

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

THE HOPE OF INTIMACY | ADVENTURES OF DATING AND MARRIAGE

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Alright. It is so good to be with you today. I want to welcome you back this Thursday, February 22nd for our worship night—all campuses under one roof right here at Northwest. It's going to be great. I just want to invite you to come.

Those of you who may call another campus home, maybe those of you who are watching online, make it a priority to be here Thursday night.

If you've never experienced a worship night, it's a really incredible moment for us just to come together and have an encounter with God. Those things cannot be fabricated, but we do want to anticipate meeting up with God in that extended time of worship. You don't want to miss it. Be here this Thursday night. I can't wait to experience that with all of you.

Several years ago I heard about this young couple, they had been dating, things were getting pretty serious, they were moving toward marriage. And as soon as the young lady's parents found out about that they said, "Hey, we've got to have this guy over to our house for a meal. We don't know much about him. We want to get to know him better." So they had them over and afterward the father asked the young man to go out into the back yard to have a conversation. And so he just begins to kind of ask him some questions. He said, "Hey, you know things seem to be getting kind of serious between you and my daughter. What are your plans? What are your intentions?"

And he was like, "Well, sir, eventually, one day, I would like to ask for her hand. I kind see this moving toward marriage." And the dad was like, "Well, okay. What are your plans for work?"

And he was like, "Well, I don't have many, but it's okay because I'm just trusting that God is going to provide." He was like, "Well, that's admirable of you, but you know she's used to a pretty decent lifestyle. How are you going to maintain that level of lifestyle for her?" He was like, "Sir, don't worry about it, I just trust that God is going to provide."

This was how the narrative was going, "How are you going to afford an engagement ring? And what if you have kids one day, how are you going to take care of my grandkids?" This was his same answer over and over again, "Sir, don't worry about it. I'm just confident God will provide."

At the end of the evening they were leaving and the man's wife comes to him and she says, "Well, how did the conversation go? What did you learn about him?" And he goes, "Well, I've got some good news and I've got some bad news. What do you want first?" "Well, give me the bad news." And he goes, "Well, it looks like our daughter is going to marry somebody with no money, no plans, and no job." She was like, "Okay, what's the good news?" And he goes, "Well, the good news is that young man thinks that I am God."



I like that one. Any of you know him? That's good.

Well, today we're wrapping up this three week series of messages that we've been in called Adventures in Dating and Marriage. And if you've missed any of it or you're just now joining us, really the big premise is that relationships, especially dating relationships and marriage, can be so exciting and fulfilling.

At the same time they can be so challenging and crazy complicated and just like an adventure. Adventures are filled with ups and downs and unexpected twists and turns that maybe you didn't see coming. And the same thing is true in our relationships, especially dating relationships and marriage.

And the principles that we are learning apply to all relationships. You may be here today and you are like, "Well, I'm not dating anybody, I'm not married, I can't even foresee that in my life for a long, long time." And yet, these principles will still apply to a lot of our other relationships. It's just that the marriage relationship intensifies everything—like times 100.

And the theme verse for us in this series has been Philippians, chapter 2, verse 5. I encouraged you to commit this verse to memory on week one. And I hope that you have been able to. And if it slipped your mind, it's really not hard to memorize. Just look at it one more time. It says:

"In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." (NIV) Now, that verse is simple, but it is packed with some tremendous wisdom and truth.

See, the X factor in all of our relationships, not just dating and marriage, is the mindset that we bring to it.

So, the quality of your relationships with your family or the quality of your friendships—and this would certainly be true of any marriage—they are the direct result and reflection of your mindset.

If you're in a relationship and you're not fully happy or satisfied with it, and you're like, "This needs to change," the first step to bring about change is a different mindset. "Well, okay what kind of mindset should we have?" Well, have the same mindset of Jesus.

