

# Trust: The Ability to Depend on God

## By Judith TenElshof

Judith TenElshof:

...the opportunity to be here tonight, and I really appreciate being able to come and talk about trust, the ability to depend on God. It's a subject that's near and dear to my heart, and, um, I love to share what God has shown me in this whole area, being able to trust Him. When I think about the ability to trust, the person in the Bible that I most often think of is Abraham. Abraham had to trust God for things that many of us in our lives really maybe just take for granted, or some of us have come to the same place that Abraham did and realized that we, if we were going to maybe have children or have to move to a place away from everything we knew, that we would totally have to trust on God. But let me read a little passage about Abraham just to help you to recall how he was able to trust God. In Romans four seventeen through twenty-five, and I'm reading out of The Message, so it's a paraphrased version. It says, "We call Abraham "father" not because he got God's attention by living like a saint, but because God made something out of Abraham when he was a nobody. Isn't that what we've always read in Scripture, God saying to Abraham, "I set you up as father of many peoples"? Abraham was first named "father" and then became a father, because he dared to trust God to do what only God could do: raise the dead to life. With a word, make something out of nothing. When everything was hopeless, Abraham believed anyway, deciding to live not on the basis of what he saw he couldn't do, but on what God said he would do. And so he was made the father of a multitude of peoples.

God himself said to him, "We're going, you are going to have a big family, Abraham!" and Abraham didn't focus on his own impotence and say, "It's hopeless. This hundred-year-old body

would never give father a child. Nor did he survey Sarah's decades of infertility and give up. He didn't tip-toe around God's promises asking cautiously skeptical questions. He plunged into the promise and came up strong, ready for God, sure that God would make good on what he had said. That's why it is said, "Abraham was declared fit before God by trusting God to set him right." But it's not just Abraham; it's also us! The same thing gets said about us when we embrace and believe the One who brought Jesus to life when the conditions were equally hopeless. The sacrificed Jesus made us fit for God, set us right with God." Do you really believe that we are and we have the ability to trust to the same degree that Abraham had? I believe so. It says so here. It says it's the same with us. But we need to be able to embrace and believe. That means we need to have the ability to trust. And so tonight, we're going to take a closer, a much closer look at trust probably than you've ever looked at before. And so I want to begin with doing something, asking something of you that Jesus asked Peter in John twenty-one. He said, "do you really love me?" And he repeated three times: "Do you really love me?" And I want to say to you tonight, do you really trust him? I mean, really trust him. Can you trust him for anything? At one time, if someone had asked me that question, I would've said, sure I trust him. But if I really stopped and thought deeply about what it meant to trust, the true answer would be, no, I trust more in myself than I trust in you. Why is that? Why would I trust more in myself, when I know what a great God we have?

Because I had no idea what it meant to receive God's love enough to trust and depend on Him. We have to be able to receive God's love, and know in our hearts his trustworthiness in order to trust him. One of the books that has had a lot of impact in my life is a book written by Oswald Chambers. And this book is called My Utmost for His Highest. And I want to read a quote to you

out of that book right now. He says, "abandon to God is of more value than personal holiness." Read that again, do you really believe that? That if you abandon yourself to God, that you'd really trust him? That that's more valuable to you than personal holiness? See, personal holiness focuses the eye on our own wholeness. We are greatly concerned about the way we walk, we talk, we look, fearful lest we offend him. Perfect love casts out all that when once we are abandoned to God. Oswald Chambers must have come to a place where he knew that God's love and receiving God's love and then being able to take that love and use it to really be able to depend on God and just abandon himself to God, was far more important than worrying about what I'm gonna wear, what I look like, how I talk, and how holy I am. I want to be like that. I want to be able to trust God that much. So how does a person learn to trust to, to the point that they depend so much that they just abandon themselves and they abandon themselves to God? The question could be asked, can everyone learn this kind of trust? And I have to say yes, not only because of the passage we read about Abraham, but also because we were all created in the image of God.

Now, I know we, you probably have heard that many, many times, but do you know what it really means to be created in the same image as God is? So what is this image, what does it consist of? What does it really mean to bear that image? I think when we look at God in his very existence, we see him as three people in one. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Three people, but they work together as if they were one being. How do they do that? I think it takes trust in order for them to be able to truly operate as one. Jesus needed to trust his father in order to carry out what his father asked him to do. Now his father had to trust Jesus to carry out what he wanted him to do. Jesus, when he was carrying out, needed someone to empower him, and

needed the, his father to be trustworthy, so that when he went to him, he would be empowered to carry through with what God was asking him to do. The work of the Holy Spirit depends both on Jesus' work, and the father's work. And so as we look at this, we see that trust has two parts. One part is being trustworthy. That means that you are worthy of being trusted. See, God is worthy of being trusted because his track record is perfect. We can't find a place in our relationship with God that he has not been trustworthy. And that's why we know we can trust him. The other part of trust is the ability to trust. So it's trust ability. So first we have trustworthiness and then we have trust ability. And they work hand-in-hand for us to be able to trust.

