

# KIRBSTONES

## ALONG THE NARROW WAY

**curb-stone** (kürb'stön') - *noun* - one of the stones or a range of stones forming a curb, as along a sidewalk or roadway. Historically, the curbstones were placed vertically along the edges of the roadbed and the paving material was backfilled against the row of curbstones. The curbstones served <sup>(1)</sup>to hold the material in the roadbed, <sup>(2)</sup>to prevent the scattering of the material along the edges, and <sup>(3)</sup>to define the road itself from all the adjoining areas.

<sup>13</sup> "ENTER THROUGH THE NARROW GATE. FOR WIDE IS THE GATE AND BROAD IS THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO DESTRUCTION, AND MANY ENTER THROUGH IT.  
<sup>14</sup> BUT SMALL IS THE GATE AND NARROW THE ROAD THAT LEADS TO LIFE, AND ONLY A FEW FIND IT." - MATTHEW 7:13-14 - NIV

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**T**rust—as a noun—occurs eighty-seven times in Scripture, without including its siblings: *trusted, trusting, and trustworthy*. When we include all the words that we associate with issues of trust, we find many, many examples in both testaments of the Bible. *Trust is a very big deal!*

Jesus knows all too well that violations of trust, as well as mistrust, can cast dark clouds over relationships, and the effects of each have the capability to destroy people and relationships in their wake. His teaching, which follows the exit of Judas at their gathering for the Passover celebration and Peter's declaration to lay his life down for him in the chapter prior to John 14, is Jesus' way of countering their activity with a teaching moment for all the disciples gathered there in the room.

Persons invited to lead groups and organizations in the twenty-first century are also called to build trust between the members of the organization and themselves. It is in the exercise of building trust that we clearly understand that there must be a relationship between the leader and persons being led. And, it is in this relationship that trust is nurtured and matured.

Edgar and Peter Schein taught in a recent seminar that leadership is more than the actions of one person; *it implies a relationship*. Trust is intrinsic in any successful leadership. Peter Schein teaches that while we stress transparency, *neither* accountability *nor* transparency guarantee trust. It is defined as a firm belief in another's reliability and truth.

While all the branches of the United States military clearly understand the essential nature of and the building of trust, we do not necessarily ascribe a military hierarchy to our local congregations. I saw the evidence of the bond of trust that was built between our son and his buddies during his time of service in the Marine Corps. We do not want this hierarchical and military chain of command in our local churches, but those folks do trust the capability and character of others up and down the chain of command.

Trust is vital among individuals in any organization. And, that same trust was central to Jesus' disciples' interactions with him and with one another, as they traveled and grew together.

The local congregation—*like any other organization*—must be moored in trust. Trust has to be culturally acceptable for it to permeate the organization, and it must always come from the top.

Peter Drucker is the one responsible for teaching us that *culture eats strategy for breakfast*. Mark Fields, former CEO at Ford, took this concept further with his *culture eats strategy for breakfast, lunch, and dinner!* And, yes, *it does!*

The point is that while we cannot—*with any success*—separate these two pieces of the corporate puzzle, changing the culture and implementing the strategy of the organization must come from the top. Real change, while some folks think it can bubble up from the bottom, must be visionary, big-picture stuff.

The corporate vision and mission must be communicated from the corner office to all of the folks from top to bottom—*throughout the company*—completely, clearly, and often—*with expectations that everyone in the organization will buy in*—if real change is to occur.

The same principles apply to the local church or the entire denomination, and we have Jesus' example working to a large degree with his twelve selected followers. We witness betrayal on the part of Judas, which quickly led to his death, and we see Peter's denial, as well as his return as a trusted member of the little band, going on to greater things.

Building trust is paramount in the local church, and it begins at the top with the pastor's trust in the One who sent him. Trust is the fulcrum leveraging our faith into the future of the church.

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**1 “Do not let your hearts  
be troubled. Trust in  
God; trust also in me.”  
John 14:1 — NIV**