

# How Do I Know I Can Trust You Again?

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Preacher: Dave Nannery

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, it's good to see you all here again as we prepare to open God's Word and learn about trust. And in this case, the question of, if someone has broken trust with us, how do I know I can trust you again?

And that's something that's important in our relationships, especially as a follow-up to last week where we talked about making peace. And so, as we begin, I want to bring us to the Lord, asking that He would give us hearts to grasp to comprehend how we make peace with one another. So let's pray. Our Father, we thank You that You're a God who has given us Your Word. And there's so much more wisdom here than we give credit for. Lord, there is, we're going to see today this pattern, this model of trust, and how it often runs so much deeper than our own shallow understandings of how trust is given.

Lord, we're grateful that You're a God who has given us such guidance. And above all, You've given us Yourself. Our Lord Jesus Christ, He Himself is our peace.

And so I'm asking this morning, give us eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to understand, not only the dynamics of how we make, of how we restore trust, but even more importantly, give us a sense that we can trust Your Word.

[ 1 : 24 ] And above all, we can trust the One who gave us Your Word. Lord, give us a trust in You that overflows into our relationships with one another. Amen. Amen. Amen. So I want to imagine for a moment a scenario here.

Now imagine, you know what, why don't we just use, why don't we pick on someone here as an example? It's always safe to pick on another elder, so I'll do Chris. Imagine that I approach Chris and I say, hey, Chris, I need to borrow \$1,000 from you.

Okay. And I'll pay you back in a month. And, you know, Chris and I have known each other for years now. And his, I don't know, maybe he thinks I'm a responsible guy.

Okay, no. All right. So maybe this is already dead in the water just to start with. But let's say that in a moment of, in a sort of a, in a moment of poor judgment, Chris says yes.

You know, he's got \$1,000 he can spare. And he says, sure, I'll lend you \$1,000. And let's suppose then a month goes by and Chris sees me at church each Sunday and, and in elder meetings at times.

[ 2 : 35 ] And he's, he's had some conversations with me about other things, but I don't make any mention of the money that he has lent me. And I'm not paying him and I haven't paid him back.

And so a month goes by and then another week and then another week. And Chris lets it go for a time. And so what Chris is telling himself, if you, if there's sort of this internal monologue going in his head and he's thinking, he's telling himself, you know, for now I won't collect on the debt.

So his first sort of response is I won't collect on the debt. And then one day I come to Chris and it's been by this point, two months, three months, who knows how long. And I finally admit to Chris, Hey, you know, I'm really sorry.

I actually won't be able to pay you back at all. I won't be able to pay you back at all. Now that might be a bit hard for Chris to take, but let's suppose Chris is either, he's either a really good friend or he's got really bad judgment.

I don't know. Um, but say Chris is a really good friend, a magnanimous person, and he is willing to absorb the cost. He's willing to absorb the cost. And so Chris tells me, you know what?

[ 3 : 46 ] I'm canceling your debt. I am canceling your debt. And that's his second response. I'm canceling your debt. Now imagine how Chris put yourself in Chris's shoes.

How would he feel if at that point I replied, thank you. Thank you, Chris, for doing that. Can I borrow another thousand dollars from you? How would you respond to that if you were in Chris's shoes?

All right, I'm seeing a no from there in the back. There is a big fat no. Imagine yourself with me staring at you, you know, can I borrow another thousand dollars from you and waiting expectantly for your reply.

How are you feeling in that moment? What are the feelings running through you? Let's name them. Sorry? Anxious. What else?

Irritated. What was the other one? Questioning my sanity. All right. Fair enough, right? You know, I didn't tell you that story just to make you squirm, although that's a fun side benefit of it for me, right? [ 4 : 58 ] I told it because it illustrates something. Here's something that we really struggle with when it comes to forgiveness. Forgiveness is hard enough.

We already struggle with forgiving. But we also struggle with how trust works, too. So we struggle with forgiveness. That's hard. But we also struggle with trust.

We don't know how to grapple with forgiveness and trust in the messy, overwhelming relationships in our lives, because I just gave you a really simple, straightforward example.

But I think if you've ever been in a situation of longstanding personal conflict, where there's sin going back and forth, things get a lot messier even than that, don't they? And so I'm going to do a quick overview before we move into Scripture.

I want to start with a quick overview of the relationship between forgiveness and trust. And so I'm going to sort of synthesize a few of the teachings of Scripture. And there's going to be something that's going to be up on the screen here.

[ 6 : 00 ] And if there's going to be a lot of little texts that's too small to read, do not worry about that. Afterwards, you can go on the website, go to the sermon section of our website, and you'll find a nice little PDF that will show what these look like in more detail.

And so I'm going to do a quick overview of the relationship between forgiveness and trust. But then I want to spend most of our time this morning on the question that we ought to ask when we're forgiving someone. After we've forgiven someone, we want to ask this question, how do I know I can trust you again?

How do I know I can trust you again? And in other words, how do I move from a place of forgiveness to a place of trust? And I think the concept of that, what we talked about, forgiving a debt, that is really helpful to understanding the relationship between forgiveness and trust.

