

Chapter 6: Trust

Learning Objective

The goal of this session is for couples to understand where trust has been broken in their relationship with each other and with God, and then to learn how to restore trust. They will know how to create a safe environment in which to resolve conflict, and establish protection against divisive suspicions and judgments.

General Session Assignments

1. Read Chapter Six of Marriage Rx: Prescription for a radical marriage.
2. Discuss together: What have I done to break trust?
3. Ask your spouse: What do I do that arouses your suspicion?
4. Take time this week to commend your spouse to another person.

Small Group Session One

1. **Discussion questions**
 - a. Recall a situation in which you felt total trust. Describe the setting and characters in the memory, and share how it made you feel.
 - b. Finish this sentence: You know you have a trust issue when ...
 - c. What is at the root of mistrust?
 - d. Who do you trust? Make a list by title, job description, or other characteristics.
 - e. What makes a person trustworthy?
2. **Group Exercise**
 - a. **Eye Contact.** This is a trust exercise because sometimes making eye contact is difficult for people. It requires a certain amount of trust and respect. For this activity, each person in the small group needs to pair up with another. Stand or sit facing each other, approximately three feet apart. The idea is to have them stare into their partner's eyes for at least 60 seconds. It can be helpful for them to hold each other's hands during this process.
 - b. **Mine Field.** This exercise requires a little preparation before it can be executed. Distribute obstacles haphazardly around an open area or room. These "mines" can be paper plates, furniture, or other such object. The small group is paired into teams of two. One team member will be blindfolded and cannot talk, while the other can see and talk but cannot enter the minefield or touch their blindfolded teammate. The blindfolded person must cross the room by obeying the seeing partner's instructions. Change roles so each person experiences both guiding and being led.
 - c. **Mine Field 2.** When the teams have practiced guiding and being guided it is

time for some friendly competition. The blindfolded team members will race across the room or area without coming into contact with a “mine” or another contestant. The guiding team members must remain in one place while giving instruction. The team that successfully crosses the room or area first will be declared winner.

- d. Discuss the results of the eye contact exercise and mine field game. What did you learn about trusting your partner? How did it feel to be open and vulnerable? What did the mine field winning team do that gave them an advantage? What was your most effective strategy for guiding? What would you do differently to communicate in a more effective way?
- e. These exercises are given to help people experience and learn trust. When distrust is in place, suspicions and judgment separate. Even the fear of sabotage can destroy a foundation of trust. How then can the church respond to Paul's warning to be on guard against savage wolves (Acts 20:29-30)? What must happen to build trust within the body of the church?

Small Group Session Two

1. Discussion Questions

- a. How do you respond to broken trust?
- b. What is the opposite of trust, and how is it expressed?
- c. How does broken trust or suspicion destroy oneness?

2. Group Exercise

- a. Brainstorm what it takes to create a safe environment, and list the things necessary for someone to feel safe. Give the couples ten minutes to work together on their recipe for a safe environment.
- b. Prepare a sheet for each person listing the following categories: Finances, Health, Decision making, Family leadership, Friends, Sexual intimacy, Parenting, Job (career), Church/spiritual, and Entertainment. Have each person rank on a scale of 1-10 how much they trust their spouse in each area.
- c. Create a bar chart of the combined results, posting the average score from the entire group in each area. The lowest scoring categories are the ones that the group lacks ability to trust. Discuss together what factors seem to make this be true. Then brainstorm ideas that might increase a couple's level of trust.
- d. Spend some time in group prayer confessing fear and anxiety in those areas, and asking for guidance that leads to peace and healing.

Small Group Session Three

1. Discussion Questions

- a. How can trust be restored in a relationship?
(Hint: Lost trust can not be rebuilt. It must be extended by the other party.)
- b. What examples can you share of rebuilt trust in your relationship? How has it changed you?

2. Group Exercise

- a. Take volunteers to role play as husband and wife the following scenarios. After they act out their responses, have the group discuss what went right and what went wrong in their communication.

Role play scenario # 1. A husband finds an unexplained charge on the credit card statement. He needs to talk with his wife about the charge since they have agreed to pay off debts.

Role play scenario #2. A wife discovers her husband up late at night, on the computer. She wants to talk with him about entertainment choices and healthy sleep patterns.

- b. Work through the same scenarios with the group, talking about how to work out each of the following steps:
 - i. Identify the potential breach (conflict)
 - ii. Create a safe environment for disclosure
 - iii. Communicate in the observe, interpret, conclude style:
"I saw ____, and thought _____, so I believed _____."
 - iv. Could you help me with my conclusion?
 - v. Participate in active listening (hear what is meant by the speaker).
 - vi. The goal is truth.
- c. Brainstorm areas where people have become disappointed with God. After the group has identified several ideas, direct them to spend 3 – 4 minutes in silent prayer. Each should ask God to reveal areas of personal disappointment or misunderstanding.
- d. Prayer Chair: Anyone that wants to come for prayer regarding something God has revealed. While the one prays, the others pray silently in agreement. The small group leader helps the person pray through:
 - i. "God, I saw _____" (verbalize the observation)
 - ii. "So I thought _____" (verbalize the interpretation)
 - iii. "Then I came to believe _____" (verbalize the conclusion)

- iv. “God, can You help me with my conclusion? (let them listen in prayer for truth to refute the untrue belief just confessed.)
- v. After the person hears from God, invite them to share what they are getting with the group.