Now, going back to the image that we're created in, three persons in one. Why is this so important to trust? Because it's a relational image. He gives us the capacity to not only relate to him and receive from him, but to be able to trust in him, and others. In fact, it is within in this capacity that I believe spirituality is given birth. If God never created us with a capacity to trust him, then spirituality would have had to begin somewhere else. But he chose to give us a capacity in which we would have the ability to really relate to him. Now, there's a lot of capacity that we are given, and many of these capacities are never trained, or we never come across the place where we are asked to use that capacity. So some capacities lie dormant inside of us. All of us have the capability of walking, and we have a capacity. We have the legs and we, we are able to walk. Or at least most of us have that. But even though we have the legs to walk and to run, not all of us become, come to the place where we train ourselves to be expert runners, where we can really run to our full capacity. That takes training and discipline. Well, it's the same way with our capacity to trust. It needs to be awakened and then it needs to be trained and it needs to be learned. So what awakens our capacity to trust? I believe a trustworthy relationship with another

person. In order to trust, we need to have a trustworthy relationship with another person. I really believe that is why God, when we are born, has us be born to parents. So that there is someone right there who is able to relate to us and begin to awaken that capacity to trust. And so spirituality is given birth within the relationship, the very first relationship in which we can trust.

And hopefully that is our parents. Now, what do our parents have to do in order to awaken that capacity? Because these early awake, relationships can awaken the capacity to trust, the capacity to trust, or can threaten to distort or shut down our capacity to trust. Thereby threatening spirituality. So it can go either way. These early relationships can help awaken our capacity to trust and help build our ability to trust, or it can sort of distort or threaten or shut down our capacity. And primarily it depends on whether that early relationship, primarily mom first and then dad, are trustworthy in their relationship with us. Now, what does it mean for a parent to be trustworthy? A trustworthy parent is one, is one that goes beyond just the clothing and the feeding and the giving of shelter to a child. The majority of parents will do that much. But it takes a child, it takes a parent to give a child more than that. A child needs to feel cared for, listened to, important. And so to the degree those things are not there, our trust can be distorted, and because relationship is involved in all aspects of our developing selves, and by all aspects I mean in the development of our physical life, the mental life, the personal life, the social life, the sexual life, relationship is vitally important to all areas of development. So distortions can happen in any of those areas. And yet you have to say, well, how in the world can parents make sure that they don't distort any of those areas? And I want to say, because they're human, we will all have distortions. We will have distortions, probably some in each of our areas.

And that's why when we come to Christ, the Holy Spirit wants to transform those distortions, because those distortions keep us from relating to God in our spiritual life in the way that God would have us. Let me give you a couple of examples, how trust can be distorted. I was born a second child for the first three of which were girls. Now, my parents both came from traditions that boys are more important than girls, so they were disappointed with the birth of each girl. My dad came from a family of thirteen. He grew up on a farm, and on this farm there were only three boys. All the rest of the thirteen kids were girls. So we have ten girls and three boys. And so boys on a farm, there is a lot of, lot of heavy physical labor, and so boys were definitely more important, because they needed these boys to get the work done. So when my dad gave birth to his first child, he was hoping to have a boy because that's what they would hope for as he grew up. And so my sister was born and then I was born, and then my sister was born. And each of us to some degree were gender unwanted. Now, this affects my sense of belonging. So when I was in the family, there was a sense that something about me wasn't quite right. And when my brother was born ten years later and I saw the joy my parents' face, I knew that I never had seen that before like the day he was born. And so I now knew that being a girl wasn't what they wanted as much as when their son was born.

Now, belonging is the foundation of self-esteem, and also its beginning of the establishment of trust. The question becomes, can I trust and depend on someone who doesn't totally want or like me? Let me give you another example. At five, I was bedridden with rheumatic fever for a whole year, and I learned many things about relationships around me. When you're in bed for a whole year, the family in some ways has to live around the fact that someone is sick. And the first experience that I had that I remember that has been so significant in my life is the fact that while

I laid in that bed, my father connected with me. Now, my father was a pretty rigid, angry person. And because of that, he didn't connect well in a loving way with any of the members of our family. But when I was sick, there was a softness that came out of him and attached to me that I had never seen before and I never saw afterwards again, not quite in the same way. And so I felt touched by my, by my father for the first time. And he paid more attention to me there, then, than I remember later. And so what did I learn? I learned I could trust him to love me when I was sick. Now my sickness also taught me to learn something else in relationship to my mom. My mom, my sickness caused my mom, a lot of hard work. We only had one car and I had to go to the doctor in downtown Grand Rapids twice a week for the whole year. And because my mom didn't have a car, she would carry me to the bus stop, and then she would carry me on the bus and then carry me to the doctor's office and then back home again.

