



Let's Talk

*Dennis
Peacocke*



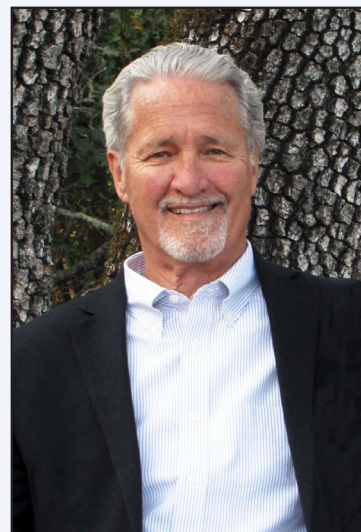
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Founded in 1979 by Dennis and Jan Peacocke, GoStrategic is a nonprofit organization that operates internationally to equip and support inwardly compelled disciples committed to truth and ongoing transformation. We accomplish our mission through our online schools (GoBusiness, GoLife, and GoCitizen), events, educational products, and networking. Our ministry headquarters are based in Santa Rosa, California, with affiliate schools in Mexico, Central and South America, Europe, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and Africa.

We believe cultural transformation starts with you! That's why we have dedicated our lives to equipping believers to be leaders in the communities where they live, work, and serve. Every believer—whether a business professional, a parent, or a pastor—shares the mission of bringing God's Kingdom to earth. With over four decades of experience educating, modeling, and connecting like-minded individuals, we have seen first-hand the fruit of Christians applying biblical principles to the most complex challenges. It is our sincere hope that the training and services we provide result in thousands of communities transformed as believers step in to rebuild, repair, and restore our world.

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Dennis Peacocke is the founder of GoStrategic, a ministry dedicated to demonstrating the relevance of Christianity to every area of life. He graduated from UC Berkeley with a major in Political Science at the height of the turbulent 60s. Carrying a concern for social justice, he was involved in the civil rights and free speech movements of that time. Since his conversion in 1968, he has gained international respect as a strategist due to his unique way of applying biblical solutions to the many challenges facing families, churches, business, and government. Both a former business owner and pastor, he has authored four books and recorded numerous audio and video presentations. Dennis and his wife, Jan, reside in Santa Rosa, California; they have three adult children and twelve grandchildren.



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SESSION ONE:

The Nature of Communication and Intimacy and the Five General Rules of Life-Giving Relationships

DISCOVERY QUESTION:

What significance do communication skills play in deep relationships and why?

POINT #ONE:

Deep relationships are built on communion not coercion.

- A. Aside from the taking of the The Lord's Supper, "communion" is commonly defined in dictionaries as the act of intimate conversation or fellowship. Its root concept is the act of "going with" someone.
- B. Coercion, on the other hand, is the act of forcing someone to go where they don't want to go. This may take the subtler forms of intonation, body language, anger, emotions, or other forms of manipulation.
- C. Communication begins not only with the commitment to go with somebody, but the recognition that we want the highest level of intimacy possible in that communication.

PRINCIPLE #1

Deep relationships
require definition,
time, investment,
communication skills,
and communion
as opposed to
coercion.



- D. Intimacy is achieved when there is enough trust in the relationship where I am free to share my inner conversation with you.
- E. Powerful and effective communication has an unbelievable ability to bring change to people involved in the projects they are doing.
- F. This study together addresses how to acquire the skills needed to achieve intimacy in our key relationships and communicate more clearly and effectively with everyone.
- G. Love is not enough to sustain a relationship or take it into levels of intimacy that will make that love grow. We need *skills*.

POINT #TWO:

Why do we have so many superficial or broken relationships in our current culture?

Some of the reasons are:

H. There are fewer parents who know how to effectively model deep communication and relational problem-solving for us as we are growing up and learning our basic communication skills.

I. Western culture, as evidenced by a divorce rate of around 50% and the “disposable relationships” of the unmarried, tells us that conflict leading to shut-down or separation is “inevitable.”

J. There are few educational institutions that practice and teach the principles of effective relationship-building and clear communication (schools, churches, etc.).



POINT #THREE:

Our particular relationships should be defined as to what we are willing to invest in them and what we expect from them.

A. If we don't approach relationships with strategy, we are leaving the depth of the relationship to chance or circumstance in terms of what they give us!

B. We tend to hit what we aim for—for better or for worse! The first and key question is, “What do you want out of your specific relationships?”

