

“To be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved.”

—George MacDonald

They Trust Me, They Trust Me Not

BY DAVE PING

Maybe you've been a part of a congregation, staff team, church board, or small group where trust evaporated overnight—or perhaps you've seen trust steadily decline until nothing was left but bad blood and broken promises. Whatever the case, you probably know firsthand how essential trust is. All good relationships, leadership, and ministry depend on it. When it's gone, everything we care about—and everything God cares about doing through us—simply falls apart.

They Trust Me Not

In Gallup's most recent annual public polling of the perceived honesty and ethics of 22 major professions, church leaders received the lowest score in the three-decade history of the survey. It wasn't just Catholic clergy suffering

Richard had been on the staff of a rapidly growing church for six months, and things were going great.

“Some of the small groups I'd started were thriving and some were just getting off the ground when suddenly we discovered that our perfect church wasn't as perfect as we thought. Our senior pastor, a dynamic preacher who'd befriended me and mentored me in ministry, was caught having an affair with a female staff member.

“Suddenly the church I loved was engulfed in a storm of hurt, betrayal, and distrust. And I was just as grieved and stunned as everyone else.”

from a crisis of trust due to the priest sex abuse scandals. Protestants and other Christians who attend church regularly also saw church leaders as less trustworthy than ever.

Another study that investigated the reasons why people stop attending church found that 37 percent leave because of “disenchantment with the pastor or church.” Another 17 percent said they left because

Learn How to Operate from Genuine Caring

Richard's story and others like it have prompted me and my team at Equipping Ministries International to partner with Standard Publishing to create *Trust Building: Loving, Listening & Leading More Like Jesus*. Our goal is to assist churches in building an atmosphere of trust that helps prevent all kinds of problems before they occur, and to more effectively handle them when they do. To help accomplish this, every leader and church member needs to trade in any unhealthy, manipulative, trust-busting habits they may have picked up and learn how to operate from genuine caring instead.

Trust Building is a down-to-earth, interactive video that all leaders and members can easily relate to. The DVD features candid interviews with engaging leaders such as Dave Stone, senior minister at Southeast Christian Church; Elisa Morgan, longtime CEO of MOPS International; and a wide range of knowledgeable and passionate trust-building specialists.

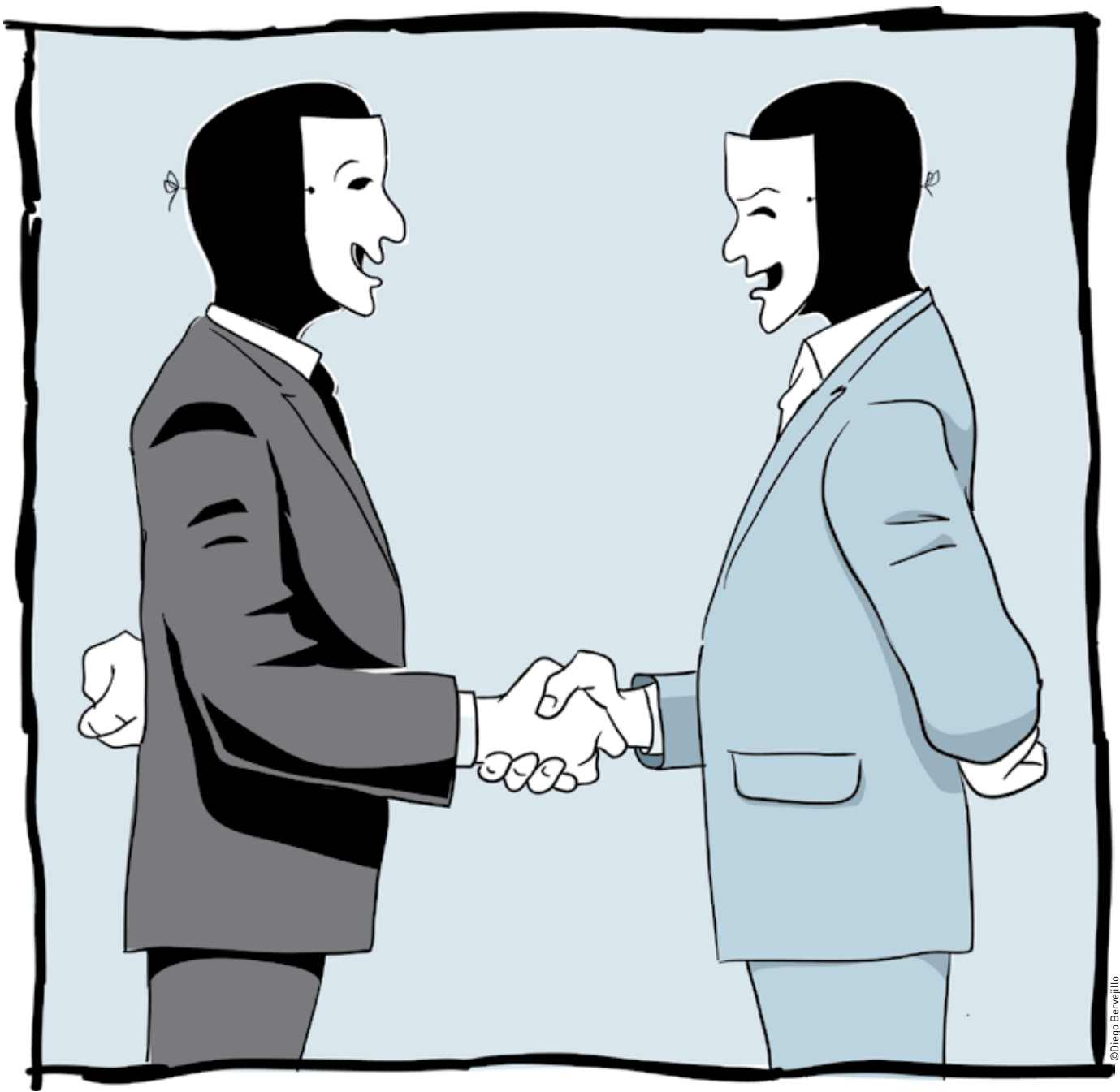
It uses entertaining video dramas to explain *what not to do* and provides face-to-face opportunities to practice new trust-building skills with others. The accompanying study guide helps



