



Who's in Your Circle of Trust?

(Finding Flow Through Community)

— brian j plachta

When the CEO of a business takes the helm of a corporation, they often select a board of directors to guide them and keep them focused.

Similarly, when a person is elected to public office, their first task is to create a cabinet of wise men and women to help them discern how to best serve their constituents.

As Jesus began his public ministry, he, too, selected a small group of trusted individuals to accompany him on his earthly journey.

It's the same with us. If we want to create balanced lives, experience inner peace, and grow spiritually, we need to be surrounded by people who help us discover our true self and how we're being invited by the Holy Spirit to grow.

In the movie, *Meet the Fockers*, Jack Byrnes, the main character, calls this collection of people his "circle of trust."

Writer Wayne Muller puts it this way: "We are called to be strong companions and clear mirrors to one another, to seek those who reflect with compassion and a keen eye how we are doing, whether we seem centered or off course . . . we need the nourishing company of others to create the circle needed for growth, freedom, and healing."

WHO'S IN YOUR CIRCLE OF TRUST?



Here's an exercise to determine who's in your Inner Circle of Trust and who might be missing.

Step One: Pull out a blank sheet of paper. Draw a large circle on it. Put the word "community" at the top.

Step Two: In the circle, write the names of people who come to mind as you focus on these questions:

- **Your Inner Circle of Trust.** Who are the handful of people God has placed in your Inner Circle—those who nudge you to grow in spirit, mind, and body? It might include your significant other, family members, your church, and/or spiritual friends. It might also include someone who "appeared" in your life just when you needed them.
- **Wisdom Teachers.** Who is your teacher? Who inspires and graces you with deeper understanding and wisdom? It might be a public speaker, a spiritual director, a writer whose books inspire you with new insights, a hero or saint, or a relative. Who do you look to as a source of spiritual wisdom in your life?
- **God.** Where do you place God in your Inner Circle of Trust?
- **Toxic People or Things.** Is there anyone or anything you feel the God-nudge to move out of your inner circle of trust? Someone or something with a negative influence on your life? I realized the other day the "sky-is-falling news media" is one of the toxic things I need to keep at a distance because it pulls me into fear and negativity.
- **MIA (Missing In Action).** As the seasons of our lives change, we need to replace those who are no longer available to us due to aging, death, life changes, etc. Is there anything or anyone missing from your community? If so, who or what? As my children grew and left our family nest, I realized I needed a spiritual friend—someone to encourage and walk alongside me as a buddy. And after lots of prayer and searching, God surprised me with the spiritual friend I needed.

Step Three: After you've finished drawing your Circle of Trust and naming the people and things in it, consider doing this:

- **Sit with God in Quiet.**
- **Review your Circle of Trust.**
- **Give thanks for those the Creator has placed in your Community.**
- **Pray about and distance yourself from the toxic people or things in your life.**
- **Discern who or what is missing.**
- **Ask God to lead you to those you should add to your spiritual community.**
- **Take a risk—seek, find, and embrace those you desire to form your Inner Circle of Trust.**

It takes a bit of prayer, searching, and quiet reflection to create a community of trusted loved ones, friends, and spiritual advisors with whom God wishes to bless you. The effort is well worth it. You are worth it. And when you find those individuals who gift your life, give thanks—you're finding flow.

—Brian J. Plachta