

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5-6  
Message: A Ministry of Trusting  
February 10, 2019; Bethel CRC, Brockville, ON  
Pastor Jack Van de Hoef

Last year we had a gentleman by the name of Micah Van Dijk come to meet with and speak to our youth. He spoke about being discerning in how we listen to music. He showed us how music can influence the way people think. I continue to receive his occasional instructional emails.

In a recent email, he referred to a new single by Ariana Grande. Her song, *7 Rings*, has shot up to #1 on the Billboard charts and broke the record for most streams in a 24-hour period on Spotify. I'm not recommending this song, but we can learn a lot from the lyrics of such a wildly popular song. Here is the first verse and a refrain that gets repeated. (Think of the tune, "My Favourite Things")

Breakfast at Tiffany's and bottles of bubbles  
Girls with tattoos who like getting in trouble  
Lashes and diamonds, ATM machines  
Buy myself all of my favourite things

I want it, I got it, I want it, I got it  
I want it, I got it, I want it, I got it  
You like my hair? Gee, thanks, just bought it  
I see it, I like it, I want it, I got it

So many people are listening to this song and its message. They are soaking in what it is saying. From just these few words that I have shared, you can hear that anyone who listens is hearing the celebration of, what Micah Van Dijk suggests, are the four pillars of an advanced capitalist ideology as identified by Berard, Penner, & Bartlett (2010, pp. 63-65).

These pillars are:

- 1) Youth as consumers
- 2) Youth as self-absorbed
- 3) Youth as rebellious
- 4) Youth as only peer-oriented

This song feeds the thinking of "I trust in me. My ideas. My things. My meaning."

This isn't just a youth problem, as if youth are the only people who are self-absorbed consumers or rebellious and peer-oriented. This song is an example to raise the question about where we place our trust. How much trust is placed in ourselves? Our things? Our

ideas?

This idea of trust is an interesting concept. Whom do you trust? How does one earn trust? Is trust something solid, reliable, firm? Or is it something that is easily lost, like writing in the sand? Is it possible to trust anyone? Anything?

There's a trendy little acronym that's been making the rounds in management circles – VUCA, which stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. The U.S. Army War College first introduced the concept in 1987 to describe the new realities after the Cold War ended. It has become more popular since 2002. This term, VUCA, refers to that perfect storm of circumstances of life that sometimes hit individuals, families, and churches. It's what happens when you face a string of complicated and ever-changing "unknown unknowns." Or as an article in the Harvard Business Review put it, VUCA is a catchall phrase for "Hey, it's crazy out there!"

A simple example of the unknowns and unexpected is to try to explain why a certain video goes viral, but a well-researched and designed advertising campaign falls flat. Or finding best laid plans collapsing because of an unexpected failure of the economy combined with extreme weather and an unexpected terrorist attack all at once. How did that happen? Now what!?!?

Can we trust anything anymore? Can we trust that the future will have any kind of stability?

Or, another angle is the question: Can we still *have* trust, even if things fall apart, or in spite of things falling apart? Or do we resign to live in doubt, uncertainty, ambiguity, and cynicism? It won't work anyway, something will probably go wrong, so why bother. Can we trust anyone? Anything?

It's interesting that in the stories that were shared by members of this church, one of the values that was prominent was the value of trust. There are two ways to understand this value. There is vertical trust, or trust in God. There is horizontal trust, or trust in each other. I would suggest that one reason we can trust each other is because we first of all have a trust in God.



When we know and believe in a God who is trustworthy, we have a peace and stability in our lives. Even in a time of VUCA, of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, we

know that we have a place, a person, where there is a stable foundation, a place to trust.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding.” This means believing that God is real. This means believing that God is faithful. This means believing that God desires what is best for us. He loves us so much that he sent his Son to pay the punishment for our wrongs, so that we could be children of this loving God and Father. True faith is knowledge and trust.

We take the bread and cup of communion as a reminder that we trust God. We can trust that God loves us. He nourishes our trust with his presence, which is as real as the bread and the cup.

We can trust this God with all our heart. He will lead us in our paths of life. Those paths might have their own volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. Life doesn't always (or often) go as planned. But we do not have to be afraid or overwhelmed because we know the God who is in control, the God who cares. In that way, these paths are straight, for they lead us in a walk of trust in God and serve the purposes of a faithful God.

We know this trust in God from his Word, from stories in the Bible that reveal his faithfulness. Go back to verse 1, "Do not forget my teaching, keep my commands in your heart."

This is more than the set of legal rules from the Bible. It is God's teaching and instruction. It is God's directive for his people which not only tells us what we may and may not do. This teaching tells us about God and his purpose and his work in this world. We find this teaching, these commands given directly in the Bible. Keep them in your heart. Don't just put them in your head so you can recite them and list them. Keep them in your heart—that is where they will make a difference in how you live. The heart is seen as the centre of our being from which comes the direction for our lives. Love the Lord with all your heart. Keep my commands in your heart.

You have to *get* those commands and stories in your heart in order to be able to keep them there. That can only happen by study and meditation on the teaching and commands of God. That means spending time in the Bible, reading the stories as a family, daily applying it to your own personal life, daily drinking in the instruction of God, making God's teaching part of your life-blood. It includes worship to praise God and to hear his Word. It can include time of study with others.

We also know that we can trust God from the stories that other people share of God's faithfulness in their lives. It may be family or friends who tell of their experiences of trust in God and the blessing and peace which they realized. That's why it's so important to share our stories of faith as reminders to others that the Lord is someone we can trust with all our heart.

From that trust that we have in God, we can then become people of trust. This is the horizontal trust. We trust each other. We live in such a way to show ourselves worthy of trust.

Going back to verse 3, we find a quality that helps us to become people of trust: "Let love and faithfulness never leave you." There's something unselfish about those words. You love and are faithful to other people. Because of the consistent, reliable, trustworthy way you deal with others, they gain respect for you and trust you.

Let it never leave you. Let it become an integral part of your character, an automatic response of who you are and how you live in relationship with others. Let love for God and faithfulness to him never leave you.

To be trustworthy is to be true to our word. We mean what we say and we say what we mean.

As followers of Jesus, we desire to become like Christ. As we know Jesus to be trustworthy, we want to be people who can be trusted, individually and as a church family.

For example, we have a safe-church policy which guides how we act in our church and our church ministries in relationship with each other. That policy reminds leaders to be trusted people. It communicates to those who participate in our church ministries that they can trust leaders and this church to be a safe place.

Another example is in the ordination of elders and deacons. As part of their ordination they promise to honour confidentiality of personal matters entrusted to them. This is a reminder to all of us to be a church family where we can trust each other to respect privacy and confidentiality. We trust each other for care and support, without the fear of gossip.

As we move in our service from hearing God's Word to celebrating the sacrament, we testify to our trust in God who loves us and sent his Son as our Saviour. We testify to our trust in each other as we are united to one another in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Trust. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. He is faithful to guide your life. Testify to your trust in God as an encouragement to others. Be a person who is trusted.

Amen.