

# *Temper Your Trials with Trust*

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As we begin a new year and a new semester, let me add my welcome to all who are with us on campus as well as all who participate with us in various ways around the world. This is a wonderful season of new beginnings and reflections. The year 2008 was tumultuous in many ways. It was a time of some significant triumphs and also a time of unprecedented trials for many, both individually and collectively. Much that was unsettled around us continues to be unclear as we enter the new year of 2009.

In spite of ample causes for concern and caution, there is much about which we should be encouraged, grateful, and optimistic. In addition to those things we share with all who reside in this land of promise and those in other free lands, we who know who we are and understand what we have should feel great comfort and confidence in our future. We know that challenges, threats, disappointments, and even temporary defeats are part of the great plan that ultimately can lead us to live “after the manner of happiness” (2 Nephi 5:27) as described by Nephi in times much more difficult and perilous than even our own.

But, as Helaman lamented, “these are [our] days” (Helaman 7:9) with their own special challenges and opportunities. One of the

disappointments of our times is the seeming loss and lack of trust among us. We have seen this in the failures of government, business, and commerce and in the personal lives of those both far and near. Like many symptoms of failure, this lessening of trust at multiple levels seems infectious and may be spreading.

Today I would like to suggest why this should not and must not be so. Trust in its various dimensions is essential for each of us and for the world around us as well. I speak not in favor of blind trust but for the essentiality of informed and earned trust that is integral to all that is good, necessary, and uplifting.

President David O. McKay, the ninth president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was the prophet of my youth and young adult years. He was loved and respected. He spoke with great eloquence and style, and I was always very impressed and touched by his teachings. On many occasions over the years he liked to quote George Macdonald: “To be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved” (*The Marquis of Lossie*, chapter 4, 1877).

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*Cecil O. Samuelson was BYU president when this devotional address was delivered on 6 January 2009.*

As a youth, I don't know that I ever doubted the idea that being trusted is more of a compliment or of greater importance than being loved, but I am sure that I didn't fully understand the significance of this relationship between love and trust that I am still striving to learn more about and better comprehend.

We all long to be loved, and when we feel love from another person or from the Lord, we feel lifted, encouraged, and happy. I think we also yearn to be trusted but perhaps do not always focus clearly on how it is that we come to be trusted and by whom we are trusted.

I believe all of us understand the fundamental notion of trust. We need to trust the Lord and others, others need to trust us, and we especially need to trust ourselves. Like most of you, I know of instances where important trust has been breached in relationships and agreements. In our recent political campaigns the issue of trust was raised frequently from every side about who was most trustworthy. It is not a topic that has been foreign to this campus and certainly one worthy of and necessary for our consideration even today. Failures of trust occur when we do not keep even small commitments as well as large ones. Dishonesty of any sort is a breach of trust and has potentially dire consequences not only for the offended but particularly for the perpetrator.

Sixteen years ago President Gordon B. Hinckley gave a tremendous devotional address here at BYU entitled "Trust and Accountability." It is not my purpose to repeat all that he said on that occasion, but it is germane to reference some of the concerns and comments he shared that day.

He talked in great detail about the trust imposed on each one privileged to be at this university. He included students, faculty, staff, and administrators in his observations and admonitions. He was largely complimentary of the entire BYU community in 1992, and I believe if there is any difference in those here today compared with those he addressed,

things and people are even better now. Just as President Hinckley observed in 1992, I would suppose there are also a few exceptions to the general rule today, but they would be few. Unfortunately, some of these very few in our midst have breached their trust in egregious and serious ways, and their disappointments have often splashed on the rest of the community.

While love and trust are often linked and even intertwined, there are some very significant differences. We hold unconditional love to be a very high virtue. Trust, on the other hand, is conditional in that it must be earned and can be very easily and quickly forfeited. Long before he became the prophet of the Church, President McKay made this observation:

*Love is the sweetest thing in the world, but to be trusted throws upon him who receives that trust an obligation that he must not fail to discharge. [CR, October 1934, 91]*

We are often loved even when we are almost unlovable. Think, for example, of an impatient two-year-old's tantrum in the middle of the night or in the middle of sacrament meeting. Frustration does not usually diminish love. This unconditional love persists even when young adults, missionaries, and BYU students do foolish things, although they know better when making unwise and dangerous decisions.