Now, you might say, "What was the mindset of Jesus?" The very next verse, verse 6 (we haven't read this yet) describes His mindset:

"Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;"

In other words, Jesus wasn't entitled, He wasn't trying to play any sort of power games here. He was fully God, but He didn't use that to His advantage. Here's what He did, verse 7:

"...rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" Philippians 2:6-8 (NIV)

So, Jesus' mindset was humility. Jesus' mindset was, "I've come not to be served but to serve and to lay My life down as a ransom for many."

Now, the secret sauce to any thriving relationship is humility. It's an act of service.

Please hear me, I'm not talking about allowing another person to take advantage of you



and certainly not to mistreat you or abuse you. If you are being mistreated or you're being abused, then you need to get out.

What I am saying is that you humble yourself, and when humbling yourself, you can still say no. And you can still establish boundaries.

Humility is the overall disposition that you bring into a relationship, especially with your spouse, that says things sort of like this—here's your mindset toward your spouse, "You know what? That's not the way that I would do it, but I'm open to the way that you are doing it. I'm going to recognize here, that in this argument, you might be right. I may need to see things from your perspective. And I'm certainly willing to put your needs above my own."

There's this great little passage in the book of Ephesians that addresses husbands and wives and there is this great little verse that we often skip past too quickly that says, "Submit to one another," mutual submission, "out of your reverence for Christ." So, because of my relationship with Jesus, I can humble myself and submit myself to my spouse.

And when we are able to do this, when two imperfect, broken human beings can do this in a relationship, what that does is it breeds this powerful little word called trust. And trust is the most important ingredient in any relationship, but especially the marriage relationship.

You can think of it this way: trust is the fuel for your marriage. And without it it is kind of like a car without gasoline. It's there but it's not really going anywhere. So, you've got to have trust to fuel relationships.

By way of quick review, on week number one, if you were here do you remember the Relationship Attachment Model that I showed you? You've got these dials—you kind of think of them like faders on a sound board. So when you meet somebody you get to know them, and then you develop some trust, and then out of that trust you determine if you can rely on them, and then you make a commitment, and then touch.

And oftentimes in our society we meet somebody, we really don't know them super well but we're attracted and we just immediately run to touch and we take that dial all the way up and it gets things out of balance in a relationship really early. And then you've got stuff that you have to deal with as you get to know one another.

Now, if you're single that Relationship Attachment Model—the key word here is progression. Take your time. Slow things down. It's kind of like rock climbing. Make sure that you've got a solid foothold before you reach for the next handhold. Oftentimes we have the tendency to run through the dials.

If you're married, the key word to this model is balance. So, you're constantly monitoring these faders and trying to figure out, "Okay, what dials need to be adjusted?" This becomes like the subject of date night, this becomes the subject of conversations, you become a student of your spouse and you're beginning to monitor the dials.

Now, oftentimes, what one of you really values in those dials or maybe you're really good at, the other one may value something else, or is really good at something else.

I don't know, let's just say that one of you in the marriage relationship really values the touch dial. You know, I can't imagine that really happening, but let's just say that one of you in the relationship values the touch dial. And you're like, "You know what? I think the touch dial needs to go up a little bit." And the other one doesn't see it.

Here's the thing. The answer isn't just to take the touch dial and take it all the way up.

The answer is to actually pay attention to one of the other dials, maybe know. Can I get a good amen? You increase the know dial and then the touch dial goes up as a result.

I love what retired pastor Rick Warren has to say about this. He says:

"Sex with one wife for life is not like playing one record over and over but learning one instrument really well for years so that you are able to play beautiful music."

So, we see here that when it comes to the dials, every... I just want to say this, hopefully to encourage you, every relationship, even the healthiest of relationships...

Let's just say that the two of you are the most compatible people on the planet. You know, you finish each other's sentences. You ride tandem bikes. You're just like two peas in a pod. You make the rest of us want to vomit.