And so this is not something that I created in my own head. I'm relying, there's a biblical counselor named Brad Hambrick who walks through this and uses this illustration and in fact wrote an entire book on forgiveness.

And so he laid out a scenario similar to the one that I presented to you, although he didn't use Chris as an example in that case. But think of this scenario of an unpaid debt.

[ 7 : 17 ] And with an unpaid debt, there are three stages to restoring trust. So there's this first stage. And in this first stage, there is an attitude in your heart.

And in your heart, you are saying to me that heart attitude is, I won't collect on your debt. I won't collect on your debt. And in that case, you can have that attitude of mercy toward me, regardless of whether I admit the debt or not.

I might be walking around acting like there's no debt. But you can still say to yourself, hey, I'm not going to collect on that debt. And that is one aspect of forgiveness. This attitude of forgiveness, it's unconditional.

You can always say to yourself, hey, there is a real debt here. There is real wrongdoing here. But I'm not going to collect on it. I'm not going to get revenge.

I'm not going to get back at the other person. I'm not going to make them pay. Then there's a second stage of forgiveness. You and I agree in this stage.

[ 8 : 23 ] You and I come to an agreement that there is a debt that needs to be paid. And you might say to me, hey, I'm canceling your debt. I'm canceling your debt.

Now, that agreement is only possible if I admit to you, yes, I owe you a debt. Yes, I have done wrong. Yes. And so that's a second aspect of forgiveness.

There is an agreement of mercy here. And that agreement of mercy is conditional. It is conditional. You can't just forgive a... You can't have an agreement of forgiveness if the other person doesn't even think there's a debt at all.

And so this aspect of forgiveness requires both people to agree that something wrong has been done and to agree on the extent of wrong. This aspect of forgiveness, you cannot actually agree,

have an agreement of mercy if the other person has not agreed that there's sin. You have to agree about the debt before you can say, I'm canceling your debt. And at this point, the debt is fully forgiven. I'm set free from it.

[ 9 : 32 ] You aren't going to hold it against me anymore. You're not going to collect. You're not going to get back at me. You're not going to change your mind three years into the future. But that doesn't necessarily mean you trust me.

That's a very important distinction. That doesn't mean that you trust me and that now you're willing to lend to me again. Here's what you would say if you do trust me.

If you trust me, you would say to me, I will lend to you again. I will lend to you again. And now we are going beyond forgiveness. Now we are moving into the territory of trust. Now you believe again. What you used to believe. You used to believe that I'm willing and able to pay back any future debts. And in order to say, I will lend to you again, you need to be at the point where you believe that once again.

So from this, we learn that trust also is conditional. Trust is conditional. It requires me to rebuild your trust. It requires me to demonstrate that I am trustworthy.

[ 10 : 38 ] Acceptance of trust is conditional. You have to decide before you trust me. Decide that you trust me before saying, I will lend to you again. And so let's apply these distinctions between forgiveness and trust.

I want to throw out another couple quick scenarios in which someone sins against you. Let's suppose, let's say you're a parent. And you catch your child. And you catch your child in a lie. Maybe they were lying about their grades at school. Stage one. Even if your child doesn't repent. Even if they still insist, no, no, no, I wasn't lying.

No, no, no, no. You can always choose to show your child an attitude of mercy. You're not going to get them. You're not going to nail them to the wall for this. You're not going to explode in anger. You're not going to just harbor bitterness in your heart against your child. Stage two. If your child does not repent. If your child does repent. If they come clean.

[ 11 : 36 ] They say, I lied and I was wrong. You can agree to show mercy. You can choose. I am not going to let this lie come between myself and my child. You can agree to show mercy.

But if you don't just then jump to stage three and say, okay, I trust you again. I trust you again. You might require evidence in the future that your child is telling the truth.

You might in the future say, hey, can I see your report card? Until you are confident that your child isn't going to lie.

Until they've laid out that track record of truth telling. Now let's try another example. Let's say you discover that your spouse has been hiding a drinking problem. Stage one.

You know, what's that thing about alcoholics? They don't admit that they're alcoholic. They don't admit it to others or even to themselves. If your spouse refused to admit it, you can still always choose to show an attitude of mercy.

[ 12 : 36 ] That doesn't mean you enable your spouse in your sin. That doesn't mean you shield your spouse from the consequences of their sin. But it does mean that you don't rage against them. It means that you don't rage against them.

You don't try to hurt them back. You don't try to nail them to the wall for it. You don't use it as a weapon against them. You choose an attitude of mercy. Stage two. If your spouse finally does come clean, admits there's a problem, admits there's a sin, they're genuinely and fully repentant. Then you can come to an agreement of mercy. But you don't just jump to stage three and trust your spouse. You don't just, your spouse can't come to you and say, hey, well, I've repented, so can I put some beer in the fridge?

Hey, can I go out with my buddies to the brew pub? No. No. You set boundaries around alcohol. It's going to take a long track record before you can ever trust them to touch the stuff again.

If it's bad enough, that track record might be a lifetime. Maybe the addiction is severe enough they have to abstain for the rest of their lives.