She would carry me to the bathroom the many times I had to go throughout the day. And she was trying to keep me quiet all this time. She had a two year old and a seven year old, and that was a lot of hard work. And she began to resent my being sick, and having to do what she needed to do in order to, um, have me be well again. And so I heard for many years later that many, many of her back problems and some of the things that she suffered later on was because I was sick. And so what did I learn about trust? I learned not only that I could trust my dad to love me when I was sick, but that my needs were too great. People would resent meeting them. And so it taught me to keep my own needs quiet inside and not to let people know them and still there was a dichotomy there because my dad also loved me when I was sick. Now my older sister was also asked to entertain me when she came home from school. And so she was supposed to spend a couple hours with me when she came home from school. Now, a seven year old, after sitting in

school all day, doesn't want to come and sit by a sick bed and read and teach their sister what they learned in school. And still, that's what she was asked to do. And so she also, um, struggled with having to meet my needs, and what I learned about trust is don't ask others, others for love and attention, even if you are starving for it. And I was starving for children's' attention. I remember sitting that year looking out the window and watching the other kids play, knowing that I could not go out there. And so I was starving for my sister's attention and, and so that we could have some fun together.

But I also learned that when you're starving for love and attention, you don't ask for it. And just these two experiences, being born a, a girl, and being sick at five, taught me so many things about trust in a loving relationship. And I began to develop distortions in what it meant to have a loving relationship on which to depend. This would affect all my future relationships, including my ability to trust God. Let's take a closer look at how trust is developed in our lives, as the, as the creative capacity is awakened. We need to be able to know how that trust is really developed, and in order to do that, I want to have you take a look at this overhead on what I call the anatomy of trust. As you look at this, uh, sketch, you'll see that it goes in a figure-eight, with you beginning right in the middle. And the first thing that you do is you experience your parents' trustworthiness. And in experience your parents trustworthiness, you begin to attach to your parent. Now, I want to spend a little time talking about attachment, because it is such a key part of what we need to do to be able to experience trust, because this is where it all begins. Now, attachment can, um, can become very extreme, that a parent becomes overprotective and attaches too much. And when we see that, we call it enmeshment. In enmeshment, in an enmeshed family, boundaries are held, are too loosely defined. It's, it's almost as the sense that we put the

boundary around the family instead of each individually, individual having in the family, having their own boundaries, that we all begin to think alike. We feel alike, we look alike, we do things alike, we do things together.

And there's no distinctions between the individuals. Everything is open, and there's a loss of individuality. Now, there's some positives with being in an enmeshed family. The positives are that we have a strong sense of we-ness. We have people who we feel connected to that, um, we can do things with and who really understand and know us. There is a strong sense of belonging, and there's a lot of communication between us. We know each, um, individual very well because we, we talk all the time. But the problem is, is that there's no privacy, and there's a huge amount of dependency, but no individuality. And so each member of the family, as they get to the place, particularly in their teenage years, when they're to develop their own sense of identity, there is no empowerment to do that. Instead, there is a holding on and saying, you still think like the family thinks, and you should still feel about things the way the family feels. And so there's no letting go. And that kind of attachment isn't going to be able to move into the separation process where parents now trust you to be who you are. And so just to take a little closer look at attachment and bonding, I want to um, just kind of talk about it a little bit more. And attachment is based on need. We attach to somebody to get our needs met. And when our needs are met, then we feel secure and significant. We feel those warm fuzzies inside. There's a sense where when our, somebody does something for us and really meets our needs, then it makes us feel warm. That makes us feel loved, and we feel like we aren't in this thing alone and we feel secure.

And we're important enough for someone to do something for us. And so attachment is all about getting our needs met to feel secure and significant. Now, when we attach to people who do reassure us that we're okay, we draw power from those people we're attached to. Now, how do we draw power in those early years between one and three, we draw power from the parent. If they're trustworthy, then we feel like we can separate from them and begin to do some things on our own, and it kind of gives birth to the self inside of us, but we need the power of attachment to allow that to happen. Now, when we are attached and suddenly something threatens our attachment or it is cut off for some reason, two things happen. We rage and then we grieve. When we rage, we often attempt to get even. Think about a relationship that you had that got cut off somehow. Maybe a broken engagement to be married or maybe even your relationship with your parents or maybe with a sibling that somehow the attachment that you had to them got cut off. I think the way we see this most often is through divorce, that a parent needs to leave and so a child is left without a parent. Or possibly through death, that a parent dies and a child is left with only one parent. When that happens, we get angry first and we kind of want to get even. And so you see a lot of angry, anger in children of divorces. They want to get back at the parent who left or who they feel, um, is at fault somehow, and so they get angry and they want to even the hurt.

