



Marriage

SEMESTER

3

MATTERS

*Small Group
Leader's Guide*

Trust: The Tearing Down

A N D B U I L D I N G U P

S E M E S T E R

T H R E E

WEEK SEVEN



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[Much of this teaching is adapted from *After the Affair: Healing the Pain and Rebuilding Trust When a Partner Has Been Unfaithful* by Janis Abrahms Spring.]

I. The breaking of trust can occur in a variety of realms within a relationship:

- A. _____ **Physical** _____
- B. _____ **Sexual** _____
- C. _____ **Emotional** _____
- D. _____ **Financial** _____

II. It can look like:

- A. One partner making an extravagant purchase without the foreknowledge of the other when an agreement had been made not to do so.

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W E E K



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- B. A pattern of one spouse making promises she/he does not keep (about spending time together, about not working late, about consulting one another before making arrangements with the in-laws, about dealing with drug, alcohol, or sexual addictions etc.).
- C. Repeating to someone else what your spouse has asked you to keep in confidence.
- D. Boundaries that continue to be crossed when a partner is verbally abusive—and then promises to change that are not kept.
- E. One partner having an emotional and/or sexual affair.

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“Betrayal not only inflames doubt and severs relationship, but also inevitably deepens hatred for ourselves. The person who is betrayed often laments: How could I have been so stupid? How could I have trusted someone who was so deceitful? The shame of being taken advantage of increases the fury of self-incrimination.”
The Wounded Heart, Dan Allender

III. A roadmap towards restoring trust...

- A. Low-cost Trust Builders.
1. These are behaviors that the hurt partner desires as ways his/her partner can make him/her feel more loved, appreciated, and cared for.
 2. The unfaithful partner makes a list as well, requesting specific behaviors that will make him/her feel that his/her efforts to rebuild trust are making progress towards healing.
 3. Things about the list:
 - a. Be as specific and positive as possible.
 - b. These are not demands but requests.
 - c. As you see your partner meet some of these requests, make note of them in a journal and affirm him/her for his/her efforts.





d. If possible, put your lists in a _____ **visible** _____ place.

e. Examples (taken from *After the Affair* by Janis Abrahms Spring):

- Give me a specific, accurate itinerary when you travel out of town.
- Express nonsexual affection to me.
- Strive to be more understanding when I need to work late; don't assume I'm trying to keep from spending time with you.
- Make it home from work in time for us to eat together as a family.
- Tell me when you withdraw money from our bank account.
- Bring me receipts of your purchases.
- Invite me to meet you at your office for lunch.
- Communicate when you feel proud of me and why.
- Let me know if you like the way I look.
- Ask me what I'm thinking or feeling. Don't assume you know.
- Go to a budget seminar with me.
- Read a book together with me that addresses the issue we're dealing with.
- E-mail, voice-mail, or text-message me during the day when you think about me.
- Throw away your pornographic magazines.
- Seek counseling for help in breaking the patterns of verbal abuse.



B. High-cost Trust Rebuilders.

1. When the trust is broken at a deeper level, high-cost behaviors are needed to make significant progress towards healing the relationship.
2. Ironically, the hurt partner can often shoulder the bulk of the burden when deep trust is broken (through an affair, a discovery of sexual addiction, a financial crisis caused by the other partner's addiction to spending, etc.). It's the hurt partner's job to calm the rage inside, restore his/her lost sense of self, and control his/her obsession with revenge.
3. Often the unfaithful partner, once she/he has come clean, is eager and ready to move on and can even feel cleansed from the confession.
4. As such, high-cost trust rebuilders are necessary on the part of the unfaithful partner. It is not enough to simply say: "You can trust me now. I'm here to stay. That will not happen again." You must back your words with some "expensive" behaviors that truly indicate you mean what you say.
5. Things about the list:
 - a. These shouldn't be punitive.
 - b. These should be actions that either the hurt partner requests or you offer to do on your own.
 - c. This list is very subjective and needs to fit your situation.
 - d. Examples (taken from *After the Affair* by Janis Abrahms Spring):
 - Move out of town with me.
 - Answer all of my questions about the affair in front of a therapist.
 - Do whatever is necessary to give up drugs or alcohol (AA meetings, detox, etc).
 - Get into counseling.