POINT #FOUR:

The Five General Rules of Life-Giving Relationships

Deep, life-giving relationships don't just “happen” as a result of love or mutual commitment. They are built as we learn to skillfully apply at least these five basic laws of relational engagement.



A. **Goals and Expectations:** We have defined our common goals for our relationship and kept those goals current.

B. **Respect and Protection:** We have defined our rules of mutual honor in our attitudes and language toward each other.

C. **Transparency and Honesty:** We are committed to be self-revealing with each other in terms of hurts, dissent, or awareness of potential threats to our relationship.

D. **Mutual Defense Agreement:** We are committed to resolving our conflicts successfully and regularly.

E. **Fulfilled Destiny:** Relationships have a strategic design. We are committed to building our “Bridge of Trust” so that it can carry God's desired destiny for us together.

SESSION ONE: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you see as primary differences between communion and coercion?
2. Read Amos 3:3. How does this verse support the idea that true communication means “going with” one another ?
3. What are you doing to insure that your communication with others is characterized by communion and not coercion?
4. Describe specific changes you envision occurring in your challenging relationships if coercive conversation is eliminated?

5. What one thing from this week's lesson are you going to practice in order to facilitate true communion in your relationships?
6. In relationships, how does strategy differ from manipulation?
7. How does one decide when to begin letting people into the "internal conversation?"
8. What will I do to begin to change my skills in relationship building?

SESSION TWO:

Growing Relationships Are Built on the Process of Mutual Transformation (Part One)

DISCOVERY QUESTION:

What evidence would your family/friends offer concerning your hunger for change as opposed to your desire to be “right” or “together?”

POINT #ONE:

Spiritual and relational growth are built on the foundation of the process of *transformation* responses rather than *performance* responses.

A. The differences between these two responses are both critical and very significant:

Performance Responses

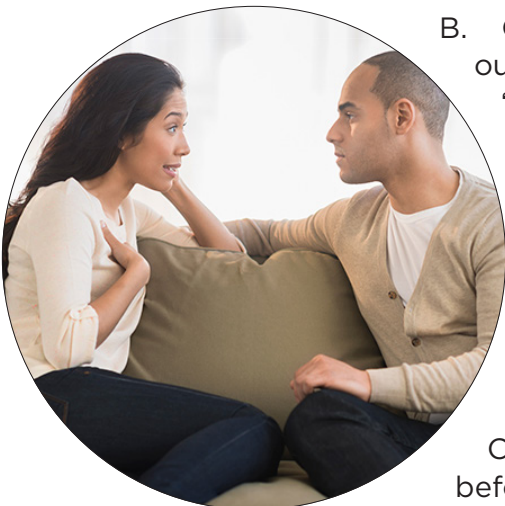
- Fear of failure
- The need to be right
- The “blame game”

Transformation Responses

- A recognition that failure properly responded to leads to growth
- The need to see where I must grow
- The “help-me-see game”

PRINCIPLE #2

A growing relationship lives in the process of failure, correction, and overcoming blind spots and strongholds.



B. Our mutual need for one another is based on the reality of our personal incompleteness. “Community” recognizes that “we” are a whole. No one is complete in himself.

What I know

- What I tell you
- What I don’t tell you

What I don’t know

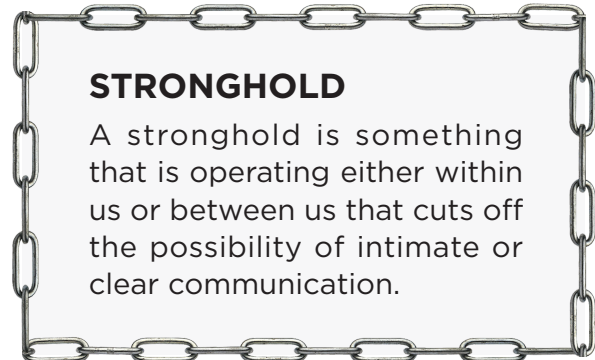
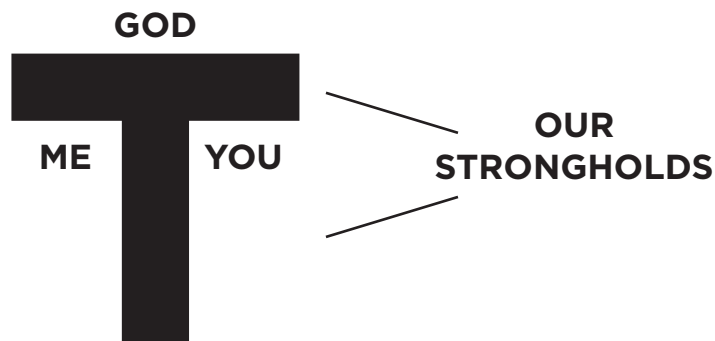
- My “blind spots” seen by others
- What God knows
- What Satan knows

C. When conversations lead to pain, we should “post” before we simply react out of that pain.

POINT #TWO:

Learning how to recognize and overcome “strongholds” in ourselves and others.