Your relationship is still going to get out of balance. It's called life. It's called kids. It's called work. It's just going to get out of balance. And when it does, when these faders get out of balance, they don't automatically self-correct, it takes great intentionality.

That's by way of review. Here's where I want to go for the rest of this message to land the plane on this series, I want to talk about trust, in particular: How does trust get developed in a romantic relationship? How do you maintain healthy trust? And then, ultimately, this is where I want to land: What do you do when trust is broken?

So, if you are taking notes, or maybe you might just want to take a picture of the screen behind me with your phone, here are a few defining principles.

The bonding agent in any relationship is TRUST

And that cannot be microwaved. You have to take your time with that. It has to be fostered and maintained in a relationship.

To know someone and trust someone are two very different things

You know, chances are right now you know a whole lot more people in your life than you trust, because, here's the definition of trust—there may be multiple, but here's the one that I'll give you:

Trust: a feeling of security or confidence in another person

It takes a long time to achieve and it can be lost, unfortunately, in a moment.

Your feelings of trust don't come from just what you know...

And your feelings of trust don't come from just what you know about the other person.

So follow me in the logic of this:

Rather from what you decide to think about what you know

This is called your trust narrative. And you have a trust narrative right now around everybody who you know. Right now, in your mind, you have a trust narrative with your boss—it's either good or it is not. You have a trust narrative with your roommate. You have a trust narrative with extended family.

You have a trust narrative going on right now with the person you are dating or the person you are married to. That trust narrative may or may not be accurate. And there are a few data points that are actually informing your narrative.

So, let me kind of give you an example of what I mean. Let's just say that you are single, you're not dating anybody but you're looking. You go to the wedding of a friend and you see an attractive guy at this wedding, and he's alone, by himself.

And afterward, at the reception, he comes over and he strikes up a conversation with you and immediately you like him. He's a good looking guy and you sit down and you start talking and here's one of the things that you notice about him. He makes you laugh. Your dad had a great sense of humor and he made you laugh and it just kind of sets you at ease. So, you're just at ease in this conversation.

Then you find out that what he does for work is he works with several non-profits that have a good cause. That just causes your respect level for him to go up.

Throughout the whole conversation he's just a great listener, he's asking all sorts of questions about you and you're like, "Man, he seems really, really interested in who I am. He seems so selfless."

And then to top it all off, he shows you a picture of his brand new puppy. And your heart just melts. You are like, "This is the perfect guy for me." So, you exchange numbers. And you decide to go on your first date.

And then over the course of the next several months, as you begin to date, you develop a trust narrative right out of the gate and you said, "You know what? I trust this guy." At least you trust him enough to kind of get to know him and to date him.

But over the course of the next several months you begin to notice some things. You begin to notice that everybody he meets, he either flirts with or flatters and it's inauthentic. And it starts to cause you a little bit of concern because he talks kind of negatively behind their backs. And they never see that.

You find out that he just got fired from his job, and actually, he tells you that he's been let go of his last three jobs in the past two years. And your thinking, "Okay, there is a trend here that is not good."

You notice that his anger flares up in a moment, whether it's in the car when somebody cuts him off in traffic and he just explodes. Or maybe his anger has been directed at you a couple of times. And then immediately he apologizes all over himself, but nothing seems to change.

Maybe, what initially in your first dialogue and conversation with him where it just seemed like he was listening to you and asking great questions, now all of a sudden his great questions feel a little bit more like interrogation and manipulation.

And then, to top it all off, he's been keeping this from you for months, but you found out he also had a cat. And you're just like, "Oh, no. I thought I knew this guy."

So what happens is that your trust narrative is not necessarily who he actually is. This is why it is so important to slow down in a relationship, pay attention to the dials, really get to know and trust and rely upon somebody, make a commitment before you ever bond with them through touch.

Study after study reveals that we often hone in on a couple of data points, and we put those to the forefront of our minds and then we kind of diminish or dismiss everything else and it kind of goes into the background.