But pretty soon, the anger gives way to the grief underneath. And when we begin to be sad over the loss of that parent, we attempt to fill the void. And when we attempt to fill the void, that's a time we have to be careful that we don't jump into another relationship too quick. I know when I, uh, used to teach divorce recovery workshops and I would always tell, uh, people who are divorced to be careful when they got out of the angry stage and when they, uh, began to feel the

grief and maybe be somewhat depressed because of the divorce, that it's at that point that they will begin to look for new relationships to fill the void, and that's the very time they shouldn't remarry. Instead, they should wait longer and really grieve over the loss to the point where they're beginning to be much more objective about the relationship and can begin to see the part they played. So in grief, we tried to fill the void. Children are the same way. I think we see so much anger in children today in both schools and, um, well, just everywhere. I think even when my husband and I take walks at night down the street, um, you can see the aggressiveness in the way children play. And I think many of them are angry because there's no trustworthy parent in which they, um, feel a sense of belonging and can get their needs of security and significance met. And so most of the time they've gone around and they're angry. If they get to the place where they feel the void, they join oftentimes with other kids that are in the same place.

And so you have a group now of angry kids who are filling their void by joining together. So for attachment to be healthy, both between parent and child or between, um, adult relationships, it needs to be balanced with autonomy. There has to be a sense that you are trustworthy, so I can trust in you. But also I need you to be able to trust in me enough to allow me to be different than you. Autonomy means that I know how I'm different from someone else. I have a uniqueness that's different from anyone else. And that uniqueness is the very reason for which I was created. And I need to begin to know and own that uniqueness, so that we have an autonomy and a sense of ourselves separate from other people, but we also know that we need other people and we need to attach to them. So healthy attachment is full of grace and truth. Grace to allow you to be different, and truth in that we both need each other and we need to be attached, but we also have to allow for our differences. And that takes grace and truth in every relationship that has

attachment. Now, love sometimes grows out of attachment, but sometimes it doesn't. And when it doesn't, it's because there have been too many distortions, not enough grace, maybe not enough truth in order for there to be healthy attachment enough so that love can grow. And it is out of love that we will begin to trust. Now, what does that love actually look like when we are attached? I think there is six critical messages that parents need to be able to give to children.

The first one is, "I believe in you." Do you really believe in your child? Do you believe that who they are is really okay? Do you give them a sense that you enjoy who they are and that you really believe they're capable of being something?

The second message that you really want children to perceive is that you trust them. Now, trust is going to be, be perceived in the second part of figure eight in the 'anatomy of trust', uh, in that you begin to experience your parents trust ability as you separate from them, because when you separate from somebody, you need somebody empowering you and saying, I trust you, I trust you to be able to do this on your own. You no longer need my help. And you begin to do that at a very young age. I think, once a child has a self, which is about three years old, the self should be born from then, from then on, you should find places where you can begin to trust the child to do things on their own that they no longer need your help with. Now you don't want to trust them to do something they're not capable of doing. Um, instead, you want to trust them right at the level that they are trustworthy for. And so you begin to say in many ways, I trust you. Another message beyond I believe in you and I trust you is I know you can handle life situations. I know you can handle life situations. So particularly when they get in the teenage years, this is a really key perception that teenagers need to pick up, that their parents trust them to handle things if they come up. If your children are at a party and there's drinking, do you trust them to be able to

say no to the things that will be harmful to them? Have your parents, have your children proved themselves trustworthy enough for you to trust them in those situations?

It works hand in hand. Trustworthiness with trust ability. A fourth message that you really want your children to pick up, is you are listened to. That means taking the time to sit with your child and really hear what's going on, whether that be at three, or whether that be at sixteen. At three, you get down on their level and you look in their eyes and say, tell mommy all about it. At sixteen, you sit and you look in their eyes and say, I'd really like to hear about what you experienced today. Do you have time to really listen to your children? And not listen just to the words that they say, but to listen beyond that. To, to hear what they felt. And to give compassion when needed, to give a sense of, I want to listen to you so much that I know just exactly what it's like to walk in your shoes. And when you do that and they really feel you're listening to them, they will feel cared for. And that's the fifth critical message that you need to get across to your, to your children, that they are really cared for. That you can set your own needs aside to care for them because you love them so much. And finally, you want to be able to get across to them that they are important to you. Now, I, I really think there aren't very many, very many ways that you can show that your children are important to you unless you are willing to set aside yourself to be able to do that. Children know when everything else comes before them. They know to stop asking you to look at something, or to read something, or to, to go with them somewhere. If the answer always is just a minute or maybe a little while later or, you know, I can do that tomorrow or, next week we'll have a lot more time. Or, you know, next month I'm going to take vacation and we'll do it then.

The child finally begins to feel, I'm just not important enough to get my parents' attention. Now, if you look at these six critical messages: I believe in you, I trust you, I know you can handle life situations, you are listened to, you are cared for, you are important to me, are the very six messages that God communicates to us. So if we aren't able to hear those from our parents, there's going to be distortions in how we believe God communicates his love to us. Do you really believe that God believes in you? Do you really have a sense of his trust for you? Do you really think, think that he believes that you can handle your life situations? See, he never made us to be puppets on a string, and when he pulls a string, then we do what the string is pulling us to do. Instead, he put situations of life in front of us, and it's up to us to handle them. He trusts us to do that. And when we feel we can't, we go to him and we ask him for help, or we go to people around us to help us. But he really believes that he's given us the capability to handle what's on our plate, because he said he would never give us more than we could handle. Do you really believe that God listens to you? Have you seen answers to your prayers? Do you really feel that he cares for you, or do you feel somehow neglected by him? That, really the little things, the mundane things that we do each and every day, sorta are too little for him to care about. We know that's not true. He really does care, because you are important to him. Because he created you in his image so that you can reflect, and he will help you in every way that he can to do that.