The cross deals with our past, present, and future sins.



A. We must stop and recognize what works and what doesn't work. In order to change, we must learn to recognize destructive patterns that tear down our relational intimacy and commit ourselves to discovering new responses that are constructive.

1. Recognizing neurosis and “strongholds”: Neurosis can be described as doing the same nonproductive thing over and over again while expecting a different result.
2. Do any examples come to mind from your own life?

B. Symptoms of strongholds:

1. Heightened emotions; strong reactions; aggressive and/or defensive language; fight or flight.
2. A sense of fear or anger usually used to manipulate the other person to back off in the discussion.
3. A general emotional, intellectual, or sense of “demand” that tends to control the rules for relating to us or them.
 - a. Spoken demands (agreements we have explicitly made), vows, etc.
 - b. Unspoken demands (don't hurt me, cross my will, or ask me questions I don't want to deal with, etc.)



POINT #THREE:

We cannot change certain areas of ourselves by ourselves. We need God and the community in which He has placed us.

- A. A Zen parable asks, “How can hand grasp hand?” or “How can we lift ourselves up by our own boots?”
- B. We need one another in order to bring missing distinctives, ingredients, and insight we don’t have about certain situations in life.
- C. Community is based on mutual need.



People can make remarkable changes on their own, but everyone runs into something they cannot change by themselves. The issue then becomes change through help or choosing pride and isolation which keeps people stuck. Instead of using problems as an excuse not to turn to God, God brings change with Him once He’s invited into a situation. I am looking to God and speaking to God as the true change-agent and enabler behind our relationship. He is Love and delights in loving relationships!

SESSION TWO: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What connotations does the word “conflict” have for you?
2. Do our associations with the word “conflict” reflect a life view committed to maturing in our relationships?
3. Read Proverbs 18:1. In an exchange involving conflict, how does how we hold our desires impact the chances of that conversation resulting in a greater level of maturity and relationship?
4. What are the obstacles that keep your from drawing more relational life out of situations involving conflict?

5. Describe the changes that could come if conflict predominantly resulted in deeper relationship rather than broken relationship.
6. It seems that more secularists/non-Christians have a greater desire to change than do Christians. How do we persuade fellow Christians that salvation is just the beginning of God's work in us and that He uses each one of us?
7. How do we move people from a performance orientation to a transformation orientation?
8. What is an action will you take this week to foster life-giving results from relational conflict?

SESSION THREE:

Growing Relationships Are Built on the Process of Mutual Transformation (Part Two)

DISCOVERY QUESTION:

Why are our relationships defined by the things we cannot talk about?

POINT #ONE:

Identifying and giving up our “strongholds” is essential to personal and relational growth.

In order to get free of strongholds we have inherited (generational sin), appropriated from others (emulation and peer-pressure issues), or taken on ourselves in ignorance or sin, we must stand in the pain of certain key questions:

- A. What idea or view of myself am I defending?
- B. What does this idea or view of myself “promise me,” in terms of protection, power, or “truth?”
- C. What do I stand to gain or lose if I alter this idea or view? (Paradigms)
- D. What do I need to pray against and repent of to start the process?
- E. With whom can I make an agreement to work on setting and maintaining new patterns of freedom?

PRINCIPLE #3

A growing relationship lives in the freedom of both discovery and assertion, the reality that “different” isn’t necessarily wrong, and not taking the part for the whole.

POINT #TWO:

Transformation requires of us that we learn to master the skill of distinguishing between “discovering” and “asserting” in our relationships. We must find the balance between these two things.

- A. “Discovery” is the heart desire to discover how someone really feels, thinks about, or sees something apart from any coercion on our part.
 1. Not talking often means simply waiting to speak! This is not listening.