Here's an example of this. You've probably seen this picture or maybe a picture like it, but take a look at this picture. Now, how many of you—I'm just kind of curious—how many of you see an older, somewhat unattractive lady in the picture? Just go ahead and raise up your hand if that's what you see. Now, how many of you see a younger attractive lady in the picture? Oh, I see what kind of a church we have. This is interesting.

Actually, some of you are going, "What are you talking about?" Well, there is kind of a big, bulbous nose there. You kind of see that. You kind of see an older unattractive lady. You can see the beady eyes. She's kind of looking this way. You see the younger lady because you're looking at her from a side angle and that's her jaw line, right there. Now, here's the thing that I just want to point out to you. Maybe you've seen other images like this. (There is a lot of conversation going on in the room right now. It's just an illustration.)

What happens is, you look at an image like this and immediately you focus in on a couple of data points right away and then you sort of diminish the other data points in the background of your mind.

What we do with images like this we do with people, which is why some people make a really good first impression and then you find out later they are not who they presented themselves to be.

Or, some people make a really poor first impression, and then you find out later that there is more substance there than what you thought. We've got to be so careful in how we develop a trust narrative.

This happens in relationships all of the time.

In Judges, chapter 16 there is this relationship between a really dysfunctional couple, named Samson and Delilah. Some of you may know the story. Others of you, if you've never read it, read it sometime. It's wild.

Samson has this incredible strength given to him by God and the way that strength could be taken from him is if he cuts his hair.

So, Samson has enemies and they kind of get in with Samson's wife, Delilah, and they send her in as an undercover agent to take him down. And notice the question that she asked him in verse 6:

"Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued."
(NIV)

I don't know if it's just me or does that seem like a big, red flag? If I'm dating somebody and, "Hey, you know just by chance, what's your greatest weakness?" It's just like, what's happening here.

Now, here's the deal. Their relationship was not built on trust because if you read the narrative, you know that Samson lies to her and so she takes that lie, tells the others, "This is how his strength is gone."

And they come and they try to subdue him and it doesn't work. And that happens over and over and over again where he's lying to her. And she's continuing to try to deceive him. She asks him the same question in verse 6 four different times. And he never catches on.

This is what I said on week number one, for the first 18 months or so of a romantic relationship, your prefrontal cortex literally shuts down. And that's fine. That puppy love, infatuation, it is a wonderful, wonderful stage in a relationship. This is why you have to take your time.

This is, by the way, if you're a teenager and you're thinking, "This series is not for me," this is the time for you to think through these things before you ever develop an infatuation or an emotional attachment with somebody. You're thinking about character issues long before you meet the other person and all of a sudden you focus in on a few of his characteristics and you become blind to the others.

This is why you have to involve other people who are wise and discerning and who love you and listen to what they say because they are not trying to be a downer on your relationship, but trying to be objective.

Listen:

Don't trust someone by what they say, but by their actions revealed over time

And I'm not talking about being paranoid or hiring a private investigator or anything like that. I'm just talking about being wise and discerning. Don't rush into the relationship.

And I know that some of you right now are pushing back on me. I can hear it. You're saying, "But, Pastor Aaron, he loves me so much. You don't understand. He broke his parole to come see me." And I would say, "Case and point."

So, let me kind of shift now to the importance of trust in a marriage relationship.

Benjamin Franklin said this one time. Now, let me just go ahead and qualify this by saying I don't know how much marriage advice we can take from Ben, particularly what we know about him. However, I'll take this one and I'll explain what he means by this.

But I think there is some real wisdom in what he says here. He says this:

"Before marriage, keep your eyes wide open; but afterwards, half shut."

Now, what in the world does that mean? Well, let me kind of unpack this. What he's essentially saying is, "Don't just constantly be holding every offense caused by your spouse—don't be holding on to them for a long, long time. Believe the best about your spouse."

