

Kids in the Wheelbarrow: Cultivating Trust in the Home

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Charles Blondin (1824-1897) was famous for crossing Niagara Falls several times on a tight rope while completing daring feats, including traversing the rope blindfolded, on stilts, in a potato sack, pushing a stove, cooking an omelet and eating it, and pushing a wheelbarrow across. It is rumored after one such event; Charles asked the crowd if they believed he could complete his tricks again, the crowd responding with a resounding "Yes!" Charles then asked the crowd if they believed he could cross the tightrope with an individual in a wheelbarrow, again the crowd responding with a "Yes!" Charles then asked for a volunteer, the crowd responding with utter silence (and no volunteer). The crowd had just seen Charles complete amazing feats and yet no one had enough trust in his abilities to volunteer to jump in the wheelbarrow. As parents, are we cultivating an environment where our kids will get in our wheelbarrow?

What is trust? If I were to poll ten people on their definition of trust I would most likely receive ten different responses. Webster defines trust as: "(a) assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something and (b) one in which confidence is placed." Have you considered what your definition of trust is, and how does one gain or lose your trust? How does your spouse or children define trust? How do you know when you trust someone or that person trusts you? In what ways do you show your trust or lack of trust in another individual?

Here are some practical examples of a parent eroding trust in the home:

- A teenage daughter pours her heart out to her mother. Later, the daughter overhears her mother on the phone sharing, without permission, her innermost secrets.
- A dad continuously promises his son he will take him outside to play catch. Instead of fulfilling his promises to his son, he consistently chooses other activities.
- A young boy is having problems at school with other kids on the playground. He is frustrated because he tells his parents what is happening, but they never believe him.

Do you follow through on what you say? For one week, write down each time you told your child one thing and did another. What patterns emerge? Do your words match your actions? Discovering your response and your family's responses to these questions will help you begin to develop and cultivate trust in the home. No one is perfect. In the real world and in any family, unexpected things happen where we may not be able to follow through on our words and actions. However, we must strive for consistency because our words and actions are watched by our children.

Charles Blondin did manage to carry one individual across the tight rope on his back-his manager, Harry Colcord. Are you cultivating an environment of trust in your home? If asked, would your children jump in your wheelbarrow? Let us remember the words of John the apostle, "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18 NASB).

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