

## WHO'S IN CHARGE?

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A seasoned executive was recently asked if his 30-plus-years of experience are of any help in this time of upheaval. "I've never seen anything like this before. I have no experience to draw on that comes anywhere close to what we're going through."

His comment is echoed by investors, politicians, even meteorologists.

It raises the question, "In times of great uncertainty, where do we put our trust?"

We often use the terms 'faith' and 'trust' interchangeably. In reality, they represent two different dimensions.

Faith is the conviction that something can be believed; trust is the conviction that faith can be acted upon.

Faith can exist in the absence of trust, but trust cannot exist apart from faith.

Faith is as much a secular reality as it is a spiritual matter. It is not confined to matters of "religion" but can be found in every sphere of life. It undergirds how we view the world and what we think about ourselves. It shapes our perspective and largely determines the meaning we attribute to particular events.

While many of us pride ourselves on the logic of our belief system, in the end it is more emotional than logical, shaped more by intangibles than things we can nail down.

But logical or not, faith consists of privately held convictions that may or may not be talked about or exhibited publicly. Even our close friends may be largely unaware of our deeply held articles of faith.

There is some safety in that. After all, if others are unaware of what we believe, we are under no obligation to act upon our faith. Faith that is undeclared need not impinge on our daily lives, at least at the conscious level.

Nor need it get in the way of our relationship with others. If faith is largely private, there is little reason to question our own or other's behaviours, little reason to 'take stands' on moral or other grounds. We can get along with almost anyone, and engage in almost any kind of behaviour.

If we keep our faith simply as the conviction that something can be believed, we need not act on it. We may have great faith in a financial advisor, for example, but never put that faith to the test. We may be able to articulate our religious faith, but never demonstrate any evidence of it impacting our daily lives.

For faith to be translated into action, we need to have trust. We need to trust the one, or the thing, in which we have faith. Trust is the conviction that faith can be acted upon. It *requires* action. Apart from action, faith has no real expression.

Trust always involves a leap. It is the difference between contemplating and doing, between believing and acting. The tourist may have faith that the bungee cord he's attached to will snap him back from otherwise certain death in the river below; only trust will get him to throw himself out into the air.

Trust also involves risk. While we may do our best to limit our exposure, risk is an inevitable part of dealing with people.

In most cases people do not deliberately defraud others, take advantage of them, or otherwise seek to advance themselves at others' expense. They apply human judgment and human wisdom to the knowledge and information they have available and make the best decisions or offer the best advice they can under the circumstances. Only a few are deliberate and calculating, taking advantage of those who trust them, abusing their positions of influence and power.

But whether well-intentioned or devious, the actions taken by people we trust can have devastating consequences. Retirement plans can be wiped out; homes lost; businesses go bankrupt.

Little wonder then, as stock markets tumble and companies face the real prospect of bankruptcy, as people wonder whether they will be able to keep their homes, as political manoeuvring raises questions about the stability of government, people are asking, "Who or what should I believe in, and who can I trust?"

At its root, the question of trust is always a question about who we are willing to put in charge of things most directly affecting us. Who do I put in charge of my life? In charge of the decisions affecting me? In charge of my family's future? Who is in charge of my job, my career, my retirement?

While we might prefer to put ourselves in charge, even the most self-sufficient among us knows that we are not totally in charge of all areas of life. We trust parts of our life to other people: our doctor, our dentist, our investment advisor, our broker, our insurance agent, travel agent, teacher, purveyors of information on the internet, in the newspapers, and other media. We may have faith in, but not trust, our primary doctor or others, and so seek second opinions on matters of supreme importance to us. But in the final analysis we do place fallible human beings in charge of various aspects of our life.

For the first time in years, many people are being forced to reconsider who they put in charge. The question ultimately comes down to, who is sufficiently trustworthy, as demonstrated repeatedly over a long period of time, to be in charge of my life, and in charge of those I love?

Who should our leaders be looking to as they try to bring wisdom and understanding to their decision-making?

The answer is straightforward.

There is only One who has been there from the beginning, only One who is completely trustworthy, only One who will not let us down or abuse our trust. That one is God, as revealed by His Son, Jesus Christ. He is worthy of trust. But before we can trust him, we have to be clear about our faith in Him.

He is not just any God, defined in any way we choose to define Him. He is self-defined and chooses to make Himself known in such a way that we do not need to wonder as to His qualities, characteristics, even His very essence. He has made Himself known through Jesus Christ, and set forth a compelling record of His interaction with human beings, in the pages of the Bible.

He has demonstrated His power as creator of the universe. We need not hesitate to bring everything to Him. After all, if He created it, it belongs to Him. And if there are things in a fallen world, or in our lives, that don't seem to belong as part of a creation that He declared to be "good," then we can bring that to Him and lay it at His feet too, in the conviction that He is able to do something with it. He can remove it, or He can transform it. But He is not compelled to leave it as it is; He is not powerless. Since God is the supreme creator, there is nothing bigger than Him, and nothing over which He does not ultimately have dominion, including our present circumstances.

He has revealed Himself as a God of infinite wisdom, knowing the secrets of the universe, and certainly the means for steering us through our current situation.

He has declared His love for individuals, and His desire to be in relationship with people – not forcing Himself on another, or shunning someone who doesn't measure up, or holding grudges, or withholding forgiveness when forgiveness is requested. He wants to be the primary player in the life of each person, the One we trust implicitly with every decision we are faced with and with each change in personal and family circumstance. He wants to lead us, guide us, sustain us, care for us.

But He will not overwhelm us.

He wants to be in charge of our life, our family, our career, our business – of everything about us.

But He will not force Himself on us.

He waits to be invited in.

We need to move from faith to trust. Trust puts wheels to faith. We may declare our faith in God, but only trust can put that faith into action.

We may need a palace revolt to get ourselves off the throne, or to remove others that we have trusted with part or all of our lives. We need to install the King of Kings and Lord of Lords as the One in charge.

Then we need to entrust our circumstances, our families, our friends, our companies – everything – to God. And God, who is faithful, will do what only God can do.