Let me take this a little further. If you're married right now and if you are here with your spouse, please don't answer this out loud. Aren't there several dozen things about your spouse that just kind of drive you crazy?

There was a lady in the 9:30 service who said, "Amen." And I was like, "Okay, that's going to be a fun car ride home."

But actually what happens is, before marriage this is how it has a tendency to go. The things that attracted you to the other person, after marriage end up kind of driving you nuts.

It's like the old phrase from that country preacher, before marriage opposites attract, after marriage opposites attack. And that's what can happen.

So, before marriage what you loved about her so much is that she was so outgoing and bubbly, little social butterfly. After marriage you are like, "Ahh. She won't shut up."

Before marriage he was so ambitious. After marriage he won't stop working.

So, these little things can kind of get on our nerves a little bit and they just become bigger and bigger things. And it ends up, if we don't deal with them in healthy ways, damaging trust.

Now, let me offer this disclaimer about what I'm getting ready to say, because I am not talking about the big breeches in trust. I'm going to get to that in just a moment. I'm talking about the smaller breakings of trust that fit into the category of a healthy relationship. It's a healthy marriage—you both are selfless, you're working on it, but you're just broken, fallen human beings so you're going to hurt one another. Let me kind of offer that disclaimer.

When your spouse says something that hurts you, or when your spouse maybe fails to live up to an expectation that you have for him in your mind, how do you keep the hope of intimacy alive?

See, when your spouse says or behaves in a way that puts you off, the narrative that you choose to believe about why will determine if trust stays high or gets low in the relationship.

And in a healthy, yet imperfect relationship... Here's the secret of long, healthy marriages. These are two people who choose to believe the best about the intentions of the other person.

Dr. Van Epp, who I quoted on week one says this:

"You live with two spouses: the spouse in your home and the spouse in your head."

And it affects your trust level and your emotional bond with them.

In 1 Corinthians 13 we read this passage at a lot of weddings and it's this description—a paragraph of what love is. And it's a great description: love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy. But in verse 7 it says this:

"...love always trusts..." (NIV)

That word trust can be translated believes. So you can read this about your spouse from that verse that trust always believes the best about the other person. So when my spouse puts me off, hurts me, annoys me and she will, I can choose to believe the best about why or I can choose to believe the worst. And then I can go and have a conversation with her and confirm it. We can kind of work through it together.

Marriage is two people fighting, not each other, but fighting for one another because we have an enemy. And I would say that all marriages can be difficult and hard, Christian marriages have an extra strike against them because they have an external enemy trying to take them down.

I've mentioned this before, 1 Peter 5:8. It says this:

"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." (NIV)

It kind of changes things a little bit when you read that verse within the context of your marriage. And this image right here kind of captures it. Your marriage is an innocent little gazelle that Satan is on the prowl over.

Here's what that sounds like, by the way. Have you ever heard this voice whispering in your ear? "Assume the worst. He'll never change. He will never emotionally connect with you."

"She will never understand. In fact, if she knew everything about you, she'd kick you out today. She isn't interested in what you are interested in."

How about this one? "You married the wrong person. Your soul mate is out there somewhere else and you deserve to be happy and go find him."

What about this? "You just got married so young. You have changed and it's okay to kind of call it quits and move along. Life is too short to be unhappy. Follow your heart."

He is constantly trying to wedge his way in there little by little.

And so we think that the answer is to jump to greener pastures, only to find that that wasn't the solution. Statistically second marriages... There is a greater chance of divorce with second marriages than first marriages.

I'm not saying that second marriages can't make it. I know a bunch of people who are on their second marriage and it's healthy and it's thriving. But I am saying statistically there is a greater increase in the possibility of divorce.

And you've just got to ask yourself: Why? Could it be because you really didn't deal with the root of the problem in your first marriage? You ran from that problem straight into another problem.

You followed yourself right into the second marriage. And you said, "You know what? The grass is greener on the other side," so you sold the house when maybe, in reality, what you needed to do was fertilize your lawn.