2. When we stop genuine discovery and move only to assertion, communication stops.
- B. "Asserting" is the act of sharing what we believe or the points we want to make.
 1. All true communion takes place when there is a proper balance of discovery and assertion appropriate to the conversation.

POINT #THREE:

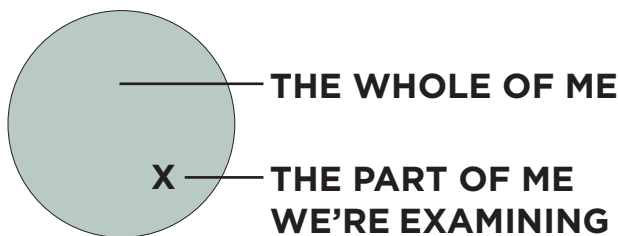
"Different" may not be wrong. We must accept the validity of "both-and," not just "either-or."

- A. There are absolutes (like morals, gravity, or death), and they must be discovered and honored. Nevertheless, out of our personal preferences and insecurities, we can easily relate out of the paradigm that "different than me or us is wrong."
- B. In our fallen human condition, we frequently respond in an "either-or" mode (simplicity) rather than in a "both-and" mode (complexity or diversity).

POINT #FOUR:

When giving and receiving correction, don't take what is meant for the "part" to apply to the "whole." *This is a critical issue in communication, especially when the communication involves any kind of correction or conflict resolution.*

- A. Our strengths or faults only make up a part of us; to talk about either as if it's all of us leads either to pride or defensive self-rejection.



- B. We don't ever want to get in a position where we punish people for sharing their hearts.

#1 *The first point of a conversation is to communicate. Who did or said what, where they said it, or what they believe is initially not the point; the first point is what was the intent of their speech and actions?*

#2 *After establishing perceived intent, we then may move on to ethics, agreements, and standards. The "right-wrong" game is the usual result of personal pride, fear of being wrong, or relational insecurity. The issue is change and growth, not comparative right-wrong stances. There are real right and wrong issues, but the first relational issue is disclosure: the whys, the facts, and then the ethical issues. True, deep relationships are built on truth, freely shared and freely processed.*

SESSION THREE: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word “discovery?”
2. What determines the way that we listen?
3. Read Proverbs 18:2. How should this verse be interpreted in light of the subject matter?
4. How do you know that you are operating in a good balance between discovering and asserting in your communication?

5. Describe the changes that could occur if your primary relationships were characterized by a good balance between discovering and asserting.

6. How do we move our friends away from the blame game and come to an agreement to base our relationship on transformation rather than performance?

7. How do we handle the awkwardness or division we experience with people after an intimate life-transforming conversation?

8. Who will you talk to this week about developing a better flow of discovering and asserting in your relationship?

SESSION FOUR:

The Rules of Engagement: Defining Our Use of Language

DISCOVERY QUESTION:

Why is the choice of words so important in our most meaningful relationships?

POINT #ONE:

Communication takes place on a number of critical and different levels as well as “languages.”

- A. The use of words (meaning, placement, and purpose)
- B. The use of emotions and intonation (intensity and attitude)
- C. The use of “body language” (suggesting or reinforcing non-verbally)
- D. The language of “recruitment” (bringing others into the conversation to strengthen your case)
- E. The language of “importance” (when and where the conversation begins and ends)

PRINCIPLE #4

Growing relationships are characterized by an awareness of the words used in communication; we need to be very clear about the meaning and usage of our words, using prior agreements.

All of these “languages” must be open to question and open to defining their usage; these are part of the “rules of engagement.”



POINT #TWO:

The use of words: Are we meaning the same things with our words?

- A. The English and the Americans are often described as “two people separated by a common language.” So it often is for all of us. Words matter.
- B. We need to define key words we use in communication for them to have meaning in the conversation.
- C. For example, what do we mean by:
 - 1. “Love”
 - 2. “Freedom”
 - 3. “I believe in God”
 - 4. “Political correctness”
 - 5. “You can count on me” (for what?)



POINT #THREE:

Stop using “Round Words!”

- A. “Round Words” are words that are used to give us the room to maneuver. They give us room to not be held accountable to any exact situation. In some situations, they may be usefully diplomatic, but as a character trait or communication style, they destroy relational trust and intimacy.
- B. Examples:
 - 1. “I’ll be home about six”
 - 2. “I’ll call you sometime soon”
 - 3. “I think I might do that”
 - 4. “I really can’t remember that”
- C. Round Words reveal potential character flaws.
- D. All relationship are defined by the level of accountability the participants want in the relationship. We need to listen for “Round Words” in ourselves and others.
- E. If we don’t confront one another around these flaws, we communicate that the relationship is not worth mutual responsibility.



