

SOURCES

¹Miller, Dan. *48 Days to the Work You Love*. B & H, 2005, page 108.

²White, Ellen G. "Address to Ministers," *Review and Herald*, May 30, 1871.

Kings 22:7). We are truthful, not agents of espionage. Trustworthiness is a byproduct of our faithfulness, loyalty, obedience, and accountability. Being faithful gives those who observe us the opportunity to decide whether we are trustworthy or not.

When I attended boarding school, I worked in the maintenance department to help pay my tuition. One hot summer day, I was supposed to fill up a hole. The dirt was sunbaked Mississippi red clay. It was hard then, and I have never seen any that hard since. Finally, the hole was filled and landscaped. A few days later, while waiting for my maintenance work assignment, I overheard the maintenance supervisor say to a school administrator, "If I give John a job to do, I know it will get done."

I have never forgotten that comment, and it has often come to mind when I have faced difficult tasks. In some situations, "no" is not an option for me. I work hard, hoping to do more than required and to the best of my ability. If I don't know how, I get someone to teach me or learn on my own. The result of my effort is that I have been viewed as a person who is trustworthy.

Trustworthiness is the result of having a dependable and reliable relationship with Him. It is not achieved overnight. He knows that if we clothe ourselves with this trait, we are living by His principles, and we can be trusted with what He gives us to do. Trustworthiness has no position or ulterior strategy. It is not political. "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much" (Luke 16:10, NIV). When trustworthiness is actualized in our lives, others will notice.

If the steward's brand reflects God's brand of love, then others will want what we have. Our reputation can be seen by others: one that is faithful, loyal, with a clear conscience, obedient, and accountable—al wrapped up in being trustworthy.

Being faithful to God will motivate a person to do what seems impossible.

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The STEWPOT

A POTPOURRI OF PRACTICAL IDEAS to help you become a better steward

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A STEWARD'S BRAND PART 2

BY JOHN MATHEWS

From Part 1 (in September): Brands are extremely important to sellers. They promote recognition and motivation that is built up over an extended period of time. Retailers create their brands to distinguish themselves from other products. If their brand is only a symbol (without words), they have achieved a high level of recognition. Others have turned their name into the recognition symbol, thus achieving the same thing.

Do God's stewards have a brand? What makes us distinctive? How are we recognized? In Scripture, God invites us to join His brand. God's brand is love (1 John 4:8,16). "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35, NIV). If we accept God's brand in our lives, it will be revealed to others by how we live. Love, as a brand, is a nuance of the character of Christ and stands out compared to the world's ideals.

It takes time to achieve a successful retail brand. Likewise, God's brand is refined as we develop His character in our lives.

OBEDIENCE

Obedience is not conforming to the wishes of the crowd. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not afraid of standing out when they were the only ones who refused to bow down and worship the king's image. Obedience is not a compliant relationship. Compliance is obeying the speed limit as you drive by the radar or traffic camera, but ignoring the limit once you pass. Compliance is doing something because you have to. On the other hand, true faithfulness prompts a consistent outflow of obedience that is freely given. Faithfulness enjoys obedience—our action of faith.

"A missionary society wrote to David Livingstone deep in the heart of Africa and asked: 'Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we want to know how

STEWARDSHIP is a total lifestyle. It involves our health, time, talents, environment, relationships, spirituality, and finances.



Compliance is obeying the speed limit as you drive by the radar or traffic camera, but ignoring the limit once you pass.

to send other men to help you.' Livingstone wrote back: 'If you have men who will only come if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all.'"¹

Being faithful to God will motivate a person to do what seems impossible. Our faith compels us to go where there is no road, and our love ventures into the unknown. We will eventually learn that faith bears the weight of obedience.

"By faith Abraham obeyed" (Hebrews 11:8, *NKJV*). Paul said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (Acts 9:6, *NKJV*). Jesus was willingly obedient to His Father throughout His earthly life (Philippians 2:8, Hebrews 5:8). He made obedience practical in His actions, and He taught obedience to others through His parables. His life was the supreme example of obedience "to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8, *NKJV*).

