

A Critical Ingredient in Evangelism

Everyone human relationship involves trust (or the lack thereof). Whether involving friends or family. Whether buying merchandise from a store you can trust or starting a business partnership. You go to a doctor you can trust and attend a church you can trust. Without trust, relationships break down. One of the most critical ingredients in ministry is trust. People will listen and be influenced by us if they trust us.

Where there is trust, there is a context for loving someone. Many in their efforts to show love are rebuffed because the trust factor has not been sufficiently developed. This explains why sometimes deeds of love are rebuffed, ignored or second-guessed. If people don't trust us, they are suspicious of our "love."

And trust is a significant factor in our evangelism. People will not accept the word of God through us unless they can trust us. Trust is the key to influencing people and making a difference in their lives.

But, how do we earn it? So, how can we become the kind of people that people will trust. I agree with the writer who identifies three qualities that build trust: Compassion, Competence and Consistency. Our Lord Jesus Christ had all three.

Compassion. One primary reason the crowds followed our Lord was because they sensed his compassion. Three times Matthew writes that Jesus was "*compassionate*" toward the crowds (for example, Matt 9:36). In another instance, he had compassion toward two blind men on the road out of Jericho (Matt 10:34). He really cared about people.

Competence. Our Lord was also competent. What he did, he did well! Not only did His heavenly father recognize his excellence ("*This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased*" Matt 3:17), but the people recognized that he did all things well. They often praised

God when Jesus had been with them (Matt 15:31). Psalm 8:1 says, "*O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is your name in all the earth*" (NASB). His name reflects who he is. Nothing shoddy about him or his efforts! His feelings of compassion were evidenced by the competence of his works – he fed the crowds and healed their sicknesses. He really did meet their needs!

Consistency. Finally, our Lord was consistent. Hebrews 13:8 "*Jesus Christ is same yesterday and today and forever.*" He was not two faced or double minded. What he said was what he meant, and he was consistent. He always rejected hypocrisy and chided faithlessness on the one hand and, on the other hand, welcomed repentance and offered love. People learned what to expect from him.

Christ influenced people because he was compassionate, competent and consistent. He could be trusted. We may not be perfect in these areas, but the more we exhibit these qualities, the more opportunity we will have to make a profound impact on those around us. People want to know that we care. They also want to know that our actions match our attitude. Our caring results in competent help. And they want to know that our caring and our actions are there for the long haul – especially when they need us. Building these qualities in our lives does not guarantee people will trust us, for even Christ was not always trusted by the religious leaders of his time. But, these qualities will foster the lifestyle that will encourage others to trust us. Then, and only then, are we in a position for making a positive impact on the lives of others.

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