Trust, however, cannot and is not able to operate with a similar lack of reciprocity. Rather, trust—like knowledge, understanding, and self-discipline—is usually gained "line upon line, precept upon precept" in a gradually increasing way until the aggregate of experience causes one to conclude that the individual is trustworthy. Sadly, often a single careless or willful act can destroy the trust that has taken a lifetime to earn. While broken or lost trust can be regained, it is not easily or quickly restored. The blemish can be removed only with serious, long-term effort—and even then a permanent scar may remain.

A special dimension of both trust and love is found in genuine friendship. A true friendship, one of life's most precious possessions, expresses unqualified love but also demands absolute trust. Few true friendships are ended by a lessening of affection, but far too many are seriously damaged when trust is breached. Think of this example of true friendship that was enveloped in both love and trust: Willard Richards felt this way about the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Elder Richards of the Quorum of the Twelve was jailed with Joseph and Hyrum Smith and Elder John Taylor in the Carthage Jail. Because of the threats on the life of Joseph, the jailer suggested moving the men into a cell, where he thought they might be more safe. Joseph asked Elder Richards if he would go with him into the cell. Listen to Willard Richards's reply:

*"Brother Joseph, you did not ask me to cross the river with you—you did not ask me to come to Carthage—you did not ask me to come to jail with you—and do you think I would forsake you now? But I will tell you what I will do; if you are condemned to be hung for treason, I will be hung in your stead, and you shall go free." Joseph said, "You cannot." [Elder Richards] replied, "I will." [HC 6:616]*

What a blessing to have such a friendship based on love and absolute trust.

Your lives before you came to BYU have been documented sufficiently through the admissions process for students or our hiring practices for faculty, staff, and administration for you to be deemed trustworthy. Listen to these words of President Hinckley in his devotional address that I have previously referenced:

*Every one of us who is here has accepted a sacred and compelling trust. With that trust, there must be accountability. That trust involves standards of behavior as well as standards of academic excellence.*

*For each of us it carries with it a larger interest than our own interest. It carries with it the interest of the university, and the interest of the Church, which must be the interest of each and all of us.*

*Some few students resent the fact that the board has imposed a code of honor and a code of dress and behavior to which all are expected to subscribe. [Priesthood leaders] are requested to interview each student and certify his or her acceptance of the standards set forth in these codes.*

President Hinckley continued:

*And so, my friends, we ask you to subscribe to these codes and to have the endorsement of your [priesthood leaders] in doing so. It is not that we do not trust you. But we feel that you need reminding of the elements of your contract with those responsible for this institution and that you may be the stronger in observing that trust because of the commitment you have made. With every trust there must be accountability, and this is a reminder of that accountability.*

Lest any of us who are not students but still part of the BYU community think we are exempt from this counsel and standard, President Hinckley then went on to clarify:

*It is [also] so with the faculty and with all of us. We ask that all members of the faculty, [administration, and staff,] who are members of the Church, be what we speak of as "temple-recommend worthy." This does not evidence any lack of trust. It simply represents a standard, a benchmark of belief and action. The setting of this standard is not new or unusual. It is not new at BYU or in the Church Educational System. . . . It is a standard applied widely in the Church. ["Trust and Accountability," BYU devotional address, 13 October 1992]*

It is not my purpose to describe all the ways we may violate the trust vested in us at BYU. In fact, I don't believe it would be possible

to do so. In that context, I think of the words of King Benjamin as he concluded his great benedictory sermon with his testimony of the Atonement and his counsel about appropriate and righteous living. Said he:

*And finally, I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin [or violate your sacred trust]; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.*

*But this much I can tell you, that if ye do not watch yourselves, and your thoughts, and your words, and your deeds, and observe the commandments of God, and continue in the faith . . . concerning the coming of our Lord, even unto the end of your lives, ye must perish. And now, O man, remember, and perish not. [Mosiah 4:29–30]*

I hope that you will conclude as I have that the matter of trust is a serious issue that deserves our careful and prayerful thought and attention. Let me offer in my concluding minutes four suggestions or homework recommendations that will help us all achieve the necessary dimensions of trust in our own lives.

