a leader allows organizations and communities to flourish, while the absence of trust can cause fragmentation, conflict and even war. That’s why we need to trust our leaders, our family members, our friends and our co-workers, albeit in different ways.

Trust is hard to define, but we do know when it’s lost. When that happens, we withdraw our energy and level of engagement. We go on an internal strike, not wanting to be sympathetic to the person who we feel has hurt us or treated us wrongly. We may not show it outwardly, but we are less likely to tell the formerly trusted person that we are upset, to share what is important to us or to follow through on commitments. As a result, we pull back from that person and no longer feel part of their world. This loss of trust can be obvious or somewhat hidden — especially if we pretend to be present but inwardly disengage. And those who have done something to lose our trust may not even know it.

Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dennisjaffe/2018/12/05/the-essential-importance-of-trust-how-to-build-it-or-restore-it/?sh=2949ec1564fe>

7. **When Trust Was Eroded**

by Alan Jones

When trust becomes a matter of doubt in human relations, something incalculable is lost. Think of our propensity for litigation and for throwing people in jail, for relying on legal controls to regulate personal life when only forgiveness and reconciliation will work. It is a sign not only of our lack of trust but also that there is no consensus as to the meaning of the words we use to interpret the world. Prenuptial agreements are surrogates for trust, as are strict rules of engagement in the workplace. One state has made a law that children should address their teachers as Sir or Ma’am; others want to set up the Ten Commandments in public places. Why? Because life falls apart when there are no shared stories embodying agreed-upon values. . . .

These are among the many forces in the world that erode the conviction that each of us is responsible for our actions and therefore we are able to trust each other. We are more helpless than ever before the power of the pressures of society and its special interest groups. If I am to trust you and you are to trust me, both of us have to be reasonably confident that the other is responsible for his or her actions. Without that moral compass we are lost. A world of individuals who cannot trust one another is a form of hell.

Source: <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/13539>

Wisdom Story

Tame Me

by Antoine de Saint Exupéry

“Come and play with me,” proposed the Little Prince to the Fox. “I am so unhappy.”

“I cannot play with you,” the fox said. “I am different. I am not like you. I am not tamed.”

“What does that mean, tame?” responded the Little Prince.

"It means to establish ties," said the fox. "To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need for you, and you have no need of me. To you I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then to you I shall be unique in all the world, and to me, you shall be unique in all the world."

The fox continued: "If you tame me, I shall know the sound of your step that will be different from all the others. Other steps send me hurrying back underneath the ground. Yours will call me, like music, out of my burrow. Think how wonderful that will be."

"What must I do to tame you?" asked the Little Prince.

"You must be patient," replied the fox. "First you will sit down at a little distance from me. Like that. In the grass. I shall look at you out of the corner of my eye, and you will say nothing. Words are the source of misunderstanding. But you will sit a little closer to me every day."

Source: *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint Exupéry

Snippets

"A friend who works in a department store decided some years ago that she would test her belief that everyone is basically good. She wanted to see if she could find anyone she felt was not a candidate. Every day she encountered friendly people, for sure, but also plenty of rude people, arrogant people, manipulative people, and downright mean-spirited people. In each case, she experimented with ways to go beneath their facades, to go past their defenses and contact their good sense, their humor, and their kindness. When we last talked, she hadn't yet met anyone she felt lacked basic goodness, and she's been working at that store for fifteen years." *Pema Chödrön*

"Our bodies have five senses: touch, smell, taste, sight, hearing. But not to be overlooked are the senses of our souls: intuition, peace, foresight, trust, empathy. The differences between people lie in their use of these senses; most

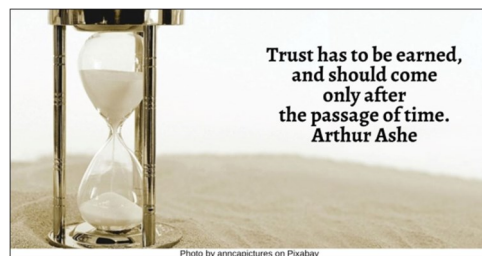
people don't know anything about the inner senses while a few people rely on them just as they rely on their physical senses, and in fact probably even more." *C. JoyBell C.*

"And you know, it's possible that the priest and the Levite looked over that man on the ground and wondered if the robbers were still around. Or it's possible that they felt that the man on the ground was merely faking. And he was acting like he had been robbed and hurt, in order to seize them over there, lure them there for quick and easy seizure. And so the first question that the Levite asked was, "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" But then the Good Samaritan came by. And he reversed the question: "If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?" *Martin Luther King Jr.*

"There is beauty in truth, even if it's painful. Those who lie, twist life so that it looks tasty to the lazy, brilliant to the ignorant, and powerful to the weak. But lies only strengthen our defects. They don't teach anything, help anything, fix anything or cure anything. Nor do they develop one's character, one's mind, one's heart or one's soul." *José N. Harris*

