



Travels and News
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Trust

Is trust extended or earned? We generally consider this question focusing on others — especially people with whom we have some tension or disagreement. But answering how the balance of “earning” or “extending” trust is best approached should likely be considered first in regard to God.

One of my favorite verses speaks to this question: “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” — Hebrews 11:6 (NIV)

The notion of “pleasing God” is intriguing to me in this verse. And it is strongly tied to faith, and inherently to trust.

To “please God” in this familiar verse is to choose to act as God calls us to, despite not being able to “see around the next bend in the road.” And this relates to “control.” For we know intuitively that we do not control God, nor the future through which we hope God will bring us good.

Being able to please God — to act as God call us to — requires believing that God exists. But this belief is in a very particular God — the God of self-revelation in the Word of creation and Scripture. This is a good God, by character and choice inclined to bring us a good future as we seek Him.

And to “earnestly seek God” is not to bring God into our way of thinking, but to bring ourselves into God’s way of thinking. This is how we “please God” — by choosing to act knowing that God will take us somewhere other than the exact place we now desire or imagine — to His “good place,” rather than ours.

The faith named here might be seen actually as “extended trust.” The Greek word “*pi,stij*” is the root of both “faith” and “trust.” We can not move into “pleasing God” without first extending sufficient trust in God to choose to act in ways which challenge our human tendencies.

So if God is calling us to act in love toward our brothers and sisters in Christ, we must initiate extending the trust which will make this interaction “please God.” Our focus here is not first of all on the trustworthiness of the brother, but on the God who calls us to please Him in answer to this call.

Will my sister break covenant with me? Certainly! And I with her! For we are self-absorbed, self-reliant humans who always violate each covenant we enter. Seeking to please God only by finding disciples who will never violate our trust is a “fool’s errand.”

The faithful “good” that God desires to bestow upon us flows freely only when we extend trust in God sufficiently to include trusting those in whom we are called to acknowledge that God is also working.

So, to reframe our question on trust — “Am I willing to extend the trust I have in God to those he calls me to also trust by faith in His good?”

When disciples please God by mutually extending trust in that call from God, trust, first “extended,” can become trust “earned” by each and both as we continue to choose to trust God through the uncertainties and perplexities of our human relationships.

— Pastor George O'Reilly

