

23. Who can I trust?

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

“Once bitten, twice shy”: most people have experienced a betrayal that has left them reluctant to trust a particular person – or people in general – ever again.

One of the most damaging aspects of Derrick Bird’s crimes is that he was, or seemed to be, such an ordinary man. It begs the question, do we really know each other as well as we thought we did?

There is a danger that just at the time we need to try to pull together as a community, that insidious question will undermine us.

People say, “Trust is earned”. There’s truth in that. But it’s not the whole truth, because Bird had earned the trust of many people, but then betrayed it.

Besides, who can say with any degree of integrity, “I have *earned* and therefore *deserve* the trust of others”? If we understand our weaknesses; if we acknowledge how fragile our best intentions are, we will be very wary of making such statements, even though we fully intend to be trustworthy.

Jesus Christ is the only person who has fully earned our trust. He alone is worthy of it, because he’s the one man in history with the power to keep his word absolutely. He deserves our trust so much that he has the right to demand it.

Where does that leave us in every day life? If Jesus is the *only* one we can trust, how can I trust anyone else?

We need to think of trust as a gift. To be precise, as 1 Corinthians 13 tells us, it’s an aspect of self-giving love. When I love someone, I give them the gift of trusting them.

We need wisdom here. We wouldn’t dream of entrusting a recovering alcoholic with an errand to the alcohol aisle of the supermarket. We may love people and still not trust them for certain functions; but because we love them we do need to give them the dignity of taking them seriously. We need to believe in them.

“But what if my trust is betrayed and I get hurt?” There’s no *if* about it! We will be let down sometimes and we will let others down. But we can live with the risk of trusting fallible people when our trust is anchored in the infallible God, and in his infallible Son, Jesus.

That was the way of Jesus himself. He entrusted his teaching and mission to all his disciples, including Judas. No doubt it hurt when Judas betrayed him. But Jesus trusted his infallible Father to use even that betrayal for his ultimate good.

If you trust God, you are set free to give the gift of trust graciously to any one.