



# THE WAYS

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**ASSUME POSITIVE INTENT.** Decide to trust that other members are being fair, honest, and concerned for the well-being of our church. Set aside your own judgments and preconceived notions. Surrender the urge to criticize and judge—it doesn't help.

1. How does someone get your trust?

**READ Matthew 7:1-6**

1. What does judgment have to do with trust?
2. How do you want to be judged? How will that affect how you want to judge others?
3. What is verse 6 all about? How does it connect to the way?

**Scenario:** You don't really know Eustace (random name, sorry if your name is Eustace.) but you have heard people say he can be a stickler and doesn't really care what people think. When people talk about him you get the general feeling that he cares more about keeping power than about using that power well. This Sunday in Church Eustace approached to talk to you about how you might be able to help him "grow the church"

1. What are some of the reasons you might think he is asking you?
2. What can go wrong if you assume the best? / What can be missed if you assume the worst?
3. Should you see to look past his reputation? Why/why not?
4. Why don't you want to assume positive intent?

We don't *Assume Positive Intent* because people are perfect, but because we are living out of being forgiven. Paranoia is an easy way to protect yourself, but it doesn't do a great job at building communities. We gather together as the church for one reason, to follow Jesus. The only way that this community works is if we seek to "hope all things" (1 Cor. 13:7) and look to trust one another. We *Assume Positive Intent* because it bonds a community together in hope.

**PRAY TOGETHER.**

(Pray that God would remove bitterness from you that keeps you from trusting.)

## DAILY Devotional

**MONDAY:** *READ:* Prov. 31:11. *THINK:* In describing a wife of noble character, Proverbs declares that the husband trusts her. No matter how wonderful your spouse's character, if you are distrustful of them, their goodness cannot shine through. It is the same in the church community. When you don't *Assume Positive Intent*, you paint many good actions with paranoia. *PRAY:* that the Spirit would show you tend to distrust.

**TUESDAY:** *READ:* Titus 3:2. *THINK:* We are told not to speak evil of one another, but your words come from your thoughts. Do not merely control your words, but steer your thoughts about one another. Why assume that a fellow believer plans evil for you? Instead, *Assume Positive Intent* and choose to avoid evil thoughts about each other. *PRAY:* that God would remove your tendencies to distrust.

**WEDNESDAY:** *READ:* Gal. 5:15. *THINK:* It is natural to protect yourself and natural to distrust. We have all been burned before. Some have been hurt so deeply that trust is near impossible to give out. But the church is destroyed when trust is lacking. We bite and devour one another seeking ulterior motives for words and actions. When you *Assume Positive Intent* you might get hurt sometimes, but the alternative is worse. *PRAY:* for wisdom in learning to trust when it's hard.

**THURSDAY:** *READ:* 1 Peter 4:8. *THINK:* Trust can only exist longterm *with* forgiveness. We don't *Assume Positive Intent* because the church is filled with perfect people who will never harm you. We *Assume Positive Intent* because the church is made of people who are forgiven. Our love for one another will cover over a multitude of sins. Love overcomes past, present, and future sins allowing us to trust despite being wronged. *PRAY:* that God would help you forgive.

**FRIDAY:** *READ:* Matt. 5:37. *THINK:* Often the least trusting are the least trustworthy. We can assume the worst, because we know our sinful and prideful inclinations and project them on others. It may not be you, but maybe you struggle to *Assume Positive Intent* because you struggle to speak honestly and truthfully. *PRAY:* that the Spirit would be the Spirit of truth in your life.

**THURSDAY:** *READ:* 1 Cor. 13:7. *THINK:* "Love hopes all things." We can't say that enough. The Christian life is built on hope: hope for Christ's return, hope in the world's renewal, hope in our resurrection, hope in our perfection and union with God. We quite literally live in and by hope. Our love for one another "hopes all things." *Assume Positive Intent* because we live in hope of perfection together. *PRAY:* that God would realize the hope of a perfected community here at FPC more and more.