



## MANAGING TRUST

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*“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” – 1Corinthians 4: 2.*

Soon after the Holy Ghost was given at Pentecost a revival broke out among the brethren in the early church. As part of that revival, every member was moved to sacrifice for God. They demonstrated their love for God by selling their precious possessions and brought the proceeds to the feet of the apostles for the use of the work. These brethren couldn't do anything less or think of a better way to show their love for God. And it was a wave that spread across the whole church, leadership and followers alike. None was left out.

There was a couple in that church – Ananias and Saphira by name who wanted to be like the rest but without proper conviction. They sold their land and like others brought the money to the apostles' feet. But unlike others, they did not bring all the money. They refused to disclose this and even lied when Peter asked them about it. They simply betrayed the trust of the brethren and leadership of the church. God did not spare them. They died for their sin.

Several examples abound in Scripture of people who betrayed trust reposed in them. In fact, the story of man started with an ugly case of betrayal of trust. For, when God created the first man, Adam and his wife Eve, He permitted them to eat of every fruit of the garden of Eden except that of the tree of the knowledge of

good and evil. Like many now reason, God could have removed that tree in the first instance but He did not because He trusted Adam and his wife to keep the commandment He gave them. However, Adam and Eve failed and many are still failing today. How many times have you wondered when you are betrayed why men find it difficult to keep trust today? Or, how many of us really can be trusted now? The problem is not new; it started long ago.

Soon after the Adam and Eve episode, other cases followed in quick succession: Cain betrayed the trust of God and that of Abel his brother when he killed his brother and became the first murderer in history. By Genesis chapter six, God could no longer trust man to effectively manage His creations again. He then decided to wipe out that generation by flood saving only Noah and his household. Even Noah, the man God spared from that flood did not fare well either. He became drunk and cursed Canaan, his grand son. In his generation, Abraham alone found grace in God's sight. He too staggered at God's promise and had a child through Hagar, his housemaid. Jacob betrayed Isaac, his father, Esau, his brother and Laban, his uncle. He was cheated too by Laban, his uncle both in marriage and in his wages. Gehazi couldn't retain the trust of Elisha, his master. He forfeited what could have been quadruple of Elijah's anointing all for lack of self-control in matters of trust. Perhaps, Judas Iscariot tops the list of traitors. He betrayed Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world. Although, Christ trusted him to the extent that He committed the purse to his charge yet, he betrayed that trust by selling his master for a token thirty pieces of silver. What a pity! Even, the price for redeeming a slave in the year of jubilee under the Old Testament law isn't that cheap.

A man's inability to keep trust surely robs him of God's favour and that of his fellow man. The human society today is in crisis and the hearts of men in pain because of lack of trust. We all then need to learn how to keep and manage the trust reposed in us and not betray them. To keep trust is to keep faith. It is to be reliable and dependable no matter what. A good manager of trust does not make unnecessary excuses for failing to keep what is committed to his charge rather he behaves responsibly and does not yield to pressure come what may but holds on to the end and turn out a good and faithful steward. There are several areas of life where we need to learn to manage trust.

### **Managing Trust In Relationships.**

Life itself is all about relationships: the relationships of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, leaders and followers, government and the citizens, pastors and congregation and even, friends. These relationships make demands on us especially in the area of trust. If we must make and keep friends, we must show ourselves friendly (Proverbs 18: 24). Certain things, tangible and

intangible are committed to our charge by the virtue of our relationships with others, which we are expected to keep or guard jealously. If we are careless at such times and do not manage the trust properly, we disappoint these other fellows and damage their good relationships with us.

A husband or wife who flirts in marriage is a bad manager of trust. So is a child who is a truant in school or the parent who is negligent towards the children and does not fulfil his or moral obligations of paying the children's school fees and taking care of them generally. Many people in the society today no longer live cognisant of their social and moral responsibilities towards their fellow men. That is why there is so much betrayal and heartaches in the world today. Servants betray their masters and masters cheat on their servants. Many of the citizens have lost faith in those in government because of their catalogues of unfulfilled promises and hopes dashed as a result. There is then a general apathy among the citizenry. The citizens themselves are no longer conscious of their civic duties and social responsibilities towards the government either. Friends betray one another. Even, pastors sometimes disappoint their congregation members while the members of the congregation too let down their pastors. Where really do we go from here?