When you get to this place of contempt the relationship is on extremely shaky ground. And walls or fences that get built up between a husband and a wife don't happen overnight. They happen over the course of years and years, where you chose to believe the worst version of why our spouse said or did something to us.

In Hebrews, chapter 12, verse 15 it says:

"Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many." (NLT)

I've asked a young couple in our church to come out on stage to help me illustrate this next point. So could you please welcome Quad and Taylor onto the stage as they make their way out. Welcome Quad and Taylor.

Now, Taylor is one of our leadership residents in our Student Ministry. She's doing a phenomenal job. Quad serves in our worship department and you'll see him oftentimes up here playing the guitar or drums. He's a man of many, many talents.

Recently Quad and Taylor got engaged. So, that's exciting. That's exciting. It happened about a month ago. So you all are invited to the wedding. It's going to be great. It's going to be fantastic.



What I thought I would do is I just thought that I would do a little pre-marital counselling with Quad and Taylor in front of our whole church family. Alright? So, what can go wrong? I don't think that anything could go wrong.

You guys, how long have you been dating? Come on, man, you've got to be quicker than that. You've been dating for six months and two days. You kids are moving fast. Get to know each other.

You guys arguing? Yes. You don't want to confess too much up here. That's a little frightening. We understand. Here's the thing. When you guys get into an argument...

What was the subject of your last argument? No details. Just generalities.

Scheduling conflicts. Ha, ha, ha. You know what that means. So scheduling conflict. I don't know what happened. Maybe one of you showed up late or didn't see it on the calendar. Whatever.

Here's what happens. Quad, you guys get into an argument and the way that you choose to handle that is almost like this plank of wood here. You've offended Taylor. Now, Taylor, what you choose to do with the offense determines the direction and the trajectory of your future marriage.

Now, Quad is going to say and do stupid things because he's a man. Am I right? We're really good at it. So, that's just going to happen. So, when he says and does something really, really dumb, in that moment you can believe the worst version about why he said it and leave it at that. And then confront it and try to deal with it.

Here's what we're trying to do. We're trying to clear the plank. Because if we don't what ends up happening is we take the plank, whether we realize it or not and it becomes a post beginning to create a wedge in our relationship.

So, Taylor, knowing what I know about you, I cannot imagine you ever hurting Quad.

You're such a sweetheart. But we know that that's not reality. There is going to be something that you say or do that is going to hurt Quad's feelings. I don't know, maybe he's been working on his sixpack abs and you haven't noticed.

Anyway, what happens is that Taylor is going to do or say something. Quad, same kind of thing, she's going to hand you an offense and what you choose to do with this in the moment, how you choose the trust narrative that develops in your mind over her motives is going to determine a lot.

You can sit down and lovingly ask her about it, try to clear it, offer forgiveness and grace, or you take the plank and maybe say, "You know what? She hurt me." And it becomes another post in the relationship.

Quad, has there ever been a time when you guys are getting ready to go on a date and you asked Taylor where she wants to go to dinner? Has she ever said that she doesn't know or care? And for you to decide. That's a lie.

So, I'm going to save you a ton of grief, bro. Never ask that question. Taylor, can you close your ears for a moment? We just need to have... What you do is you say, "Hey, babe. We're going to go to dinner and we're going to go to your favorite place. Guess where it is." And wherever she says, take her there.

What's going to happen though is Quad is going to take Taylor to the wrong place, or you're going to forget an anniversary—did you remember Valentines Day? Okay, good. Of course he did. He's only been dating for six months.

What's going to happen though is there is eventually going to come a year, whatever, he forgets something, he kind of hands you this offense—whatever you choose to do with it will determine the health of the relationship. But if it just goes in here, it becomes another post.

Here's what can end up happening. Once you've guys have been married for five, seven, 10 years or more all of a sudden you begin to recycle arguments. And you begin to have this conversation or this argument and it becomes an impasse.