[ 13 : 46 ] In each case, we want to know, how do I move from a place of forgiveness to a place of trust? How do I get from stage two to stage three? And so here's the key question that is going to help us know the answer to that.

The key question is this. Is the repentance genuine? Is the repentance genuine? You have to confirm that the repentance is genuine before you can trust someone again.

And the word repentance, if you haven't, you know, if you aren't familiar with that word from Scripture, or maybe you've been coming to church and you've heard that word thrown around to you, you don't know what it is. It's simply this.

It means you admit that what you've done is wrong. It's wrong in the eyes of God. It's a sin against God. You recognize that you are fully responsible for the damage done.

And you are willing to turn away from that sin, to say no to it, to close the door on it, and to turn towards righteous living in its place, and to restore the damage that your sin has done.

[ 14 : 55 ] That's repentance. That's repentance. It is taking full responsibility and turning away from sin and turning towards righteousness.

Now, every one of us knows, though, if you have lived long on this earth, you know that repentance can be faked. It can be faked, at least for a little while.

How do you identify genuine repentance? How do you tell it apart from a fake? That's going to be the key to knowing whether you can trust someone again. Think of repentance like this.

Let's say you're down at the Squamish River. You notice that you're looking in the water, and there's something glimmers off the bottom. You pick it up. It's a chunk of shiny yellow metal. What are you wondering?

Hey, is this gold? Well, that would be nice. Can I trust it? Can I trust that this is genuine? Well, what do you do? How do you know the answer to that question?

[ 15 : 55 ] Well, the first thing you do is you look at its initial appearance. You do some quick checks, you know. Yeah, it's yellow. It's shiny. Boy, it really seems to sink.

It's heavy, actually. That's what gold is like. Okay, so it passes this initial check. So there's this initial check that you do, and then you're like, okay, well, let me take it to a specialist. Let me take it to, you know, maybe Roland would know.

Or he would know somebody who can examine it. Maybe someone could melt it down, remove the impurities, weigh it, measure it. And if it's a...

And so what you do is you do more than just the initial check. You also see if it's got tested endurance. Can it hold up? Can it hold up with further testing, with further evaluation, with refining, with heat?

And that's how repentance works, too. That's how you know repentance is genuine. You look first at the initial appearance of it. You do some initial check. And then you wait to see if there is a tested endurance to it.

[ 17 : 01 ] Then you wait to see if there's a tested endurance to it. And that's how trust is built. There's an initial appearance of repentance. And as it endures, then the trust grows.

That's what we see modeled in Scripture. And here's where we see this modeled. I'd like you to open your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 7. 2 Corinthians 7. I'm going to read verses 10 through 16.

Now, if you're using one of the Bibles that our ushers handed out to you, then that'll be on page 967. Page 967. And 2 Corinthians 7, verses 10 through 16.

And so just, we're jumping. It's always hard to jump in halfway through Paul's letter. We're jumping in in the middle of a conversation. So I'll just give you the very, very short version of what is happening here.

Paul is writing to a church that he founded. He knows all the people he's writing to personally. He spent months with them back when he founded the church in the city of Corinth.

[ 18 : 02 ] And if you've read 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians, then you know this. This is one of the worst churches. This is not a good church.

It is messed up. It is dysfunctional. This is the kind of church that nowadays people would come away, walk away, saying, like, I want nothing to do with Christians ever again if they're like this. Right?

So this is a church that has got problems. And if you read the rest of the letter, you will see that. And in this little episode here, Paul is going to talk about one of those little problems.

The people of the church are guilty of some sort of sin. And it's really interesting. Paul doesn't go into detail what that is. It's actually something that I think is just very kind of him, that he doesn't lay out all the dirty laundry for all the readers to see.

He kind of spares them that, the shame of that. But most commentators I've read, they seem to think he's, somebody in the church has turned against Paul. Maybe an insider, maybe somebody from the outside has come in, and they've been talking dirt about Paul as an apostle.

[ 19 : 07 ] And the church has kind of just let it happen. They've just gone along with it. They haven't risen to Paul's defense. They haven't really, you know, just teamed up with this person, but they're just letting that continue.

And so John Calvin, in his commentary, he describes their sin as undue forbearance. Undue forbearance. They are tolerating someone, forbearing with someone who is slandering Paul. And so Paul, he wrote a previous letter, and this is a letter that we don't have, but it was a letter that he calls a severe letter. And that really got in their face with them about this and about other issues in their church.

And in response, the Corinthians were deeply grieved. And in the verses right before this, Paul talks about that. He says that, you know, he doesn't like the fact they were grieved per se, but he loves the result that it produced.

And for him then, it was worth it. It was worth it in the end because it produced good results. And so we're wondering, will Paul forgive the Corinthians? And is he going to trust them again?

[ 20 : 07 ] Well, Paul writes about that in verses 10 through 16, 2 Corinthians chapter 7. He says, Godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment.

At every point, you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter. So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the one who did the wrong, nor for the sake of one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your earnestness for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God.

Therefore, we are comforted. And besides our own comfort, we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.

For whatever boasts I made to him about you, I was not put to shame. But just as everything we said to you is true, so also our boasting before Titus has proved true.