"The truth is that our self-deceptive lies range from seemingly tiny untruths to massive life-altering falsehoods about reality. ... At the most basic level, self-deception is fooling ourselves into believing something that is false—or—not believing something that is true. ... Self-deception comes from not having enough psychological strength to admit the truth and deal with the consequences that will follow when the truth is acknowledged. ... The areas in which we felt most insecure, unsafe, unloved, uncomfortable, embarrassed, angry, and generally unresolved as a child are the areas that we will be most prone to self-deception as an adult. ... Perhaps the most tragic way that self-deception harms us is that we start believing our lies and we teach them to others." *Cortney S. Warren*

"Tragedy in life normally comes with betrayal and compromise—by trading in



Trust has to be earned,
and should come
only after
the passage of time.
Arthur Ashe

our integrity and failing to treat life and others in our life, with respect and dignity. That's really where the truest and the most tragic failures comes from... they come making the choice to betray another soul, and in turn, giving up a piece of your own." *José N. Harris*

"To laugh is to risk appearing a fool. To weep is to risk appearing sentimental. To reach out to another is to risk involvement. To expose feelings is to risk exposing your true self. To place your ideas and dreams before a crowd is to risk their loss. To love is to risk not being loved in return. To hope is to risk pain. To try is to risk failure. But risks must be taken, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing." *Leo F. Buscaglia*

"The ability to sense danger in your surroundings or untrustworthiness in other people depends on how well you listen to your gut feelings. To detect threat, you have to be aware of how situations and interactions make you feel. The primal instincts of the inner world are crucial to your safety. ... A good relationship with your inner world reveals what's meaningful to you and directs your life's purpose." *Lindsay C. Gibson*

"The forgiveness process, properly understood and used, can free those bound by anger and resentment. It does not require accepting injustice or remaining in an abusive situation. It opens the door to reconciliation, but it does not require trusting someone who has proven untrustworthy. Even if the offender remains unrepentant, you can forgive and restore a sense of peace and well-being to your life." *Robert D. Enright*

"A commonplace argument in contemporary writing on trust is that we would



all be better off if we were all more trusting, and therefore we should all trust more [...] Typically, however, the crucial variable is the trustworthiness of those who are to be trusted or relied upon. [...] It is not trust per se, but trusting the right people that makes for successful relationships and happiness. [...] To trust the untrustworthy can be disastrous. If we wish to understand the role of trust in society [...], we must get beyond the flaccid—and often wrong—assumption that trust is simply good. This supposition must be heavily qualified, because trusting the malevolent or the radically incompetent can be foolish and often even grossly harmful.”

Russell Hardin

Questions

1. In reading #1, Preston Moore writes about covenant, which is a promise based on trust. Does your congregation have a covenant? What does it mean to you? Has it ever, to your knowledge, been broken? If yes, with what consequences? Moore focuses not so much on the breaking but on the repair. Think about important promises that you have broken. How would you answer his questions: “How shall we recover from this failure? How shall we keep going?” Even in promise-breaking he writes, “the message you get from your partners when you fail is just as much an affirmation of self-worth as if the promise had been fulfilled.” In what way could this be true? If true, how does it change the equation of trust?
2. In reading #2, M. Scott Peck compared the “ethic” of rugged individualism with community. The former involves a go-it-alone mentality, while the latter involves interdependence. Which do you feel more

drawn to? Why? Peck outlined three attributes of community. The first is “to communicate honestly with each other.” What role does trust play in honest communication? The second is “whose relationships go deeper than their masks of compo-
sure.” Why is trust required to deepen relationships? The third is those “who have developed some serious commitment.” How does serious commitment depend on trust?

3. In reading #3, an unknown writer shares the experience of recovery from addiction as “one of slowly allowing strangers to become friends to become trusted confidantes.” The process of sharing personal stories was a bridge. Have you ever been in a group when someone shared a story, and you also realized that it was your story? How did that make you feel? How does the sharing of personal stories build trust? How do personal stories reveal the truth about a person? How does the sharing of personal stories promote honesty with another?
4. In reading #4, Julie Stoneberg compares belief with faith. Belief means “to hold dear,” while faith means “to trust.” Wilfred Cantwell Smith thought “faith” was as much a verb as a noun. While belief is about thinking, faith is more about feeling. Stoneberg writes faith refers to “our most fundamental orientation to the world—our basic images and core assumptions about how the world works and where our place is in that world.” Given this, what are some core elements of your faith? What role does trust play in your faith? Has your faith ever been shaken or destroyed? What was that experience like? What helped with recovering your faith, if anything?
5. In reading #5, Jeremy Adam Smith and Pamela Paxton define trust as “the expectation that other people’s future actions will safeguard our interests.” Does this definition make sense to you? Why or why not? What else about trust is important to you? Do we better un-

derstand the importance and power of trust more in its keeping or breaking? Why? They contend that “trust promotes feelings of goodwill between individuals, which in turn benefits community.” Do you agree? Why or why not? What happens to communities when trust among individuals breaks down? Smith and Paxton also write that trust is essential to democracy. Do you agree? Why or why not? How might things unravel when trust in democracy is lost? When that happens, how can trust be restored?