If we must manage trust in our relationships with people generally, it must start with our relationship with God. We must love God deeply. We must love our families too and regard everyone around in the larger society as our brothers and sisters. This includes those who don't even share a common faith with us. The best standard of human relations is to love your neighbours as yourself and to do to others as you would want them do to you. I think it will do us a lot of good if we can just imagine ourselves in the other man's shoes. If we all regard one another as neighbours and will not do to others what we ourselves won't want others to do to us then the world would be a better place to live in, devoid of betrayals and its attendant heartaches. We will all develop mutual trust in one another and manage the trust better.

### **Managing Trust In Ministry.**

God in no doubt has committed His work into the hands of some men. By this we serve our fellow men and this service to men on God's behalf is what we call ministry. There are different kinds and levels of ministry and every man that is called to ministry is equally endowed by God to do the work He has called him for. But sometimes, the cheers and jeers of men distract those in ministry. The cheers of men can puff up a minister in pride and he starts arrogating to self the glory that belongs to God. He starts impressing men like an actor on stage instead of seeking to please God who called him into spiritual service. The jeers of men, on the other hand deflates and has costs many true servants of God their

ministries. It is wrong for a minister of God to seek men's praise instead of God's approval.

A minister therefore must remember at all times that his primary responsibility in the discharge of his duties goes to God and so not allow what people say whether positive or negative influence him unnecessarily. He must serve faithfully and learn the discipline of maintaining a clear conscience towards God. Since the word of God is the major tool of work for His ministers, every minister of the gospel must heed the advice of Apostle Paul when he said, “ *Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2: 15). If the word of God can be rightly divided then, it equally goes that it can be wrongly divided also. A preacher therefore must be careful to do proper and thorough homework and so not divide the word of God wrongly or handle it deceitfully. A minister also must be careful to live up to the moral expectations of God and man in terms of his conduct. For, the truth is, certain behaviours are not in consonance with the lifestyle of anyone who professes to be a minister of God. Men of God must distance themselves from such negative behavioural patterns.

Church members too should be good and faithful stewards of the word of God. They should not be hearers of the word only but put into practice those teachings with which they are fed by the preachers every now and then. They too should try to be morally upright and live up to the expectations of God and their pastors in their general conduct. They should carry out faithfully every duty and assignment given to them in church for, in that sense, we are all ministers of God. In fact, we should see life generally as ministry of which we are going to give account at the end. This way, we would live each day conscious of our accountability to God in the end.

### **Managing Trust In finances.**

We need to know how to manage trust in our finances too. Although money is very good and useful, the love of it is evil and many who have tried to be faithful in other areas of life still don't really know how to be faithful when it comes to handling and managing money. The starting point is to appreciate the fact that we are only trustees of the money we have whether small or much. All money belongs to God and we shall give account to Him in the end for the way we have managed His money. Failure to understand this would run us into a lot of problems.

One sure way to turn to know good managers of financial trust is in the area of our tithes and giving generally. Those who find it difficult to pay their tithes are not good stewards of money. Tithe defaulters are like small children who receive packs of biscuits from their parents and yet refuse to give only one piece back to

the parents. That child forgets that the whole pack, as big as it first appears would soon finish. Then the child would return to the parent for more. God tests us with money that way too. Those who cannot manage His trust in their finances will surely have problems with Him. It is only those who prove faithful to God in the little, little things He has committed into their hands that God promotes eventually and commits much more into their hands. Many, then who complain that they can't give because they don't have, should henceforth appreciate the fact that the reason they don't have is because they have not given. Just like a farmer who has sown nothing cannot go to the farm and expect harvest, the man who does not practise giving should expect nothing.

Another area to test for faithfulness in financial matters is in debt management. While it may be true that we might not be able to completely avoid owing altogether in modern times, we can however avoid our debts piling up so much. If you are always groaning under heavy yokes of debts or you find yourself begging most of times then you may be biting more than you can chew. You would need to first of all sit down and re-appraise your priorities in life. It is not fair to be praying for debt cancellation each time or even that your creditor should forget and not remember your debt. Instead, we should check ourselves for covetousness and start to control our carnal appetites and inordinate ambitions. We must learn to draw up our budgets periodically and live by those budgets as much as possible. As it is often said, those who to fail plan are simply planning to fail.

Faithfulness to God in our finances would demand that we don't waste His money. A believer must be prudent in spending as much as possible and only invest in things that have eternal value. As good investors for God we should seek to lay His treasures in our lives in heaven where moth and rust don't destroy and thieves don't break in. Then, these investments can attract the highest dividends possible. The unprofitable servant, according to Matthew 25: 14-30, was punished, not just for hiding his master's talent but; much more for not putting it where it could have attracted some good interests. God has not changed. He would still demand from every one of us the profits we have brought into His kingdom in the end.