[ 21 : 25 ] And his affection for you is even greater, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.

I rejoice, because I have perfect confidence in you. So how do you identify genuine repentance? How do you respond to it? When do you forgive? When do you trust again? Well, Paul models for us three responses. Three responses if we are going to restore relationships of peace with one another.

Three responses to reach a place of trust again. First, first response. Agree to forgive if there is initial earnest obedience to God.

Agree to forgive if there is initial earnest obedience to God. Now remember, you can always have an inward attitude of mercy towards someone, regardless of whether they are repentant or obedient or not.

[ 22 : 23 ] We're talking here about coming together with them, and them saying, hey, yeah, I was wrong, I was wrong. Well, you agree to forgive them if there is initial earnest obedience to God.

There's obedience here. And now here's something that is very, very important. And Paul makes this distinction right here. You can see him make it. He is distinguishing between remorse and repentance.

There is a big difference between remorse and repentance. Sometimes they go together, but sometimes not. Anyone can feel remorse for their sin.

Anyone can feel really bad about what happened. It is possible to feel remorse when you see the damage that has been done because of you.

It is possible to feel remorse because you just feel helpless. It is possible to feel remorse because you feel humiliated that you were caught.

[ 23 : 23 ] Consider this extreme example of remorse without repentance. Judas Iscariot.

After he betrayed Jesus. Matthew chapter 27, we read, So initially you'd think, Oh, wow, he's repenting, right?

Well, no. They said, What is that to us? See to it yourself. And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed and he went and hanged himself. Brothers and sisters, that's not repentance.

The degree of remorse is no condition of repentance. I have seen unrepentant people sobbing, almost unable to speak over their sin.

Judas was so distraught over it that he hanged himself. But Jesus called him the son of destruction. Jesus said about him that it would have been better if he had never been born.

[ 24 : 40 ] He was not repentant. Paul calls this sort of remorse in verse 10. He calls this worldly grief, worldly grief. He doesn't think it actually does any good at all.

Remorse without repentance doesn't do any good at all. He tells us in verse 10, Godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret.

Well, wouldn't that be good? Salvation without regret, freed from it. But worldly grief produces death. It produces death.

You can tell godly grief apart from worldly grief. And the distinction is not the degree of remorse. Some people look at somebody and be like, you don't look like you're remorseful enough. No, no, no, no, no.

That's not how you tell repentance apart from remorse. That's not a sign of genuine repentance. Repentance is how distraught a person is. You look for the fruit.

[ 25 : 41 ] You look for what it produces. Godly grief produces repentance. And then repentance leads, Paul says, to a person being saved from the presence of sin in their lives.

They are being saved from the presence of sin in their lives. Here's what Paul sees in the Corinthians. Here's what he tells them he is seeing in them in verses 11 through 12. Here's what repentance looks like.

See what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves. What indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment. At every point, you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter.

So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the one who did the wrong, nor for the sake of the one who suffered the wrong, but in order that your earnestness for us might be revealed to you in the sight of God.

So this earnestness is revealed by their response. Unlike that, you know, the worldly grief, it might produce an initial flurry of action, or more often it just leads to somebody just in despair, like Judas.

[ 26 : 56 ] This despairing inaction that does not correct what was done wrong. Godly grief, though, produces earnest action. Produces earnest action.

That's how you know you can agree to forgive. You agree to forgive if there is an initial earnest obedience. An initial earnest obedience. In these verses, here's how earnestness shows up. There's a thorough confession of sin.

There's a thorough confession of sin. There are no excuses, no half-truths. The Corinthians call it what it is. You don't see any indication in here that they're just trying to get away with just confessing just a little bit and hoping that that's good enough.

No. There's a zeal. They want to clear themselves. They want to get everything out on the table. Second, there's a zealous action to be rid of sin.

There's a zealous action to be rid of sin. They don't just say, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, it'll never happen again, and then just do nothing about it. They commit. Second, they believe that repentance, it has to result in real concrete steps of obedience.

[ 28 : 02 ] Real concrete steps of obedience. Third, there is humility to submit to the consequences of sin. There is humility to submit to the consequences of sin.

Someone who is in a state of remorse, one of the reasons that they're distraught may be, oh no, the consequences of what I've done. How can I get out of those consequences? And that's all that they're in it for. I just want to get out of the consequences.

The Corinthians aren't in this just to make it easier for themselves. They're not just trying to evade the consequences. They actually take responsibility. They take responsibility. And fourth, there is a willingness to restore the damage wrought by sin.

There is willingness to restore the damage wrought by sin. Whatever it is they've done against Paul, they make efforts to undo it. They make efforts to set things right. Paul says, wow, there's a zeal. They make an effort to prove themselves. And so initial earnest obedience means that a person gives a thorough confession, they commit to taking zealous action, they submit to the consequences, they commit to restoring the damage.

[ 29 : 15 ] They're all in. What a wonderful thing when this happens. Maybe you've been blessed to see this happen, the summon in your life, and oh man, what a good thing that is.

What a good thing it is when someone is zealous to repent, when it's real. And they're like, yes, you know, whatever it takes. Here's what I've done wrong. I'm turning away from that.

