

**Message: Trusting People**  
**By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison**  
**Proverbs 3:5-10**  
**The Power of Generosity Sermon Series**  
**October 11, 2020**

The ultimate question is: *“Who will I trust?”* Our coins say, *“In God we trust.”* Tithing is an Old Testament concept found in the first book, Genesis, and the last book, Malachi. Abram gave Melchizadek the tithe (10% of all he possessed). God does not need our money. But we need to strip money of its power and make God our priority. We need to trust God in ALL our ways, including our finances. The New Testament describes the joy created by generosity. I love the story of Mary anointing Jesus’ feet with costly perfume only to be rebuked by Judas (John 12:1-8). She illustrates the fragrance of giving. It was unbridled devotion. The New Testament emphasizes generosity, not tithing, but the tithe is a good standard. I like the “10/10/80 plan.” Give the first 10 percent to the Lord. Designate the next 10 percent to long-term savings (retirement). Live on 80 percent. Do it long term. John Wesley taught the Methodists: *“Gain all you can”* (through honest labor). *“Save all you can”* (be frugal). *“Give all you can”* (do not spend or hoard). His words still apply.

APPLICATION: In the love chapter (1 Corinthians 13), Paul describes having moved past being like a child. He saw things differently as an adult. He matured. Have you matured in your trust of God? ...your finances? ...your giving? What percentage of your income are you giving and saving (long term)? How can you better honor the Lord with your wealth?

One of our membership vows is about financial giving. Every member needs to be consistently giving to the church. If you haven’t started, this is the time to begin. If you are already giving, this is the time to stretch your faith.

**The Bible in 5 words:**

CREATION. From His incredible generosity, God created human beings & invited us to rule over creation with Him. We are to be stewards of God’s world. That was Adam’s original job.

FALL: Adam & Eve were fired from their job for insubordination by doubting God’s Word and no longer trusting Him. Sin and suffering burst into the world & created all kinds of misery.

ISRAEL: Redemption is the theme of the Bible. God chose a special people, Israel, to begin the redemptive process. Then our generous Creator sent a Savior.

JESUS: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* God Himself humbled himself and came in Jesus Christ. He invites us into His Kingdom. He was proactive in going to the cross and unleashed the great Joy in the history of the world with the resurrection.

CHURCH: He generously poured out the Holy Spirit upon people. The church was born at Pentecost. We receive redemption and help others follow Jesus, too.

### **Proverbs 3:5-10**

*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death. Proverbs 16:25*

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.*

There are 3 ways to TRUST:

1) Many say to trust in **OURSELVES**: My feelings, thoughts, and perceptions. *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.* Isaiah 55:8-9 Our FIRST inclination is to trust our own judgment. Reason and experience are important, but when we put them ahead of scripture and tradition, we are in spiritual peril. In an information age, trusting our own opinion is precarious with so many "answers" at our fingertips. Yet, God's wisdom surpasses all.

**The Wesleyan Quadrilateral** (Scripture/Tradition/Reason/Experience)

*"What does the Bible say? What has the church taught? What do I think about it? What is my experience?"* Scripture is primary. It is our foundation. We need to know what others think, too. These are 2 "external" authorities. We have 2 "internal" authorities: reason & experience. Both are essential, but the internal can get us into trouble as we prefer our own feelings and experiences. We must be careful.

2) Or Trust in **OTHER things/people**. Education, Family/Friends, Government/politics, Media, Medicine, Science? Sports? Technology? Vocation?

Wealth? The church? Pastors? These can be good, but all are inadequate to save us. They will all die, be replaced, or end.

3) **Trust in the LORD.** Trust means to “cling to, rely upon.”

He qualifies it: *with all your heart.* In our generosity series, we’ve been talking about the “heart” = our affections (what we are devoted to). Giving shapes our hearts. Giving answers a fundamental question: “Who side am I on?” *In all your ways acknowledge him* (in big and little things)

**Honor** (the opposite of honor = dishonor) *the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce* (Not leftovers) All things come from God – we really don’t own anything. Worship has an economic side

I like this quote: **“Commitment precedes experience.”** I became a Christian because my parents made a commitment to attend church. I was opposed to it. My friends didn’t have to go. But because my parents made a commitment to faithfully attend church, I met Jesus. My life changed. If you want to be good at something, you’ve to make a commitment to it. If you want to make money in the stock market, you must invest. If you want to have a relationship with someone, you have got to spend time, energy, consideration, and quite possibly, money. You won’t follow a sports team if you don’t make a commitment to follow one. You’ve got to invest your time and take the trouble to figure everything out. Commitment proceeds experience. The baseball quote is also true; **“You can’t steal 2<sup>nd</sup> base with one foot on first. Progress always involves risk.”**

1.) **All** gifts are important. Just as everyone is welcome at communion, so, everyone has something to contribute. Every gift is important because every life is important. Not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice.

Over 100 years ago a small group of some of the only Christians in one of the poorest regions in India made a decision that every time they cooked; they’d throw a handful of rice into a separate container to give to their local church. The church would then sell all the rice to provide for ministers among their neighbors, almost none of whom knew the Lord. This service raised a whopping \$1.50 the first year. Today the practice of giving a “handful of rice” raises \$1.5 million annually, allowing churches in this poor part of India to support thousands of missionaries at home and abroad. As one church leader said, *“When I cook for my family, I cook a meal for the Lord as well.”* The butterfly effect is a concept that stresses how a tiny, localized event can create a vastly different outcome. What we think, say, and do may seem small and insignificant in the moment but can

have a powerful effect in the future. Small changes, over time, can be transformative.

2.) **Begin.** Start giving. It breaks my heart when I learn some do not give. Often people don't give because they think their gift doesn't matter because it's too small, they are too young, or it won't be missed. You are missing the important part – your commitment will lead to a new experience.

We are to imitate God who gave far more than we can fathom. Ben Witherington, Asbury Seminary Professor, told a story his father told about a lawyer in their church who went around to collect pledges for the church. When he came to the home of a retired woman living on a fixed income in a trailer on the edge of town he noted the condition of her tiny yard and the trailer, and was reluctant to ask her for a pledge of money. As the chat wound down, the lawyer rose to leave w/o asking for the pledge. The widow said, *"Wait a minute, son. I've got my pledge on the fridge."* He muttered in return, *"That's all right, ma'am, we understand you are just barely getting by..."* Before he could finish his sentence, she had gotten right up in his face, grabbed him by the lapels, and said, *"Don't you take away from me my opportunity to contribute to the ministry of Jesus. Don't you do it, son."* She handed him her pledge card. She had experienced the joy of giving and refused to let anyone take it from her.

We can't have the experience until we make a commitment. Until we give, we miss out on a great opportunity to contribute to the ministry of Jesus. We don't want to steal that privilege and opportunity from you, either.

Next step: **Commitment Card.** Bring your commitment card to Communion. (Can make a pledge online, or at Guest Services. We want to give you this privilege to bless the Lord, to bless His Church, to bless other people, and to be blessed yourself. As Jesus said, *"It is more blessed to give than to receive."* Make a commitment and receive an experience. God has gone 1<sup>st</sup> in Jesus. It's our time to respond.