First, learn to trust the Lord.

In Proverbs we read:

*Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.*

*In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. [Proverbs 3:5–6]*

A computer search of the scriptures leads to over 300 references to the instruction to trust in the Lord. The first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We may not know everything about God, but we do know, as did Nephi, that He loves His children and He is completely trustworthy and keeps His promises (see 1 Nephi 11:17).

Second, learn to trust yourself.

Our doctrine teaches us that as literal spirit children of a loving, absolutely trustworthy

Heavenly Father, we are trusted by Him. One of the fundamental reasons for our mortal or earth-life experience is to learn to prove or trust ourselves. The Lord who knows you better than you know yourself has given you commandments so “that you may prove yourselves . . . that ye are faithful in all things . . . , that I [the Lord] may bless you, and crown you with honor, immortality, and eternal life” (D&C 124:55). We honor our understanding of our relationship with our Father in Heaven when we show that His trust in us is warranted because we have learned to trust ourselves. A necessary component of being able to trust ourselves is repentance—sincere, regular, and authentic repentance. As we are taught by the Lord, “By this ye may know if a man [or woman] repenteth of his sins—behold, he will confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43). We must forsake our sins if we expect to be trusted by others and especially by ourselves.

Third, learn to trust others.

President David O. McKay often included in his discourses the principle of learning to trust others. More than 80 years ago, in the general conference of the Church, he said this:

*Tell a young boy that you trust him, and you have one of the greatest means of guiding him uprightly that can come into your hands. Young boy, I trust you! To be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved. Boys are few indeed who will not hold inviolate an implicit trust. [CR, April 1928, 104]*

President McKay’s counsel is true of all of us—boys, girls, men, and women.

All of us have had experience with those who have violated a trust or our trust, but the principle of expected trust is generally accurate. Most of us adjust our views of others and ourselves with the input, whether positive or negative, of those we love and respect. Listen to these words of Alma, given to the faithful Saints in Gideon and representing his trust in them:

*I trust, according to the Spirit of God which is in me, that I shall also have joy over you. . . .*

*. . . I trust that ye are not in a state of so much unbelief as were your brethren. [Alma 7:5, 6]*

Or listen to these words of Alma to his son Shiblon:

*And now, my son, I trust that I shall have great joy in you, because of your steadiness and your faithfulness unto God; for as you have commenced in your youth to look to the Lord your God, even so I hope that you will continue in keeping his commandments; for blessed is he that endureth to the end. [Alma 38:2]*

Trusting others is an expression of faith in them. When trusting is exercised wisely, like exercising faith, trust is increased, and increased trustworthiness on the part of well-intentioned others can be the result.

Last of all, learn to trust the power of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ that makes the first three relationships of trust truly possible.

Because the Atonement of Christ is real, continually operative, and limitless in its scope and possibilities, we can trust it unconditionally with the assurance that all things we cannot accomplish entirely on our own are

possible when they fit with the mind and will of the Lord.

Just as Abinadi described the Savior's terrible trek through the Crucifixion and Atonement process as a demonstration of "the will of the Son being swallowed up in the will of the Father" (Mosiah 15:7), the Atonement provides us with the means of developing sufficient trust, faith, and obedience that our own wills also might follow that pattern of being "swallowed up" in the wills of the Father and the Son. Becoming one with God and the Savior must be a primary goal for each of us. It was the reason for the expectations and promises explained to each of us long before we accepted the assignment to come to earth and be tested and trusted.

May we all strive to trust those things of greatest truth and importance to us and may we also strive to be fully trustworthy in every dimension of our own lives and particularly with the special trusts conveyed to us in our blessed circumstances at BYU.

God does live, and He trusts us. Jesus Christ, His Son, likewise loves and trusts us so much that He gave His mortal life for us. President Thomas S. Monson and those who serve with him love and trust us as well. May we never ignore or betray the sacred trusts bestowed upon us. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

