

Trust and affirming faith

What Does This Mean?

Distrust is an actively negative attitude. Cynicism is a deep distrust allied with pessimism and suspicion. All aspects of life involve trust at some level, and distrust can hamper learning. We place trust in doctors, nurses, architects, teachers, and the people we work with. Outright gullibility is not a virtue, but without some level of trust we could not function or form relationships.

It is impossible to go through life without trust: that is to be imprisoned in the worst cell of all, oneself. Graham Greene

The cynic puts all human actions into two classes—openly bad and secretly bad. Henry Ward Beecher

Faith is closely related to trust; it involves a trust that reaches beyond the immediate and everyday. To disregard faith in any aspect of the curriculum is to ignore an aspect of life that has been significant for most of humanity through the ages and remains so today for people around the world.

For a Christian, faith is about assurance, confidence, and trust. It is a growing trust in God that is based on evidence of God's character and experience of him ([1 Corinthians 1:9](#); [Psalm 22:5](#)). Faith in Christ is a means by which people come into a close relationship with God ([John 1:12](#)).

Reason is not the opposite of faith. [Reason and faith](#) can go hand in hand; in fact, all reasoning has to start from somewhere, something trusted as a starting point. Faith cannot be proved by reason ([Hebrews 11:1](#)), but that is not to say that reasoning is not part of faith. [Asking questions and probing issues](#) can be a sign of a growing faith.

If a man fights his way through his doubts to the conviction that Jesus Christ is Lord, he has attained to a certainty that the man who unthinkingly accepts things can never reach. William Barclay

Trust in one another is built by honesty and kindness ([Luke 16:18](#)). Learning to trust appropriately can be difficult when we have been disappointed, but [hope](#) and faith in the

underlying presence of God's goodness can motivate trust. Trust makes us vulnerable and requires wisdom. Jesus told his followers to be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves ([Matthew 10:16](#)).

What Does This Mean in School?

Trust can be nurtured by an emphasis on honest and caring relationships within teaching and learning and by how we teach and learn.

- Ways of learning that require mutual trust and depending on each other can be built into lessons. This experience of learning to trust others can open the way for reflection on what it means to trust God.
- Faith in God can be nurtured, as appropriate, by asking questions of faith, creating stimulating contexts where questions of faith arise, and responding to such questions in faith-affirming ways.
- Issues of trust and faith can be highlighted in discussions of curriculum content, such as in the lives of historical or literary characters.
- Opportunities for worship, prayer, and (in some schools) the sacraments/ordinances can nurture faith. Insights from various subjects can be shared as part of worship.

Think of a time when students asked questions about faith. How did you respond? Does the nature of the response depend on the subject? Identify a lesson or unit where questions of faith often are not asked (e.g., music or sports). Are there ways such questions could arise? How could teaching and learning signal that asking these questions is acceptable? For example, you could have a faith-related quote from a famous musician, scientist, athlete, or artist connected to the subject as part of a display.



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