POINT #FOUR:

Stop using “War Words!”

- A. “War Words” are words we use to attack others or ourselves. They are destructive by design, and except on very rare occasions, are totally inappropriate in most relationships.
- B. Some examples of these are:
 - 1. “You never”
 - 2. “You always”
 - 3. “I don’t believe you”
 - 4. “You’ll never change”
- C. These words accuse, often inaccurately, and leave people no room for change nor credit for the proper responses they actually have given. Don’t use them!
- D. These words shut the conversation down and cause people to withdraw and resent us.

POINT #FIVE:

Tell me how you got there: Examining the “Ladder of Inference.”

- A. The principle: All of us tend to come to conclusions or opinions based upon a set of “orderly assumptions” (the ladder) which lead us to a particular conclusion, step-by-step. In order to truly know each other deeply (or ourselves), we must be free to share how we have come to the conclusions we have come to and examine whether or not our reasonings are appropriate or productive.
- B. Unexamined assumptions (ladders) usually make a fool out of you and me!



SESSION FOUR: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do we communicate beyond verbal language?
2. With all of these ways of communicating, what keeps us from clarity in our interaction?
3. Read Matthew 5:33-37. How does Jesus' message apply to our use of language in conversations with others?
4. What strategies can you utilize to ensure clear communication, both in your choice of words and your manner of speaking?

5. What steps can you take to manage intense emotions amidst confrontation?
6. How can we become more mindful of our thought processes and trace our “Ladder of Inference?”
7. How important are context and timing to effective communication?
8. We’ve shifted from “I think” to “I feel.” What is next?

SESSION FIVE:

The Rules of Engagement: Defining Our Responses to Pain and Pressure

DISCOVERY QUESTION:

Why are the rules of engagement so important to our key relationships?

POINT #ONE:

Love runs on rails: Relationships are built and deepened by our ability to keep the agreements we make.

- A. Our agreements and expectations tend to define our relationships and that is why:
1. They must be clear and defined.
 2. Agreements not freely entered into will not hold under pressure.
 3. They must be held by mutual accountability.

PRINCIPLE #5

All relationships run on the clarity and enforcements of their agreements, expectations, and responses to pain and pressure.

Broken commitments tear up the planks on the Bridge of Trust. Kept agreements make the bridge ever stronger. All bridges have a "load limit" of how much weight they can handle. Wise people don't put more weight on a relationship than the bridge can handle. Our deepest relationships should be strong enough to handle the deepest issues of our lives.

POINT #TWO:

We must define and describe what it is we expect out of our relationships.

- A. Expectations, defined or undefined, are incredibly powerful and often determine the nature of our relationships whether we know it or not.



What we “expect” is what we hold each other accountable to produce or do. It is critical that we define and describe our expectations to see if we are in agreement. If not, we must sort through the differences and clearly redefine what we expect from one another.

B. The question: “What does that look like to you?” Describing or picturing what we think something or some emotion or action should look like can be unbelievably helpful in clarifying our expectations of each other.

POINT #THREE:

Building the “Bridge of Trust”



A. All bridges have a “load limit” of how much weight they can handle.

B. Being “self-revealing” means I will share with you my inner conversation, not just my outer conversation. This is important.

C. Integrity is when my outer conversation and my inner conversation are saying the same thing. This builds trust.

D. The “assumption of goodwill” means believing the best about someone’s intentions and motives, rather than giving into accusations coming out of our pain or misunderstanding of why someone did what they did or said what they said.

E. Anything that attacks the “assumption of goodwill” is an enemy to the relationship.

F. When we discern that “the game is on” (emotion, pain, conflict, etc.), we must come back to our “rules of engagement.”

POINT #FOUR:

We must commit ourselves to avoiding “Destruction Derbies.”

A. A “Destruction Derby” is a conversation where no communication takes place and one or both parties start destroying each other emotionally until one or both quit in defeat. Verbally they go like this:

1. I hurt you / you hurt me
2. I escalate / you escalate
3. Our trust in each other goes down the tubes!

B. We must learn to “post”:

1. “Posting” is a self-defense technique that involves gathering your composure by a) getting physical space, and b) taking control of your breathing. Fear, shock, or pain cause us to react without thinking clearly first.
2. When conversations lead to pain, we should “post” before we simply react or speak.