And those are the messages that if our children [unintelligible] from us, we will then be able to receive from God. And they too, will be able to turn to God and know that these things are true of God because they were true when they were a child with their parents. So they can transfer that trust that they have from their parents, with their parents, to a God who will no longer distort those messages in any way. Going back to the anatomy of trust just for a couple of minutes, and

then we're going to take a break. We have gone from the center of a figure eight up towards the parents, an experienced their trustworthiness through attachment. That attachment early on is primarily what's happening between the ages of one, um, from birth to one and a half and even beyond, attachment always has to be there. But there's almost a sense of a strength of attachment early on. And then the closer you move towards three, the more a child's self is born, beginning to see that they're separate from their parents, and they begin to experience their parents' trust ability where parents allow them to do some things on their own. Maybe now they can sleep by themselves, or they can begin to handle a fork or a spoon and eat by themselves. But they're beginning to separate and beginning to sense that they're different from who their parents are. If you have experienced both attachment and separation, in your ability, in your relationship with your parents, then you have now the ability to experience trust, learn to trust, and you're able to trust others. And you also feel worthy of trust, and so you act worthy of trust and you become trustworthy. Trustworthiness is now your ability to allow others to trust you. Do others trust you? You also believe others can and will trust you. You have no doubt that they will trust you. Why? Because...

[audio skips]

...and I want to walk with him. As, as I experience what it is like to have him lead me, I want to empower other people to do that, too. He wants to lead you. He wants to take you into the very purpose he created you for. And he did create each of you for a purpose you know. For a very unique, specific purpose. There's not one person in here that will experience God just the way I did. Because he uniquely works in each of our lives differently. And are you open to where he's

leading you? I want to help you find that. And then I want to give you just, in our final moments together, I want to give you a few more, um, keys about trust. What happens when we trust?

When we trust, this is what happens. The first thing is when we trust someone else, we give that person a gift. An incredible gift, often undeserved and therefore demonstrating grace, because whenever you're trusting someone, you're trusting them beyond maybe what they have proved themselves trustworthy to be. When you're trusting, you want to trust just above their level, so they have a place to stretch and to grow to. And when you do that and you say, you can do it, I believe you can go there. Then you're giving them a gift, a gift that they have done nothing to earn. But you're helping them get to the next step. And so you're, you're initiating that sense, of they can accomplish something for God. Whenever you initiate trust, you become more vulnerable. Why? Because you're risking. When you initiate trust with someone, you are, you are risking something yourself because you don't know for sure whether they can do it because they haven't proved that yet.

And particularly, if it's someone who, um, is really important for how you look. Someone who's working under you. Your child, who you don't want to shame you. That's difficult. Can we trust them just that next step? Or are we going to hang on and protect and not allow them to take that step because we don't have that ability to trust? You know, I used to teach on trust. I've taught on trust for, for a number of years now, and I used to teach on trust, and every time I taught on trust, I felt pains of guilt. You know, God works on you that way. [laughs] And I kept trying to figure out, how in the world do I trust when nobody ever trusted me? Because I teach just the opposite. And I struggled with that for a long time because when, early on, I trusted everyone. I didn't lock my doors, my car doors. I never thought anything bad would happen to me. I, I just blindly

trusted. And I thought, what's that all about? I, I am such a trusting person. And still nobody ever trusted me in my family. Why can I do this? I'm not making sense with what I'm teaching. My life doesn't make sense with this, and that's always a big key that something's wrong. Either you're teaching the wrong thing, or you know, your life is wrong. And so I finally figured it out.

Trusting everybody was all about what I needed. If I trusted them, then they would need me. And they would come back to me because what I did was trust way beyond what they were capable of doing. And if I did that, then they were dependent on me to get there, and that felt like love.

And so if I could trust people, and the way I found it out was when I was, um, in the church, and I was responsible for a lot of other lay counselors and stuff, and I would trust them with things that were beyond where they needed to be, so they needed to come to me all the time and say, what do I do in this situation? What do I do in that situation? And I felt so good because they were coming to me. That wasn't trust. That was getting my needs met. And I was setting them up for failure, because I was asking them to do things that they weren't ready to take. So when I say trust, I really mean, know that person well enough that you just take them the next step. You don't trust them way beyond. But it makes you vulnerable, because you're taking a risk, because always, it's a new place. Whenever you initiate trust you imitate God. If it's true trust that you're initiating with another person, you're imitating God because God every day trusts us with so much. We don't often think about it. But he keeps us responsible for so many things, and he trusts us to take care of his world, and we've made such a mess of it. Whenever we trust, we give impetus to the relationship. We motivate it. It's a wonderful thing to be trusted, to go into a place you've never been before. And you give incredible motivation to that relationship when you say, I trust you to do that. I trust you with a car, to a sixteen year old. And I trust you to take care of

my child when I leave them with you. And I trust you to do something else over here. Each time that relationship is given more motivation, and more impetus to grow, because you've initiated trust in that relationship.