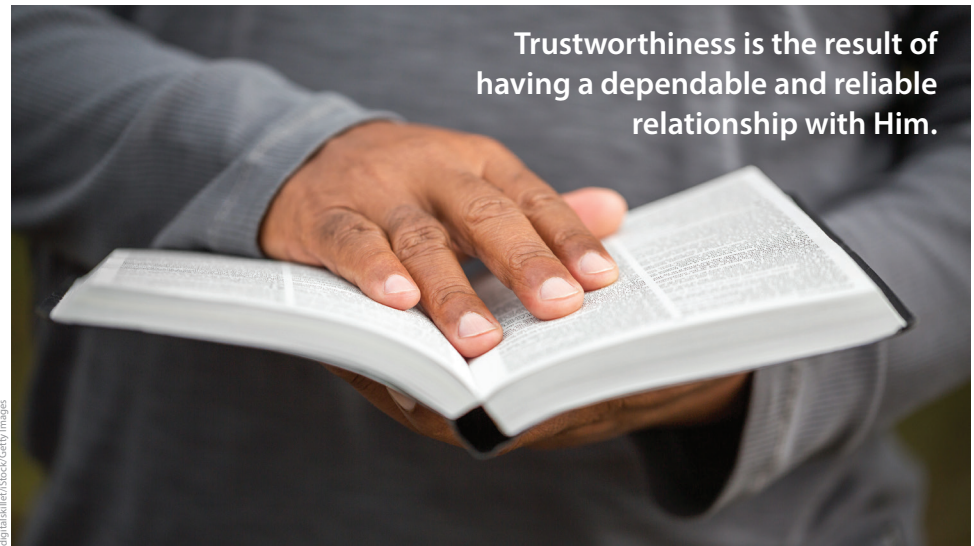
ACCOUNTABILITY

Stewards understand that they are accountable to God (Romans 14:11). Accountability is a way to measure our successes and failures. As God's stewards, accountability is an obligation that love accepts because it reveals what we have done. There is no defense, just a presentation of our actions. A clear conscience is not afraid of accountability. Without accountability, stewards will experience an atrophy of love that becomes political and judgmental.



Responsible people will make their mistakes right.

Trustworthiness is the result of having a dependable and reliable relationship with Him.



God's accountability has three characteristics: First, somehow God keeps a record of our lives. He numbers the hairs on our heads (Matthew 10:30), knows our every word (Matthew 12:36), and knows those who fear Him (Malachi 3:16). "[F]rom his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth" (Psalm 33:14, *NIV*). He is driven by a heart of love (Jeremiah 31:3). Second, God expects us to be responsible for our actions (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Galatians 6:4, 5). Responsible people will make their mistakes right. How we deal with our actions reveals true character. "I must know that the grace of God is in my own heart; that my own life is in accordance with his will; that I am walking in his footsteps. Then my words will be true, my actions will be right."² And third, accountability is not a spectator sport. Neither is it transferable. There are no minimum requirements available; a full participation is required (Romans 14:12). Individual accountability will be dismantled if any one of these three characteristics is missing.

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TRUSTWORTHINESS

I was sitting on a plane next to an off-duty airline pilot. We were talking about a commercial pilot's flying skills when he commented, "We only promise to get you down." After a second, longer pause, I said, "Thank you very much; I appreciate that." I figured he was as happy to be on the ground as I was. Is an airline pilot trustworthy? Yes. However, the pilot can't give you a 100% promise of a safe landing. Knowing this risk, we trust the pilot and fly anyway. When we land safely, it says something about the pilot's skill and that our trust was well placed.

Is Jesus trustworthy? Yes – 100%! "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8, *NKJV*). Is Lucifer trustworthy? "For he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44, *NIV*). Are we trustworthy? We may say, "I love God," but our actions reveal the truth. Trustworthiness is what people recognize in us when our talk matches our walk (see 2