SESSION FIVE: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does “assumption of goodwill” mean to you?
2. How do we build and protect the assumption of goodwill?
3. How should the principle of “assuming goodwill” intersect with the responsibility for ensuring clear communication?
4. Read Proverbs 23:6-7. In this exchange highlighting the difference between internal and external conversation, who is responsible for the negative results?

5. How far is too far, and how long is too long, in cooling off and “posting?”
6. What changes may occur if the conversations you share with those you care about become genuinely self-revealing?
7. What practical step will you take this week to bring internal conversations to the forefront of your relationships?
8. How have you taken responsible action for the results of your relational interactions?

SESSION SIX: The Heart of the Matter: Building the Bridge of Trust

DISCOVERY QUESTION:

How do you assess the “load limits” of the key relationships in your life?

POINT #ONE:

Wisdom is expressed in correctly assessing and living within the “load limits” of your relational bridges (The book of Proverbs).

- A. The Bridge of Trust
 - 1. How much weight will our bridge hold?

PRINCIPLE #6

“Trust” is the bridge that carries God’s work in our lives and relationships.



BRIDGE OF TRUST
▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲
LOAD LIMITS (SUPPORT)

B. Love is something we give, whereas trust is something that is earned.

Communication Principles that Build Strong Bridges:

- Kept agreements
- Heart for God and truth revealed
- Conflicts successfully resolved
- Time priorities revealed
- Sworn to your own hurt (Psalm 15:4)
- Family and friends honored
- Inner conversations revealed
- Morals and financial integrity revealed
- Expectations shared

POINT #TWO:

Building trust often begins by asking, “Where have I hurt you?” and then resolving those pains quickly.

The release of pain and bridge to intimacy requires these actions:

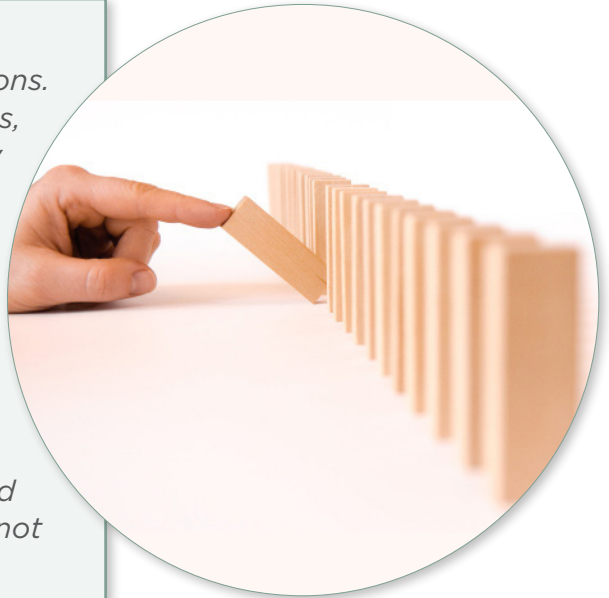
- A statement of what I did to hurt you.
- A request for forgiveness when both parties are finished sharing.
- A question of, “How can I fix it?” (Make restitution)
- The release of forgiveness.
- A commitment to do my/our best to not repeat the same error (sin).
- A recognition that we are to resolve hurts as quickly as possible and not carry them undisclosed and undiscussed.



POINT #THREE:

**We must recognize the critical distinction of agreement and alignment:
Talking new but acting old.**

It is one thing to agree on ideas, principles, or actions. It is quite another to line up our actions, emotions, or thoughts with what we say we conceptually agree upon! The distance between agreement and alignment creates dissonance, disharmony, and frustration, especially if it isn't recognized! Jesus, the Master Teacher, talked about the need for the wineskin to properly fit the needs of the wine. We often "talk new" but "act old" and don't see it. Talking about something and agreeing on it doesn't necessarily bring change! Some habits die hard. We must search for and change areas where we say we agree but we're not yet acting or thinking in the new way.



Pain closes us up in self-protection and shuts those who have hurt us out of the tender places of the heart. Without genuinely confessing that, right or wrong, you meant no pain, the wounded party usually will not reach out to us from their side of the river to build a bridge of trust.