When you initiate trust you co-author the relationship, you're now in it together. I go back to the relation, um, the image of God in which we were created. God, and his Son, and his Holy Spirit. They work together. They have unique roles. But without each other, it wouldn't be near as full and complete. They all need each other. And we're doing the same thing when we initiate trust; we're beginning to co-author with some, somebody. Helping them to grow that life into a deeper, greater, capacity than they had before. When we initiate trust, we discover new facets of ourself and each other. That's the fun part of trusting. It's also the scary part of trusting. Because whenever you trust, you're gonna also learn something about yourself. Because you may learn that the person you're trusting, you don't really trust. That maybe you have to step back, and you have to look again at this person, and really try to read them and understand where they are. You may find out that it's you that does, that is struggling with the ability, it's not that person at all, they're very capable of going where you want them to go. But you're afraid for them to go there because maybe, they're gonna go beyond where they need you. Can you let a person grow beyond you? Can you let your kids develop in an area that you know nothing about? I can remember, our son in eighth grade was pretty bored. He always had an incredible ability to think, and a lot of times wasn't challenged that much in school. And I can remember when we, um, decided to get first computer, it was when he was in eighth grade. And these boxes came home. There they sat in the family room. And Gene looked at me and I looked at him and I said, you know, who's gonna put this computer together.

When you, when you used to get computers, you had to sort of put them together to get 'em going. And, and he said, well we'll, I'll have to call somebody that we know and have them come over and put this thing together because there's no way that I can do it. We were both really not computer literate, [chuckles] but we thought it was time for us to begin to challenge ourselves with something new. And so, um, our son had a headache that day. Said he didn't feel very good and wanted to stay home from school. And that was one thing I always trusted our children for, is that when they said they were sick, they could stay home. I never forced attendance, and they never broke the trust in that. So he stayed home. And when we came home that night, the computer was together. And he said, that was the greatest challenge I ever had. But, it grew him this high, because he found he could do it. He had to figure out how to do it, and he did it. And then, not only did he put it together, but he knew how to work it. And he knew what we did not know. Can you learn from your kids? Can you let them grow in an area that they are much more capable of than you are, and be proud of them and be excited about it? Or do you have to be as good as they are? Can we trust people to move beyond us? That's important, because we won't challenge and initiate trust with people if it threatens us in some way because we're afraid that they'll get better than us. And that's particularly true in employment. When you have people working under you, can you trust them; to grow and encourage and empower them to become all that they are.

And initiate the trust, that's, important to do that, or are you gonna kind of hold them in a box so they can't move into the place God really wants them? That has all to do with your ability to trust. We enhance our own and each other's self-esteem. Now, why do I say it enhances our self-

esteem? Because when you initiate trust, you again, are bringing in co-authoring that relationship and you're giving a sense of belonging. You're also giving a sense of worthiness. They can do it. They're, you're beginning to help them say messages of, I like myself cause I can do something. I can, I can accomplish something. And then finally, you're helping them be competent. Those three things, belonging, worthiness, and competence are the three things that make up self-esteem. And so when you initiate trust and you help them move to the next level, you're helping them feel like they belong to something because you are now in this with them. You are risking something. So they feel like they belong more. They also feel worthy of carrying out something that you've asked them to do, and if they are able to accomplish it, they now feel competent in an area they maybe didn't feel competent in before. All those things enhance self-esteem. Now, how does it enhance yours? Well, you are also being able to watch this all happen. And that's gonna enhance what God is doing through your life with other people, too. It's gonna enhance your ability to go to somebody else and initiate trust there, and help them to become what God has intended for them to become. And so it enhances both of you.

If I can get back to my original notes here, see if there's something here I forgot. Okay, um, what I'd like to do is give you another quote from Oswald Chambers. Oswald Chambers has had a unique influence in my life too, through his little book the Utmost for His Highest. I love his devotionals. They bring me into the presence of God and challenge me and give me messages from God over and over, and I can read the same ones and hear it differently each time. But he has a devotional that says to put God first in trust. And I don't want you to leave here with thinking that people will always come through for you. Now, you know they won't. That's why it's so important to put God first in trust. The verses in John two, twenty-four and twenty-five

says Jesus did not commit himself unto them, for he knew what was in man. Jesus knew what was in man, he knew that his commitment had to be to his heavenly father. And that's also true of us. Our Lord trusted no man. Yet he was never suspicious, never bitter, never in despair about any man. How many times have you trusted someone, and then been in despair afterwards? People let us down, don't they. They don't always come through with what we've trusted them for, or what we've asked them for, or what we're hoping for to get from them. And so he said, he, he trusted, that should be trusted, absolutely in what God's grace could do for any man. If I put my trust in human beings first, I will end in despairing of everyone. Just a key statement. I will become bitter because I have insisted on man being what no man can ever be. Absolutely right. That's what's wrong with going back and blaming your parents.