you immediately use what you learn with fellow leaders and church members. The principles you'll discover will also help you apply solid biblical teaching to your relationships with family and friends.

Trust Building (includes DVD and five participant guides); Item 021533310; \$39.99.

Available at www.standardpub.com or from your supplier.



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of “hypocritical and judgmental church members.” An additional 12 percent stated, “The church was run by a clique that discouraged involvement.”

Whether due to disenchantment, dissatisfaction, or bitterness, many people are “voting with their feet.” They’re leaving on bad terms because, in their eyes, Christian leaders or fellow church members have failed their “trust test.”

Tests of trustworthiness can seem arbitrary and incredibly subtle, but no church or leader—and no family, marriage, or business, for that matter—can thrive without passing a variety of these tests every

day. If you’re a leader, it’s likely you’ve enjoyed the warm glow that comes with knowing your team or congregation genuinely trusts you. You knew, at least for that moment, you’d passed their test. Unfortunately, it’s just as likely you’ve been blindsided more than once by humiliating challenges to your trustworthiness and harsh accusations about your motives.

So what can you do to build more trust and to restore trust when it is broken? How can you help church staff, boards, teams, congregations, and families more consistently pass trust tests they face each day?

Trust-Building Solutions

When the disgraced senior pastor (described earlier) resigned, the church board asked Richard to take on the daunting task of rebuilding the shattered trust of the congregation.

“Though I thought about turning them down and leaving to avoid the inevitable trauma, confusion, and anger,” Richard said, “I sensed God had been preparing my small group leaders and me for just such a time as this.”

In the four months that preceded the

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Are You Trustworthy?

People decide whether to trust or distrust us based on a subtle combination of **nonverbal**, **verbal**, and **behavioral** “trust tests.” Answer the questions below to examine how you’re building or busting trust with those around you. **(Circle the responses that honest friends, family members, or colleagues would say best describe you.)**

NONVERBAL TRUST BUILDERS/BUSTERS

I look people in the eye when I am talking with them.

(1) Practically never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Usually (5) Almost always

I fidget, roll my eyes, look at my watch, or “tune out” when others talk.

(1) Practically never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Usually (5) Almost always

I naturally notice and respond to little things people say and do.

(1) Practically never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Usually (5) Almost always

I assume I already know what people are going to say and get impatient.

(1) Practically never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Usually (5) Almost always

I take time to show that I genuinely care about what people think and feel.

(1) Practically never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Usually (5) Almost always

I get so caught up in my own concerns, I disregard the needs of others.

(1) Practically never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Usually (5) Almost always

Black Scores _____ + _____ + _____ = _____

Gray Scores _____ + _____ + _____ = _____

Subtract to get Nonverbal Trust Score _____

VERBAL TRUST BUILDERS/BUSTERS

I make it clear that I believe in people’s ability to make good choices.

(1) Practically never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Usually (5) Almost always

I start problem solving for them long before they’re done telling their story.

(1) Practically never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Usually (5) Almost always

I don’t give advice until I’ve listened long enough to fully understand a situation.

(1) Practically never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Usually (5) Almost always

I say things that people have interpreted as negative, dismissive, or sarcastic.

(1) Practically never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Usually (5) Almost always

I keep the conversational spotlight on others (not myself) when they are talking.

(1) Practically never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Usually (5) Almost always

I fall into preaching, analyzing, or interrogating people instead of listening.

(1) Practically never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Usually (5) Almost always

Black Scores _____ + _____ + _____ = _____

Gray Scores _____ + _____ + _____ = _____

Subtract to get Verbal Trust Score _____

BEHAVIORAL TRUST BUILDERS/BUSTERS

I’m careful *not* to take advantage of others’ weaknesses or vulnerabilities.