- Place some of your money into a joint account.
- Each month show me your credit card statements, bank statements, and pay checks.

IV. Overcoming some roadblocks to change:

A. The **myth**: “My spouse should just know what I need if she/he really loves me. I shouldn’t have to make a list.”

The **truth**: This way of thinking is a set-up for hurt and disappointment. Your spouse is not a mind reader. Each of us is responsible for articulating our own needs.

B. The **myth**: “If I communicate what I need, it will just create more conflict. I’ll just deal with my frustrations myself.”

The **truth**: Unless we are willing to risk conflict, there can often be little authentic closeness. Requesting our partner to change, when done in love, can be a gift to the relationship rather than an attack on the person.

C. The **myth**: “My spouse is the one who hurt me and therefore should be the one to change first.”

The **truth**: Refusing to step out and make changes first may satisfy your anger and sense of indignation, but it will do nothing to move you towards healing.

D. The **myth**: “It doesn’t really count if my spouse is doing what I ask because it’s not spontaneous.”

The **truth**: When in a process of rebuilding and healing, we must value deliberate actions to rebuild the relationship. When we value feelings of love more than actions of love, we limit our spouse’s capacity to move towards us.



References:

- Allender, Dan B. *The Wounded Heart: Hope for Adult Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse*. Rev ed. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1990.
- Everts, Don. *Jesus with Dirty Feet: A Down-to-Earth Look at Christianity for the Curious and Skeptical*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999.
- Manning, Brennan. *Ruthless Trust: The Ragamuffin's Path to God*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002.
- Spring, Janis Abrahms. *After the Affair: Healing the Pain and Rebuilding Trust When a Partner Has Been Unfaithful*. New York: Harper Collins, 1996.





APPLICATION QUESTIONS

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1. What are some things from this teaching that were new to you?
2. What are some things you've heard before but were good reminders?
3. What are some ways in which trust has been broken in your relationship?
4. If you have been the "hurt partner," what are some things you've felt because of the broken trust? Sad? Angry? Scared? Stupid? Hopeless? Frustrated? Betrayed? Lonely? What are some ways you're dealing with those feelings?
5. If you have been the "unfaithful partner," what are some things you've felt because of the broken trust? Sad? Angry? Scared? Stupid? Hopeless? Remorseful? In what ways are you dealing with those feelings?
6. What do you think about creating a list of low-cost trust rebuilders? What are some things that might be on your list? In what ways do you think that might help begin rebuilding the trust in your relationship?
7. Is there a need for one partner in your relationship to create a list of high-cost trust rebuilders? What are some things that might need to be on the list? What are some ways those things could help rebuild trust?
8. Look over the list of myths in overcoming barriers to change. Which of those things do you think you'd have a tendency to struggle with? What are some things that might help you overcome the myth and embrace the truth?



HOMework

THIS WEEK, take time to create a “low-cost” trust rebuilders list and a “high-cost” trust rebuilders list. Set time to share the list with your spouse. Refer to the outline for help in creating your lists.

**One last thought on this week's topic,
“Trust: The Tearing Down and Building Up”:**



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DEVOTIONS

SPEND SOME TIME asking yourself and God the meaning of these passages.

DAY 1 / Psalm 13:5

Reflect on God's unfailing love. Can you choose to put your trust in Him as the Psalmist did?

DAY 2 / Proverbs 3:5

What does this verse mean to you as you experience heartbreak over broken trust from another person, such as your spouse?

DAY 3 / Psalm 29:11

Consider what God offers to you, especially during difficult times.

DAY 4 / Psalm 46

Read and reflect on God's strength, power, and presence in times of great need.

DAY 5 / 2 Samuel 7:28

It is comforting to know we can trust God and His words to us. What steps are you wanting to take in building trust again with your spouse?

DAY 6 / 1 Corinthians 13

Read the "Love Chapter" in the Bible. What aspects of love do you need to develop in your marriage? Ask God to help you grow in these areas.

NOTE: Please notify your small group leader if you need a copy of the Bible.