Because they were everything they could be for you. But they weren't God. My parents gave me much. They didn't give me all. Never trust anything but the grace of God in yourself, or in anybody else. In other words, when I'm in relationship with another person, I'm trusting what God is going to do through them into my life. I'm not trusting them. It's God that can turn it to good. It's God that can work it out in your life. And if you just blindly trust in people, you may never get to the place where you can really trust, because people will always let you down. Now that doesn't mean that God isn't gonna use people in your life. He wants us to be in fellowship. All the one another's in the New Testament are all about unity of the body of Christ. And the way we can have unity is to trust what God is doing in another person that can bless us. And so whatever a person says to you has to match up with what God says. Those two things have to come together. We have to search our hearts to find, when a person says something, if it fits with

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what God is saying to us. Does it match up, and if it does, then you have been incredibly blessed by having that person in your life.

We have a few minutes more, I'm done a little bit early. And we have a few minutes, and I'll be glad to take any questions or any area that you would like me to explore a little bit deeper. I didn't, um, cover everything in depth because I wanted to give an overall flow of trust. But I'll be glad to take your questions, and I'll start back there.

Audience Member 1:

You said we draw power from those who we are attached to, can you explain that?

Judith TenElshof:

We what?

Audience Member 1:

You said we draw power from those that we are attached to?

Judith TenElshof:

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Yes, um, early on in that early relationship with children, uh, in the one to three stage, at that point in time, um, the way a child's self really gets born is drawing from the power that they get from a, a parent, really allowing separation to take place, and so that power comes from them.

When we are attached to somebody, we are, we have a greater capacity than what we have without that person, because they bring something into our life. When we are attached, there is a love connection there that brings greater power into our life to be able. We are, we have more power in two than in one. Make sense? Okay. Yes?

Audience Member 2:

[unintelligible]

Judith TenElshof:

What is the role, she's asking, of discipline in regards to the development of trust? It's key. Okay, and there's a whole thing on discipline. But if discipline becomes punishment, then the focus is coming out of your anger and your frustration. And the goal is to change the behavior of the child, and to punish the child for what they just did. If it's discipline--which is going to destroy their trust for you--If it's discipline, then your goal is, first of all, you're operating out of love because you want to train them to the place where they will be able to behave differently, and so you'll think differently about how you handle that situation of misdeeds. You'll think twice about just punishing, because the punishment may not train them. It may build in them fear so they won't do it again. But do you want your child to operate out of fear, or out of love? And so

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discipline is key in whether it communicates to the child, in the end, not at the moment, at the moment, discipline is never, in Hebrews twelve it says, discipline is never pleasurable in the moment, but in the end, the child should be able to look back and say, they really cared for me. And so they notice that care because of the fact that, um, you did it with the goal of training for future deeds in mind, rather than punishment. So discipline is a key thing because what they read, what messages they come up with out of that discipline is going to, um, change everything for them inside. Good question.

Audience Member 3:

[unintelligible]

Judith TenElshof:

Oh, yes. I'll put that back up for you. There you go. Nancy.

Audience Member 4:

I was wondering if you could explain further what you meant, um, you were talking about [unintelligible] what happens when you trust, and you were saying how, how [unintelligible], and you're saying that, and then you're saying that, [unintelligible] so much trust that I set them up to fail. can you give an example of that or explain it a little further?

Judith TenElshof:

Um, for me, it was, I was trying to create dependency. So, um, so that, because if people depended on me, then I, it felt again like I was getting the pats on the back. You know, that they needed me, so somehow I was important and I needed, you know, that I had something to give. And so I would trust them on things, I would give them assignments that were greater than what they had proved trustworthy to do, and that way they needed to depend on me. And so it was all about me, it wasn't about risking for them. Make sense? Okay. Good.

Audience Member 5:

You said that what can awaken our capacity to trust is being in a trustworthy relationship with other people, I'm confused on like how you shouldn't trust [unintelligible].

Judith TenElshof:

Yeah, I was afraid of that, but it was important to me to recognize the fact that people are human. Okay, and that's why I went back to that last quote. I really believe that God use human relationships to teach us trust. And I think it's why he instituted the family. And he gave us those relationships because they aren't perfect. And that makes us become very aware of our need for him. And so as people fail us, and as parents fail us, as we get to the place of, um, transferring our trust from parents to God, we should want God, in some ways, we should be able to transfer that trust, if the trust has been good enough implanted in us. And so it's almost, we call it in

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psychology, "good enough mothering," so that the self can be born. And um, and so there's that sense where, it's never gonna be perfect, but in that imperfection, we will need God. You still look puzzled.

Audience Member 5:

Yeah, I'm still, somewhat. Um.