(1) Practically never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Usually (5) Almost always

I exaggerate or add to facts to win others to my point of view.

(1) Practically never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Usually (5) Almost always

When I make promises, I carry them out faithfully *and on time*.

(1) Practically never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Usually (5) Almost always

I stumble and break personal confidences, or participate in gossip.

(1) Practically never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Usually (5) Almost always

I give others time to make their own decisions and feel their own feelings.

(1) Practically never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Usually (5) Almost always

I attempt to nag, manipulate, or control others in order to get my way.

(1) Practically never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Usually (5) Almost always

Black Scores _____ + _____ + _____ = _____

Gray Scores _____ + _____ + _____ = _____

Subtract to get Behavior Trust Total _____

Add All Subtotals _____ + _____ + _____ = _____ **Final Score**

SCORING: Figure the black and gray scores for each section and then subtract them to get a section subtotal. Add the subtotals to get the final score.

26-36 — you believe others see you as extremely trustworthy.

15-25 — you’re conscientiously working on building more trust.

4-14 — you’re aware of significant trust-busting issues in your life.

3 or less — it’s likely that you’re struggling with trust in multiple relationships.

We recommend double-checking your scores with those you *trust* to give you honest feedback. And if you want to improve the quality of trust you’re experiencing inside and outside of your church, we urge you to check out Standard Publishing’s new *Trust Building Small Group* DVD. See ad on page 30.

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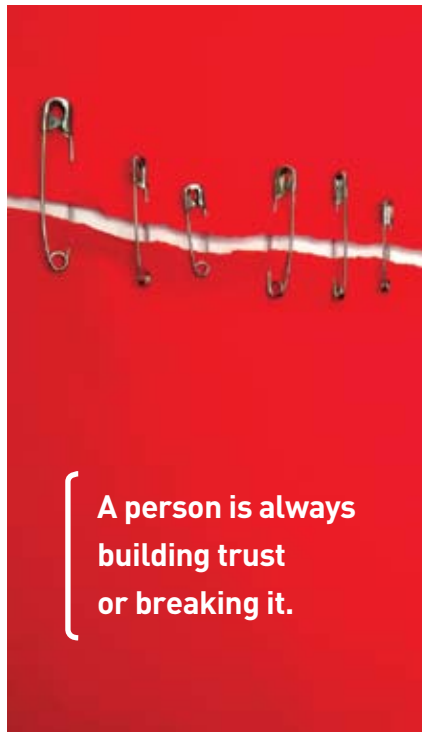
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church crisis, Richard had been bringing in my team from Equipping Ministries International to train his core of 60 small group leaders in trust building and practical ministry skills. After the scandal broke, Richard and all the small group leaders were reeling from the devastating blow the church had suffered. The infectious energy of growth they'd known only weeks before was suddenly supplanted by a dull sense of disappointment, disillusionment, and growing distrust toward the leaders who remained.

Fortunately, instead of giving in to despair, they decided to put their new trust-building skills to work.

Richard and these small group leaders began calling on and meeting with every family in the church, even many who had already left. Instead of pleading with them to stay or defending the current leaders' decisions—the small group leaders simply listened. Though many were angry and defensive at first, most were grateful Richard and the group leaders cared enough to hear them out without dismissing or minimizing their concerns. Over weeks and months, these leaders connected with lots of people, showed them that they genuinely cared, and *gave them a reason to trust again.*

In nearly 30 years of serving in, consulting with, and equipping churches around the world, I've helped stunned



governing boards and leaders put the pieces back together after more than a few trust-shattering falls like the one Richard's church experienced. Without the kind of trust-building he and his group leaders employed, many churches in similar situations die out or struggle along unsuccess-

fully for years.

Within nine months, Richard's church had not only returned to its previous attendance levels, it actually was growing and thriving again. Beyond that, the people trusted their leaders and each other again. And the whole community saw God's people pass one of the most difficult trust tests of all!

The bottom line is that trust isn't something one should overlook. A person is always building trust or breaking it. So whether your church is passing most of its trust tests or failing miserably, now is a good time for every leader and every member to begin cultivating more trustworthiness in their homes, workplaces, small groups, board meetings, Sunday school classes, and in every relationship. It's a great time to learn to love, listen, and lead more like Jesus.

And I promise, nobody will have to fall backwards to see whether their friends will catch them!

Dave Ping is an author, conference speaker, and church consultant with nearly 30 years of ministry experience. He is CEO of Equipping Ministries International, a nonprofit Christian organization that has helped train more than a half-million volunteers, pastors, and missionaries to serve Christ more effectively in more than 70 countries. In addition to creating *Trust Building*, Dave is coauthor of *Irresistible Evangelism: Natural Ways to Open Others to Jesus* and *Outflow: Outward-Focused Living in a Self-Focused World*.