



Hope Is Built Upon Trusting Loving Relationships

Rev. Dr. Fr. Stépanos Dingilian © 2011

Hope is built upon trusting loving relationships and not upon ideals or concepts of what “life should be.” In order for a person to have hope in life, he or she must have at least one loving trusting relationship. This is especially true for a teenager who is looking to differentiate between abstract ideals and real life ongoing relationships.

Referring to the Gospels and the life of Christ, we see that indeed he loved everyone, including those who crucified him. Yet, he only shared his vision and plans with a small group of Disciples and followers whom he trusted. There were two reasons for this. First, he often stated that, “it is given for you (meaning the Disciples) to understand the secrets of the Kingdom.” In other words, only these trusted persons truly understood his message, his Good News. Others were more interested in having the results of the miracles such as the healing and the food. Second, even with these Disciples, he shared gradually what was to happen in the future. This is very interesting: Even though Jesus trusted the Disciples, but he needed to give them responsibility in a gradual manner, not all at once. By doing this, Jesus built his hope in the relationships with the Disciples as well as allowed the Disciples to gain confidence and build hope in their relationship with Jesus.

The relationship between the parents and their teen offspring has a very similar pattern as that of Christ and the Disciples. First, the parents need to help the teen discern between peers who can truly be trusted and those who are merely passing acquaintances. To a teen, everyone appears as loving, caring, and supportive. But in reality, only a few of these persons are truly dependable friends with whom a trusting relationship can be established. Trying to form relationships with non-trusting persons could result in betrayal, anger, low self-esteem, and lead to loss of hope that one could have trusting friends in life.

A second aspect in developing a trusting relationship for a teen is the gradual development of a trusted relationship. Jesus knew that even his trusted Disciples could embrace only so much of the relationship, otherwise they’d be overwhelmed. Likewise, a teen needs to understand that a trusted person can only embrace a certain amount of time, effort, and emotional sharing in a relationship. If a teen does not appreciate this, then a trusting relationship does not form. Either the relationship with another person becomes too overwhelming or too shallow. Just as a growing infant must be fed the appropriate amount of milk, not too little or not too much, likewise a growing trusting relationship must be ‘fed’ the appropriate amount of time, effort, and emotional investment. A human being needs to learn to do this, and the time to learn is during the teen years, and the persons from whom to learn is one’s own parents.

The teen years are wonderful and exciting years to form new and lasting trusting relationships that become sources of hope. Yet, these relationships could form only if a teen has guidance and support to discern between those with whom such lasting trusting relationships could be formed, and those who cannot. This guidance needs to come from a teen’s own parents, who by their own example need to show how they build and maintain trusting relationships over the years.