Judith TenElshof:

We trust people, God's work in people in our life, but not trust the person themselves. We need to trust what God is doing in their life to us. Rather than totally putting all our trust, it's like saying, and this happens over and over and over in my counseling experience, is that a person, when they find the spouse or the, the person they're finally gonna marry, they think all their needs are gonna be met in that spouse. And in that marriage, finally, they're gonna get all that they ever wanted in terms of love and needs and all those things. And they're placing way too much on the other person. Instead of, realizing that in that marriage, they need to bring out what God is doing in their spouse, and that their spouse should be bringing out what God is doing in them, and in that way together they reflect the glory of God. But the problem is, is that we put it all on that person to love us, to empower us, to, to do for us, and we, we think that that is what is going to make us all of what we need. And that's way too much to put on one person. Does that make more sense?

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Audience Member 5:

[unintelligible]

Judith TenElshof:

Um, can we do anything perfectly? No. And, I want to keep coming back to that because anything another person does in our life for us is God working in our life. He's always using, he's doing it through that person in our life. Whether it's a spouse or a child or someone else, and the more we recognize that, the more we thank God for that person, the more we love God more, because he's brought that person into our life. And it brings us back to God, and we don't ever want a person to take God's place in that. Okay? Good.

Audience Member 6:

[unintelligible] a statement you said, I think you said it like this that God is more concerned with the process [unintelligible] can you elaborate on that?

Judith TenElshof:

Yeah, I think the hardest thing that we have to do in life is to live the mundane of everyday. Each day, to live it for God in a holy way, is really difficult. Doing a big goal for God, you know, we'll finally get there we'll do, you know, accomplish something. But we're working far too hard

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towards the end goals, and not spending near enough thought and time and effort and energy and living what we think each day. How we handle the phone calls of each day. How we, meet the person on the street. How we, um, interact with our spouse and our children. How we do all those things, those are the things God is really concerned about. Because in that we are reflecting who God is when we're Christian, and we should be giving God glory and all that, and most often we're not. And we're so concerned about accomplishing that Ph.D. or accomplishing, um, that paper we have to write or accomplishing, um, getting our child potty-trained [laughs], or whatever it is, wherever we are, it's that goal that we're going for instead of thinking, what does this day mean to God in my life? That's what we should be concerned about, and spend much more time thinking about. Okay?

Audience Member 7:

[unintelligible] what does an attached, healthy adult look like? [unintelligible]

Judith TenElshof:

A couple of things. There, there's a lot of things that it looks like. But, I think those six messages sort of encapsulize it that I talked about. If those six messages are being lived out in that healthy attachment then, um, it would look healthy. But, and I think healthy attachment has to be, um, a balance of being attached and still not losing who we are individually. And so it's empowering the individual within the attachment, but never losing sight of the togetherness in that. And so, that means being able to contain our anger and our frustration in that relationship, and being able

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to speak it in a way that doesn't hurt the other, because they still need to hear that they're cared for and that they're loved, and that they're important, even though we're angry with them. So to be able to learn a way of expressing negative things that doesn't destroy and take away from the relationship, that would be healthy attachment. It's not hiding all the negative emotions that we have in the attachment. But it's being able to speak them in a way that doesn't take away from the relationship. Okay? Good. Yes.

Audience Member 8:

[unintelligible]

Judith TenElshof:

Right. I think if relationships are going wrong for you, um, if there's a lot of frustration and anger and you find people are with you for a while and then leave, or you have a lot of broken relationships in your life, you can think of people in your life who, you've emotionally just cut off. You just didn't know what to do with them so you just didn't see them again, um, that's, my family, does a lot of that, um, emotionally cut people off. My father, after our daughter's wedding, just didn't talk to me for two years and just kind of emotionally cut off and because he was so angry. And so there was, there's a sense where with those kinds of things are happening in your life, you know that you are struggling in your ability to trust. And as I grew, and, um, you get stronger in your ability to be in places where you're not trusted. So, the more I grow in my ability to trust God and to be able to trust, I can be in places where people don't always

affirm and trust me, but I can still be there and be okay, and not lose who I am when I'm with them, and just give in to being what they want.

As soon as you have to be and perform whatever a person wants, you know there's something wrong in your whole trust area. Either you, um, aren't trustworthy in a place or you don't have the ability to trust that other person with you, you think you can do it by yourself better. Does that give you a little bit? Okay, good. Okay, why don't we close in prayer, and then um, I'll be here for a few minutes if anybody else wants to talk. Heavenly Father, what a wonderful gift so undeserved that we receive from you, your love. Given to us even though we aren't always able to receive it. But you don't turn it away from us, you continue to pour it down on us, and you even help us find ways to reach you. Help us to open our hearts to your love and to the love that you give us through people. Thank you Lord for working in other hearts so that we can be touched by people here, through what you do in their lives. Lord I pray for each of these people, as they move away from here and go back to their relationships. I pray that those relationships can be thought of in more of a clear way of what you are doing in each of their lives. All these things we ask in your Savior's name, amen.

[Applause]