Here's the deal. Taylor says something or does something that hurts you. Quad, you do something to Taylor. And here's the narrative we say in our mind, "I've already talked to him about this and he always does this." "She always reacts this way. You know what? I'm not even going to begin to bother."

We become passive aggressive and we don't even give the opportunity to really forget the post. We just immediately take it and we go to here. And, if we don't clear the fences...

See, here's the thing, being offended is a moment, living offended is a choice. And so we just say, "You know what? I'm just going to stay offended. I'm just going to believe the worst version. I can't believe it. You know what? My soul mate is probably out there somewhere."

And over years and years of time of not dealing with these things, they become close, and in the relationship they become a dividing wall of hostility. And then what God brought together ends up being two people sitting in an attorney's office dividing assets. Hey, would you give Quad and Taylor a hand. Thank you guys.

I just want to end our time with this. See this right here, this fence right here is just like the everyday, common things that we may do to hurt each other.

But some of you are sitting there going, "Yeah, but Aaron, what about the big things? What about the big breaches in trust? The big things like maybe a hidden addiction that you didn't know about. And then it's compounded over time.

Or maybe it's an abusive situation. Or maybe you learned of the affair. And you are like, "How in the world can we reconcile? How in the world... What is the way forward?"

Now, I just want to say this. Oftentimes within society people will kind of say, automatically, that any of those big breaches in trust is to divorce. And I'm not saying that that isn't an option. And I'm not saying that you don't have the reasons to do that. I am saying that it doesn't have to be. And actually God can redeem and restore the most broken things. That's what He does.

I've actually known of... I was talking to a man this morning who said he and his wife had a big breach in trust 12 years ago. And he said, "I just want to testify that if the two will stay and fight and humble themselves, God can redeem and restore anything."

So, can I just leave you with these two things really quickly? For those of you are like, "How do you rebuild trust in the midst of a big breach?"



For the spouse whose trust has been broken
Realize trust and forgiveness are not the same
I think oftentimes with a deep break in trust, spouses will withhold forgiveness, thinking that what that means is that they immediately need to trust again. And that's not necessarily true.

So you're withholding forgiveness because you think, "That means that I've got to trust and I can't trust." And then that just leads to a bitter heart.

You can forgive, trust takes a long time. And, actually you might not ever get there. Scriptures commands us to forgive. Never once does Scripture demand us to trust an untrustworthy person.

For the spouse who broke the trust:

Maybe you really love your spouse and you messed up and you know it and you want the marriage to work, I just want to offer you these words of caution here:

1. It's likely you will
want things to get back to normal before your spouse is ready

And that's understandable. It's just not realistic. And so you are on your spouse's timeline, not yours.

2. You'll often want
trust to be given without significant changes to the relationship

I've talked to some married couples before, big breach in trust, and they decided to stay together, go to counseling and work on it.

And maybe six months later, eight months later, whatever it is, the one who broke the trust is complaining and saying, "You know what? It's just so confining. She just constantly wants to see what's on my phone. And she's constantly following me around with all of my friends. It just doesn't seem like she trusts me. It's so confining."

And I would be like, "Well, yeah." In order for there to be healing there has to be a confinement.

It's kind of like when you break an arm, you set it in a cast and it restricts the movement. Why? So that healing can occur. And that just can't be fast forwarded. You've got to allow that to play out.

Here's the thing. Going back to the Relationship Attachment Model, when trust is broken, know goes way down. So that's going to require more time and more transparency. And without it a new trust narrative cannot emerge.

But if you would forgive and if the person who broke the trust is willing to humble himself and to make some real effort at change, listen. God can renew and revive and restore anything. It's called beauty from the ashes.

You know what gets under Satan's skin any more than that? Nothing. The fact is that he's like, "Man, I did everything I could to break you guys up but it's not working." But it requires two people not just one.