What must I do? What consequences must I bear? I'm all in. When earnestness shows up, that is a gift from God. Paul talks about earnestness in the chapters around this, and he just calls it a gift from God when he sees it in people.

When he sees people just genuinely acting for the good of others, genuinely acting out of love for God. Man, in our cynical culture, where we're always looking for hidden motives in people, when no one seems earnest, when there always seems to be just, you know, when earnestness is so refreshing.

It is so good. And it is characteristic of the children of God. It's good to be earnest. Some sinners need to be confronted in order to gain this earnestness.

[ 30 : 31 ] Paul talks about earnestness, and sometimes that's given to you by others. Someone comes to you and challenges you on something. Look, what you're doing is wrong. And in response to that, you develop earnestness. Even better, I would urge you, is earnestness that you don't even need to be confronted.

It comes out of you. The Spirit of God works it in your own heart. And earnestness can be given either way. It can come through confrontation, and you respond earnestly. But boy, it's even more trustworthy when it comes out of you.

But nobody has to push you towards it. If there is initial earnest obedience to God, if that's what you see in the person who has sinned, then you can cancel the debt.

Then you can agree to forgive the one who sinned against you. That's the first response we need in order to restore relationships of peace with one another. Here's the second response, the second of three responses.

You begin to trust if there is tested, earnest obedience to God. Begin to trust if there is tested, earnest obedience to God. So, genuine repentance doesn't just stop at words.

[ 31 : 45 ] It doesn't just produce that initial flurry of grand gestures. If it is real, if it is tested, if it is real, then it will be tested and true. It will endure.

It will last. In fact, it will grow. And you can see this in verse 11. That's where Paul talks about, see what earnestness this godly grief is producing you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment.

At every point, you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter. Now, that word proved, you've proved yourselves literally pure in the matter. You've proved yourselves pure in the matter.

That word proved, Paul uses that several times in this letter in 2 Corinthians. Earlier on, Paul uses it in reference to something. He talks about letters of recommendation, letters of recommendation.

Think of it like a reference. A reference letter is very important when you're going to trust someone.

So for example, when we hired BK as lead pastor here several years ago, he didn't just come to us and we're like, okay, well, I trust you.

[ 32 : 52 ] You can be pastor. You know, you say you're a good guy. Okay, cool. Now, we got letters of recommendation. He was initially recommended to us by Joe Haynes, a pastor in Victoria whom we had reason to trust his judgment.

We called up BK's references. They had things to say about him that were good. We even called, if I remember right, I think we even asked them for, hey, do you know somebody else who knows BK?

And then called those people. We got the commendation of other people. We got letters of recommendation. And so we decided we could trust BK because those individuals commended him to us.

This is how trust works. To trust someone, they must be proved or they must be commended, either by somebody else who knows them well or by their behavior or by their own behavior that you can see yourself.

And Paul explains what commended the Corinthians to him. He says, it's what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what punishment.

[ 34 : 01 ] And Paul adds, at every point you have commended yourselves innocent to the matter.

And so Paul isn't saying, oh, they're innocent of sin. You know, like we learned earlier, they're guilty.

They were guilty of undue forbearance of somebody who was attacking Paul. What Calvin explains about what Paul's doing is Calvin says, he acquits them, however, from the charge of concurrence.

He acquits them from the charge of concurrence. In other words, they did not concur with the person attacking Paul. Their obedience has been tested and it's become clear. They were not in alliance with Paul's attacker.

And they've proven that. They've proven that there aren't deeper sins underneath the surface because here's the issue. One of the reasons repentance isn't genuine is because often there are deeper sins underneath.

In this case, it could be defiance, contempt, unbelief. When someone is repenting, but it's quote unquote, but it's not genuine, that's what's underneath the surface.

[ 35 : 09 ] There is defiance against God. There is contempt for God and for his people. There is unbelief in who God is.

And their track record of tested obedience shows that these things aren't present, that the repentance is real. It commends them as truly repentant. Now, I want to shift because so far I've been addressing the person who's asking the question, how do I know I can trust you again? But now I want to shift to the person, and maybe some of you in this room are in this situation because I've been in this situation before, where you're asking, I've done wrong. I've lost someone's trust.

And I want to rebuild that. I want to be trusted again. How do I get there? How do I do this? How do I reach this place where our relationship is restored with trust? The only way to do that is through tested, earnest obedience to God.

[ 36 : 23 ] And brothers and sisters, that will take time. That will take time. And that will take consistency. And I say this because Satan is going to tempt you.

He's going to tempt you to commend yourself by some alternative means. He's going to tempt you to say, oh man, tested, earnest obedience, there's a better, here's an easier way.

Here's a quicker way. He will tempt you to take shortcuts to being trusted again. And I want to lay out seven shortcuts. This is so important because if you want to be trusted again, you must guard yourself against taking these shortcuts because they will, first of all, they will backfire terribly. You will not get trust again. And second of all, it will dishonor the God that you want to follow. These seven shortcuts are not acceptable pathways back to trust.

So here's shortcut number one. Concealment. Concealment. You can't take the shortcut of concealing, of covering up your sins, or failing to disclose them fully.