SESSION SIX: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What connotations does the phrase “load limit” have?
2. Do you primarily look at your relationships through the lens of your desire or the lens of your ability for healthy, honest interaction?
3. In Luke 14:27, Jesus says, “whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” How does this relate to the ideas behind the Bridge of Trust?
4. How would reinforcing the Bridge of Trust affect your significant personal relationships?

5. How do you know if you have truly forgiven someone?
6. How do you test the “load limit” of the Bridge of Trust before crossing it?
7. How can you approach a person who is having a negative impact on a situation when there isn’t much trust built into your “bridge?”
8. What can you do this week to increase your capacity to sustain healthy and honest interactions?

SESSION SEVEN: Defending What We've Built

DISCOVERY QUESTION:

How are you demonstrating that you are prepared to defend your key relationships?

The Bridge of Trust and the power of our communication must be diligently defended by openness and ongoing discovery of effective communication. We must constantly work on our listening and speaking skills as illustrated in the following four points.

POINT #ONE:

We need to learn to recognize when “the plug is not in the sink.”

- A. “The plug in the sink”: The missing ingredient that allows our relationship to grow.

PRINCIPLE #6

We must learn to defend what we've built as we practice truth, humility, forgiveness, and love.



THE PLUG IN THE SINK is the key missing idea, insight, character distinctive, skill, or commitment allowing the water you pour into your relational sink to go down the drain. The ability to understand and describe the nature of the “plug” in any relationship is a gift from God. To then insert the plug and make change requires **resolve** coupled with **insight** and driven by the necessity of **love**.

- B. Describe what's missing: What is required to break the pressure? Why is it missing? Who is responsible, or who holds the key to change? Not accusation, but humility and responsibility.
- C. Agreement: Make an agreement to do what is necessary to change.
- D. Reinforcement: What are we going to do to brace one another until we are trained to a new habit pattern?
1. Two are better than one. Two can work on one better than one can work on oneself.
 2. Signals



POINT #TWO:

We constantly need to work on our listening skills. Both seeing and hearing are acquired skills.

- A. A scale of one-to-ten: Frequently we have no way of knowing how important something is to someone else, or how to communicate how important something is to us.
- B. Everything can't be a ten! If our body language and emotive responses say "10" but our words say "3," it shows as an inner-contradiction or a need to better control our emotional signals.

POINT #THREE:

We constantly need to give one another feedback as to what we heard.

- A. Another way to better ensure that real communication has taken place is to "play back" to each other what we think we heard for clarification and confirmation.
- B. The goal is to demonstrate that you understand the heart intent of the person. Don't play lawyer!

POINT #FOUR:

We need help seeing what we do not see.

- A. When we aren't relationally progressing, we are usually hit with:
 - 1. Am I in the wrong relationship (out of God's will)?
 - 2. What is wrong with me/you/us that we will never change?
 - 3. Why don't these principles of communication work for me/us?
- B. The answer is usually found in one or more of the following issues:
 - 1. One or both of you are applying the truth in the wrong way.
 - 2. You are missing some key tools and need outside help.
 - 3. The change will take *more time* to build (rebuild) trust.
 - 4. One or both parties aren't yet clear on their expectations or commitments.
- C. The issue often then becomes the need for outside help to show us what we aren't seeing.

POINT #FIVE:

Power of conversation is built on the trust we have for one another to share the things that are uncomfortable.

- A. It is not natural for us to talk about strongholds—in fact, it can be embarrassing.
- B. We know the biggest cure for darkness is to expose it to the light of the appropriate people.
- C. Stand against accusation together.



- D. Agree to be transparent.
- E. When we've hurt someone, find out what the enemy is going to accuse us of: "What accusation about me do you believe the enemy will run through your mind?"

POINT #SIX:

How do we defend one another?

- A. How do we defend each other? We must make commitments to defend one another in our relationships.
- B. I can't defend myself, but I can defend you in ways you can't.
- C. Many times when we get stuck, we need a third party who brings a level of objectivity, love, and a mutual commitment to the relationship to bring the missing ingredients from a point of view we can't see.



SESSION SEVEN: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What ideas come to mind when you think of the word, “defend?”
2. Why do we need to think about defending our relationships?
3. Read John 10:1. What do the “gates” represent in relationships, and how can we protect against those who would try to enter in illegitimate ways?
4. How do you know that you are doing an adequate job in defending your primary relationships?

5. What would result from knowing confidently that those you are close to are working diligently to defend the health and quality of your relationships?
6. What if you are not in agreement in a working or marriage relationship?
7. What are some practical things to look for when asking for feedback, and how do we get the relevant information?
8. How will you begin this week to develop a more specific strategy for defending the relationships that are most important to you?