Romans, chapter 8, verse 28 says:

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (NIV)

I think it's unfortunate that that verse has been so over used that we resort it to an axiom on a coffee mug. It's not. In all things means in all things. And God can take them and work for the good. There is hope. There can be hope on the other side of a big breach in trust by the power of the Holy Spirit.

You might be like, "Well, Aaron. Where in the world can I find that kind of strength to offer that kind of forgiveness?"

In the Old Testament, one of my favorite stories is a story of a prophet named Hosea. God tells Hosea to go and marry an adulterous woman, a woman who has a checkered past. Her name was Gomar, which is unfortunate.

He marries this woman who has a checkered past. And they have a family together. And really, what God does is He gives a living illustration to say, "As a people, you have been unfaithful to Me. You have committed adultery on Me. And, yet, I have come to be in relationship with you."

One day Hosea comes home to an empty house. He gets a sick feeling in the pit of his stomach because he doesn't want to believe what might be true, that Gomar is being unfaithful to him once again.

He goes back to the redlight district of town and sure enough he sees her at a distance in the arms of another man. He is upset and he is hurt and he is broken. He has every right to be.

But here's what God says to him, "Go. Run after her. Take her. Forgive her. Restore the relationship. Bring her home as your wife once again." And Hosea didn't want to do it, but that's what he did.

This is what God is saying to us. God is not saying, "Be a doormat." God is not saying, "Allow your spouse to take advantage of you and allow her to get away with it." What He is saying is, "This is an illustration of a faithful God who runs after unfaithful people and extends grace to them when they never deserved it."

I don't know if your marriage will survive one of those big breaches in trust. It largely depends on the demeanor, the disposition, of the person who broke the trust. But I do know that there is a God who is powerful enough to bring healing to the worst wounds and breaches in trust that you might experience. And it's a super natural thing, it's a miraculous thing.

I'll tell you this. Talking to couples... There was the man who I spoke to this morning, I referred to him earlier, they'd been married 37 years and he said, "It was in year 25 that he had a big breach in trust. And yet we were willing to work on it. We were willing to work on our friendship. And now, 37 years into the marriage, I can honestly say we are the best of friends."

God can take whatever ashes you might be holding right now and He can breathe beautiful, beautiful life into them if you'd be willing to submit them to Him.

I know right now that this might be heavy. There might be some of you who are walking through some things right now—you just learned of something this week. Maybe some of you, this brushes up against an old wound.

I just want to create a space. I know, traditionally, right now this is the time of the service where a lot of us have a tendency to peel out. And I get that. I understand that. Parking lot is fun. But I just want to encourage you to sit in this moment and not bypass what the work of the Holy Spirit might want to do in you.

Maybe, right now, your relationship is healthy, your marriage is great. Man, thank God for that. Others of you, maybe you're hurting and you might want to just reach over and grab the hand of your spouse and pray together right now, in this moment.

Maybe, right now, you're just going, "God, I need Your strength because I don't know how to move forward. God, I'm the one who broke the trust. And I am just drowning in shame. God, would You please forgive me?"

Just sit in this moment for a moment praying to the God who runs after those of us who have been unfaithful to Him and allow Him to speak new words of life into really broken places.

Father, we come to You right now. We're so grateful that even in the midst of our sin the book of Romans tells us that Christ died for us. So, Father, I just pray right now that You would bring healing power into our relationships, into our marriages, where maybe trust has been broken.

Father, would You please give us the strength to believe the best about our spouses, not because they necessarily deserve it but because instead of fighting with them, we want to fight for them.

So, I ask right now that Your Holy Spirit would just put a hedge of protection around marriages in this room and those who are listening. I pray that You would give us the strength to realize that there is a spiritual battle going on that wants to break up marriages and families because that will weaken the church and society.

God, would You please give us the strength and the ability far beyond our own ability to do so, to offer grace and forgiveness because You've offered those same things to us. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.