[ 37 : 32 ] There is no quicker way to lose trust and possibly lose it forever to destroy it to such a degree that it would take a thousand years to rebuild it.

And you, just giving you a heads up, you're not going to live that long. If some trust is so broken, if some sin is so bad, that to be trusted again, you could be trusted again, but it'll be a thousand years from now.

And you, it's more than a lifetime. And one of the quickest ways to lose trust forever is to conceal sin that you ought to have revealed. You ought to have fully revealed.

Concealment means you're trying to be trusted and you're trying to do it by hiding from the other person the reasons why you shouldn't be. The reasons why you shouldn't be. So concealment is a shortcut.

You cannot go that route. A second one is penance. It's penance. If concealment means refusing to say what is necessary, penance can mean there's several ways this can show up.

[ 38 : 35 ] One is that you say far more than what is necessary. This is something I have seen. Excessive, exhaustive confession of every last little detail. Or penance can be it's like the self-flagellating.

You're beating yourself up over sin in front of the other person. I'm just a horrible person. I'm awful. I'm horrible. I, oh. Or you make this excessive show of piety like, you know, you're just like, oh, I'm just going to God and I'm just confessing.

And, you know, the point is that you're trying to get out ahead of the discipline. You're trying to, if I get to myself and beat myself up first and exhaustively confess first, then I can avoid all the hard stuff that other people might subject me to or that God might put me in.

You overconfess, you punish yourself because you want the other person to let you off the hook and to start trusting you again. That's a shortcut. And it might feel really religious.

It isn't. It's a shortcut to trust and you cannot go that route. The third one, sympathy seeking. Sympathy seeking.

[ 39 : 43 ] And this includes self-pity. Taking a bath in your own sympathy. You know, just like sliding down into that bathtub, wallowing in it.

You could go and look and look and look and hunt for other people's sympathy too. Claim victim status. Try to squeeze sympathy out of other people when in fact you're the one who is doing wrong.

Maybe it'll make you feel better for a bit but sympathy seeking, it's nothing more than self-centered manipulation in this context. It's no way to win back trust from another person.

There are times for sympathy. This ain't it. This is no way back to trust. So we've done concealment, penance, sympathy seeking.

And here's a fourth one. Sycophancy. Sycophancy? I forgot to look up how to pronounce that. But it's, if you're looking, you're like, how do I spell that?

[ 40 : 46 ] You just made up that word, Dave. No, I didn't. I didn't make up clemency last week. S-Y-C-O-P-H-A-N-C-Y. S-Y-C-O-P-H-A-N-C-Y.

Being a sycophant means you're groveling or fawning over the person. You know, oh, oh, you know, you're trying to win their trust and so you grovel and you fawn all over them. You flatter them with empty words.

Oh, you're just so wonderful. I can't believe you're like that. You said such nice things. Oh, oh, you're so great. You might show excessive deference or respect to them. You might excuse them or praise, even praise them when they do foolish or sinful things.

And sycophancy will never win the trust of anyone who's wise. They're going to see right through that. And there's no way to win back trust. Number five, self-exaltation.

Self-exaltation. And this means that you try to commend yourselves to others and here's how I'm going to do it. I'm going to make myself look really good. Big flowery speech. Big words, eloquent, oh, you know, lavish promises that turn up empty.

[ 42 : 00 ] Grand gestures to show what a great friend I am. Don't you, aren't you happy that you've got a husband like me? Look at how many flowers I bought you. Self-exaltation will not win the trust of someone who takes sin seriously and who prides humility.

Self-exaltation is no way to being trusted again. Number six, blame shifting. Blame shifting. Now we're going to get the last two are kind of nasty ones. Blame shifting.

This means that you look for reasons to find fault in the other person. You think I'm bad? Well, look at you. You're not trusting me.

You're the one who's the problem. And you complain about the way the other person's treated you. Maybe you complain about how they're not trusting you. The fact that you're not trusting me shows you're bad.

Blame shifting is a particularly nasty shortcut that tries to create trust by inflicting guilt on another person. Blame shifting is no way to being trusted again. And here's the seventh and final shortcut.

[ 43 : 12 ] Pressure. Pressure. This means that you issue subtle warnings or threats to the other person and you're trying to coerce them into giving in.

Little warnings are threats. Watch it. You better watch what you say or else.

Or you go around and you start recruiting people to join you in your pressure campaign. Let's have a meeting. Let's talk about this guy who's not trusting me. Let's talk about this guy who's not trusting me.

Isn't that awful? Could you send him an email maybe? Pressure is a way to intimidate someone into trust and it is no way to be trusted again.

And so we have these seven shortcuts. Concealment, penance, sympathy seeking, sycophancy, self-exaltation, blame shifting, pressure. Maybe there's more.

[ 44 : 17 ] The human heart is a never ending factory of shortcuts to being trusted again. We love our shortcuts. Shortcuts have no place in the track record of earnest obedience that God has called you to.

The simple matter is there are no shortcuts to being trusted again. If you lost trust because you lied, you will need to establish a new track record of telling the truth and especially telling the truth when it hurts.