SUMMARY:
Practicing Truths that Build the...



To keep my bridges strong and growing, I will...

1. Seek **communion** (*"to go with"*) in my conversations.
2. Work on my **relational priorities** and skills.
3. Discern **destructive patterns** and change them.
4. Find the **balance** between discovery and assertion in my conversations.
5. Accept the reality that "**different**" may not be "**wrong**."
6. Seek and extend **forgiveness** in the process of restoration.
7. Assume **goodwill** about motives and intentions toward me.
8. Be **self-revealing** (share my inner conversation) with you.
9. Mutually share with you my **Ladder of Inference** (how I came to my conclusions).
10. Describe and "word picture" my **expectations**.
11. Use the scale of one-to-ten to help quantify my **level of feelings**.
12. **Play back** what I hear for clarity.
13. Make **clearly defined agreements**.
14. Look for the missing "**plug in the sink**" when things aren't changing.
15. Work to **align my actions** with our agreements.
16. Look for help (**mediators**) when we get stuck.

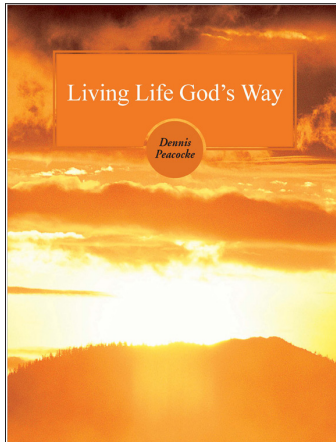
SUMMARY:
Practicing Truths that Build the...



Sinful practices erode the Bridge of Trust and my relationships with other people, therefore, I will resist...

1. Using **coercion** (force and manipulation) in my conversations.
2. Letting my relationships “**fall where they will.**”
3. Getting into “**destruction derbies.**”
4. Playing the “**right-wrong game.**”
- 5. Punishing people** for sharing their hearts.
6. Using “**round words**” in committed relational conversations.
7. Using “**war words**” in committed relational conversations.
8. Taking “**part for the whole.**”
9. Not taking time to **define my words** and what I mean by them.
10. Putting **one-hour** problems into **five-minute** time slots.

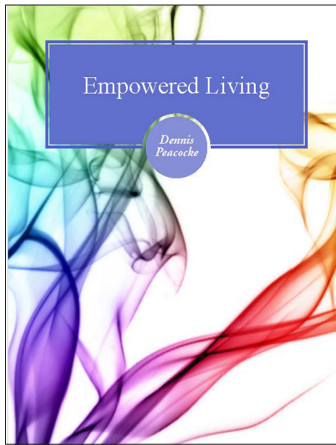
Recommended Resources



Living Life God's Way

Originally broadcast on the James Robison TV Show, this video series serves as a practical guide to living a transformed lifestyle in a fallen world. Just as Jesus taught with parables—illustrations everyone could relate to—so also are our human struggles a common basis for understanding. These anointed teachings will resonate universally, as each of us has grappled with feelings of disappointment, pain, anger, loneliness, depression, trauma, loss, and the array of emotions we call “hurts.” You will be empowered to truly move beyond the hurts of life!

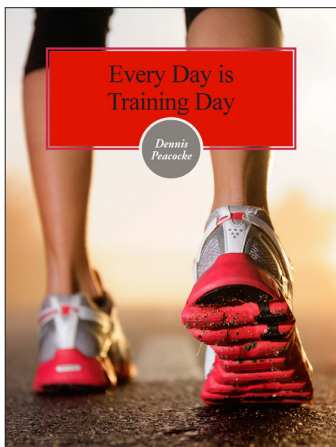
8-part MP4 Video Series with Workbook



Empowered Living

As “Christ was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God” (2 Corinthians 13:4a), so may we learn to recognize and seize the everyday opportunities in our lives for God to demonstrate His power through us. These teachings focus on developing the characteristics of God-powered living, how our personal character can impact others, and applying the wisdom of God’s Word in our decision-making.

3-Part MP3 Audio Series



Every Day is Training Day

This 2-part series by Dennis Peacocke highlights the call of every believer to effectively engage the world around them, handle the circumstances they face, and live out the destiny they have been called to.

2-Part MP3 Audio Series

Visit www.gostrategic.org/store to view these materials and more!