6. In reading #6, Dennis Jaffe writes, “the absence of trust can cause fragmentation, conflict, and even war.” Do you agree? Why or why not? He writes that when trust is lost “we withdraw our energy and level of engagement. We go on an internal strike, ...we are less likely to tell the formerly trusted person that we are upset, to share what is important to us or to follow through on commitments.” What part of this reaction resonates with you most strongly? Why? How do these kinds of reactions exacerbate the situation? How have you reacted when your trust has been violated? Was there a resolution? How? Or healing? How?
7. In reading #7, Alan Jones writes, “many forces in the world ...erode the conviction that each of us is responsible for our actions and therefore we are able to trust each other.” Do you agree? Why or why not? He calls this “being responsible for our actions” a moral compass. How might this be true? Have you noticed a decline in people accepting responsibility for their actions? If yes, what is this about? What does it do to trust? How can moral character be so fleeting? Jones concludes, “A world of individuals who cannot trust one another is a form of hell.” Do you agree? Have we moved closer to the edge of this hell? How? What can be done to move back from the brink?

The following questions are related to the Snippets

8. Pema Chödrön writes about a woman working in a department



store who for 15 years has been assessing everyone she met to determine if they are basically good. Chödrön writes “she hadn’t yet met anyone she felt lacked basic goodness.” They were not all angels. She has met “plenty of rude, arrogant, manipulative, and downright mean-spirited people.” Does this make sense to you? How do we reconcile the outward appearance with the innermost core which aligns with our first principle, “the inherent worth and dignity of every person?” Perhaps, most importantly, how do we help people reconnect with their inherent worth and dignity?

9. C. JoyBell C. writes that our physical senses are often our focus, but that ignores the soul’s senses: “intuition, peace, foresight, trust, empathy.” While her reference to the soul may be metaphorical, which of those additional “senses” do you rely upon? Do you have a “sense” of trust? Why or why not? How is the sense of trust sharpened? How has the sense of trust protected you?
10. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke about the story of the Good Samaritan. What significance does that story have for you? Why? In the end, it is a story about who is trustworthy. And it is not always the one you expect. Have you known a Good Samaritan? Have you been a Good Samaritan? What did these experiences teach you? What should we focus on first: learning whom to trust or becoming trustworthy? How did you learn to be trustworthy? Can we expect trust from others if we are not trustworthy?
11. José Harris writes “lies only strengthen our defects.” Do you agree? Is lying common? Is lying justified? How have you felt when you discovered that someone had

lied to you? How would you feel if someone important to you discovered that you had lied to them?

12. Courtney Warren explains that our self-deception as an adult relates to the “areas in which we felt most insecure, unsafe, unloved, uncomfortable, embarrassed, angry, and generally unresolved as a child.” Does this make sense? What else could lead to self-deception? Where do you see self-deception operating either individually or collectively? Have you witnessed someone addressing their self-deception? What was the result? Warren concludes, “Perhaps the most tragic way that self-deception harms us is that we start believing our lies and we teach them to others.” Do you agree? What is the impact of teaching our children our self-deceptions? How can we remove the veil of self-deception in order to see who we are?
13. José Harris links some tragedies with betrayal because we fail “to treat life and others in our lives, with respect and dignity.” How does betrayal ignore the inherent worth and dignity of the person betrayed? In what ways are the inherent worth and dignity of the betrayer diminished by being untrustworthy? Harris concludes with “the choice to betray another soul, ... [you are] giving up a piece of your own.” Do you agree? Why or why not? How does being betrayed affect our ability or willingness to trust others? How do we heal from being betrayed?
14. Leo Buscaglia wrote about how our actions involve risk in terms of how we might be perceived. While he did not address trust, we might paraphrase it as follows: To trust is to risk appearing to be naïve. To be sure there is risk in trusting another person but there can also be reward. How do understand the risk-reward calculus in terms of trust? How might we reduce the risk and increase the reward of trusting someone?
15. Lindsay Gibson writes that sensing “untrustworthiness in other people depends on how well you listen to your gut feelings.” Do you agree? Why or why not? Where would you place yourself on a continuum from being too trusting to being too suspicious? Why do you locate yourself where you do? How has that position served you? What are the consequences of being too trusting? Of being too suspicious? Like Goldilocks, where does the place of “just right” dwell when trusting someone?
16. Robert Enright writes about the importance of the forgiveness process. Importantly, he writes, “it does not require trusting someone who has proven untrustworthy.” Do you agree? Why or why not? He concludes, “Even if the offender remains unrepentant, you can forgive and restore a sense of peace and well-being to your life.” How might this be true? We tend to view the forgiveness “formula” as benefiting the person who is forgiven more than the person who forgives. For you, how is the benefit of forgiveness allocated? Why? How does our understanding of the benefits of forgiveness affect our willingness to forgive? To trust?
17. Russell Hardin is concerned that the contemporary admonition to trust more is naïve. Do you agree? Why or why not? What are some of the benefits of trusting another? The liabilities? He concludes that the “assumption that trust is simply good ... must be heavily qualified because trusting the malevolent or the radically incompetent can be foolish and often even grossly harmful.” What steps can we take to trust wisely and well, rather than indiscriminately?