If you lost trust because of pornography, because you were caught in that, you will need to establish a new track record of sexual purity, accountability, setting up boundaries around your phone and computer.

If you lost trust because you misused someone's money, you will need to establish a new track record of wise money management, generosity.

In time, someone who has forgiven you, someone who is willing to trust you again, what will happen in time is they'll start taking small risks. They'll start trusting with little things.

[ 45 : 32 ] They're not totally on board, but they'll start, you know, making little moves of trust and then as you keep establishing that track record and keep enduring in faithfulness, they start taking bigger risks and bigger risks and bigger risks and in time, there is a relationship of restored trust.

That's what you're looking for. Perhaps you're wondering how long that's going to take. How long is it going to take to set down a new track record of tested, earnest obedience?

And there's a lot of different things that factor into that and the answer is not going to be the same for everybody. A couple factors in that is number one, how severe was the sin?

It's one thing if a spouse catches you drunk. It's another thing if you got pulled over for driving drunk and putting others in danger illegally.

A second factor is how enslaved to it were you? It's one thing to, in a moment of weakness, you got drunk one night, but there's been, that's just out of the blue.

[ 46 : 43 ] It's just so different from the pattern of the rest of your life in a moment of weakness you gave in. That's different from there has been a decade of drunkenness, a deep slavery, and along with it a host of other things that come with slavery.

If you're on that long path to being trusted again, that comes with more severe sin, that comes with sin that has been deeply enslaving, I just want to encourage you right now, hang in there, don't lose heart.

The Lord is with you. If you are walking that road faithfully, the Lord is with you. and you are on your way to peace, there is no other way to peace than that tested, earnest obedience to God.

If you are the one who has sinned against, if you are the one who has sinned against and is in the middle of wondering, can I trust this person ever again?

Begin to trust if there is tested, earnest obedience to God. And boy, that's going to be, that's going to mean taking some scary little risks. Don't take big ones, take little ones.

[ 48 : 08 ] Little risks of trust. And this leads us to our third and final response. If we're to store relationships of peace with one another, here's our third response. Open your heart to joyful confidence.

Open your heart to joyful confidence. repentance. This can be hard. This can be very hard.

I won't go into all of it. Like, there are, we could bring up subjects of like, what do you do in cases of abuse, trauma that comes out of it. So I'm not suggesting necessarily, this is not suggesting a naivety.

I'll get into that in a moment. But if somebody comes repentant and there is an initial earnest obedience, not just words, but like, they're committing stuff, they're ready to go, and they start going down that road, and you're like, you know, they seem to be sticking with this.

Open your heart to joyful confidence. C.S. Lewis once wrote about forgiveness. He said, everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive. Forgiveness looks great on other people.

[ 49 : 17 ] Forgiveness is like that dress you see on Amazon. Wow, that looks really great on that model, and then you put it on yourself, and you're like, oh, that didn't work out. That's what forgiveness is like.

It looks really good when we see other people doing it, but when we have to, oh, it feels, it's hard, it's hard. It's very hard to forgive. I just want to encourage you, if that's something you're struggling with, that's what we're here for, to help shepherd you through that as elders.

And forgiveness can sometimes take time, it can be a messy process, trust can be even harder. As I've said, there's some sins so extreme that trust can never really be fully restored in a lifetime.

But for most sins, when the offender shows earnest obedience to God, it is a good thing to open your heart, open your heart to a possibility of joyful confidence.

Corinthians. Here's what Paul says, because that's what Paul does. Here's what he says in chapter 7, verses 13 through 16. He could give in to cynicism.

[ 50 : 24 ] He could write off this church. He could walk away from them. I mean, he, I think honestly, if Paul were like you and me, he probably would have. It's kind of amazing he sticks with the Corinthians.

It's unbelievable. We're going to talk at the end about why. what's going on. But rather than giving into cynicism, here's what Paul says to them. Therefore, we are comforted.

And besides our own comfort, we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. For whatever boasts I made to him about you, I was not put to shame.

But just as everything we said to you was true, so also our boasting before Titus has proved true. And his affection for you is even greater, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.

I rejoice because I have perfect confidence in you. Now notice the attitude of Paul and of his assistant Titus. Thankfully, the sin of the Corinthians, this sin of undue forbearance, was not a super severe one.

[ 51 : 36 ] It didn't take a super long track record of trust before Paul trusts them again. He sends Titus to them. Titus sees them. He sees their earnest obedience, see that it's lasting.

And he's refreshed. Titus is refreshed by his visit to the Corinthians. He looks at them. He doesn't see them as perfect. Oh boy. Just read on in the rest of the letter. They are not perfect.

Far from it. They are still a mess in so many ways. And yet, Paul sees the good. And Titus sees the good. And he enjoys it. He doesn't say, yeah, yeah, you're doing okay in this area.

But all these other issues. He's like, yes, I'm seeing obedience. Maybe just in this one area. You're still a mess everywhere else. But look, obedience. Yes. How exciting.

Titus comes back and says, you know how you were bragging about that church that they would, you know, they're real. They're a mess. But I've got confidence in them. You were right, Paul.

[ 52 : 35 ] I'm just coming back and I'm refreshed. It was just good to be with them. Paul, Titus, sees it. He enjoys it. He remembers them with fondness. Paul describes Titus as joyful and affectionate.

And he says, you know what? I share his joy. I enjoy you, Corinthians. And Paul concluded these words, I have complete confidence in you.

He doesn't have confidence in other areas, but he's got confidence with them in this. But they're not going to tolerate people who tear down Paul and attack him.

I've got confidence in you. What a wonderful thing that would be to hear. This open-hearted spirit, it is the attitude Paul had.

That is his attitude towards a dysfunctional, troubled church. Consider Paul's heart. In chapter 6, verse 11, here's what he says.

[ 53 : 40 ] And if you ever read these epistles and think, oh, Paul was this grouchy, you know, hard-headed guy, kind of a jerk, then you have not been reading the Bible carefully. Read, this is what he says.

We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians. Our heart is wide open. It is the Corinthians who are closed off and grouchy and hard-hearted, not Paul.

We've spoken freely to you. Our heart is wide open. And then in chapter 7, verses 3 and 4, he tells them again. He says, you are in our hearts to die together and live together.

I am acting with great boldness toward you. I have great pride in you. I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.

He's saying, I am in this with you till death. What a heart. Can we say that to one another?

[ 54 : 50 ] Our heart is wide open. The author, Paul Miller, he encourages us, you know, when we're approaching other sinners, we can be tempted to have an attitude of cynicism, of self-protection towards them.

And instead, Paul Miller calls us, hey, here's the attitude that Jesus and his apostles encourage us to have. Be warm but wary. Warm but wary. That means you're not naive, but you're not cynical either.

You're warm-hearted, but you're also aware. That there is real sin. You're not gullible about repentance, but you're warm and you're open-hearted.

And as we see a track record of trust develop, as someone is demonstrating that they are truly repentant, there is tested, earnest obedience, we move from, we start dropping the wary and we're just warm.

Believe me, Paul, if you think, well, Dave, I've seen hypocrisy like you wouldn't believe. Go tell that to Paul. This guy had no illusions about how dysfunctional and hypocritical this church was and he never let go of his warmth to them.

[ 56 : 07 ] Paul had learned the mindset of his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. How could he live like this? Well, I'll tell you what, if all Paul had to rely on was his own strength, his own ability, he couldn't.

He could not live like this. Nobody can. You can't do this on your own. Paul had learned the mindset of his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

Because Jesus Christ lived who firmly rooted and grounded in the love of God, in the peace of God. He knew he was holy and set apart for God.

So he didn't get sucked into all the manipulation and anxieties and craziness of the world around him. He was free to love. Jesus approached sinners with that same warmth.

He loved them to the end. Jesus went so far as to die on a cross for you and for me.

[ 57 : 17 ] And God raised him to life. And he did it because God wanted to make peace. Jesus' death and resurrection makes peace between us and God.

Because our sins separated us from God. We know what that separation is like in our own relationships with one another. What if that's a problem in our relationship with God?

What if that's a problem in our relationship with God? with the creator and the judge of all the universe? But what if that God was so kind-hearted that he sent his one and only son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life?

what if Jesus, his son, did what we could never do? Because where we have failed, Jesus showed that he has tested earnest obedience.

He is the one who can be trusted. If you don't trust Jesus, then who can you trust?

[ 58 : 28 ] Jesus earnestly obeyed and we never did. And if you have put your trust in him, then he is your letter of commendation. His righteousness is counted to you on your behalf.

And God has forgiven and welcomed us into his family. He's welcomed into his family everyone who trusts Jesus Christ and says that Jesus Christ is Lord and I am following him.

I am obedient to him. So here's that final question. How do I know I can trust you again? And we've talked about all the reasons in the other person, all the things that need to happen there.

But ultimately, it boils down to this. I can take that risk of trust again because ultimately, I am trusting Jesus Christ. I have entrusted myself to Jesus Christ.

And this journey is going to be difficult. This journey of trust is going to be hard. But I'm rooted and grounded in him. I'm trusting Jesus has made peace with God. I'm trusting that he has done all that is needed and provided his spirit and given us the community of faith that can surround us and bring us together and help to make peace between you and me.

[ 59 : 41 ] And so we, we can together have this joyful confidence because we belong body and soul to the God of peace. Our God and Father, trust is hard for us.

and we, oh Lord, we have tried to escape that hardness of trust by either just cynically closing our hearts to one another or by taking shortcuts of trust to try to get it back by withholding forgiveness, by faking repentance.

forgiveness. Forgive us, God. Win us back to you. Show us the way of peace, the way of forgiveness, the way of trust because you gave your own son so that we would be forgiven, so that we would have peace with you.

And we trust you. We trust that all your ways are perfect and good and right. And I pray, Lord God, if there's anyone here this morning who says, this is a difficulty I struggle to trust.

It is so hard for me. Lord, may they come and seek help. May we become a people who stand out from the world and that we are not naive and neither are we cynical.

[ 61 : 09 ] We have a wise wariness but even deeper than that, an open-hearted warmth to one another. that we look just like Jesus.

Amen.