

# “Let’s Talk”

Communication Skills

for People Who

Want Deeper Relationships

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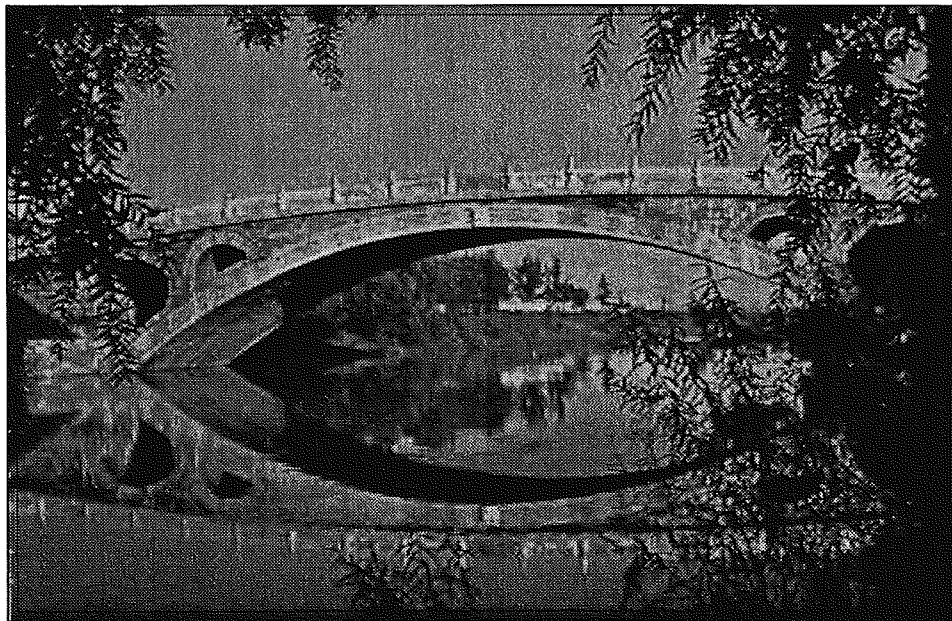
**This workbook belongs to \_\_\_\_\_**



*igniting personal  
and social transformation™*

# Let's Talk

Communication Skills  
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Transformation Study Group

with DENNIS PEACOCKE

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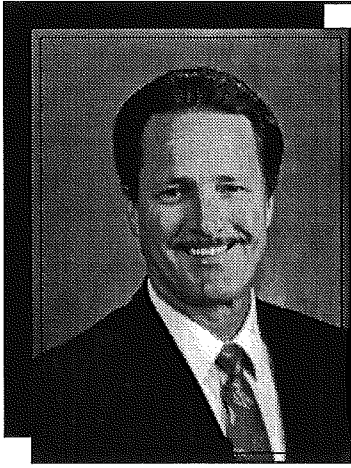
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# Welcome to the “Let’s Talk” Transformation Study Group

with Dennis Peacocke

**T**his seven week, one-hour-per-session discussion group, is designed to capture the interest and imagination of believer and unbeliever alike as they discover the power and life in applying God’s principles to their relationships.

The principles are time-tested and can be taught with the full confidence that they work. Besides all this, teaching this group will definitely change your life as well!

This teaching session will be recorded, and you will get the tapes (\$12.00 please) to study and re-study along with my teaching notes. You will also get our preliminary “P.R.” proposals. We will be going over class recruitment, venues, and follow-up recommendations in our joint workshop break-outs this weekend.

The plan is to let you “soak” in this material, discuss it with your church leaders, and plan your strategy for release. Here is what we are recommending—

1. Practice these principles yourself, starting now! You will be amazed how they begin to change your relationships.
2. Share them with your family and friends.
3. Teach the class in your church with other candidates who may want to teach it as well.
4. Prepare to share with an at-work or neighborhood group.
5. Keep us posted as we work together on perfecting how to build thousands of these transformation groups throughout the nation!

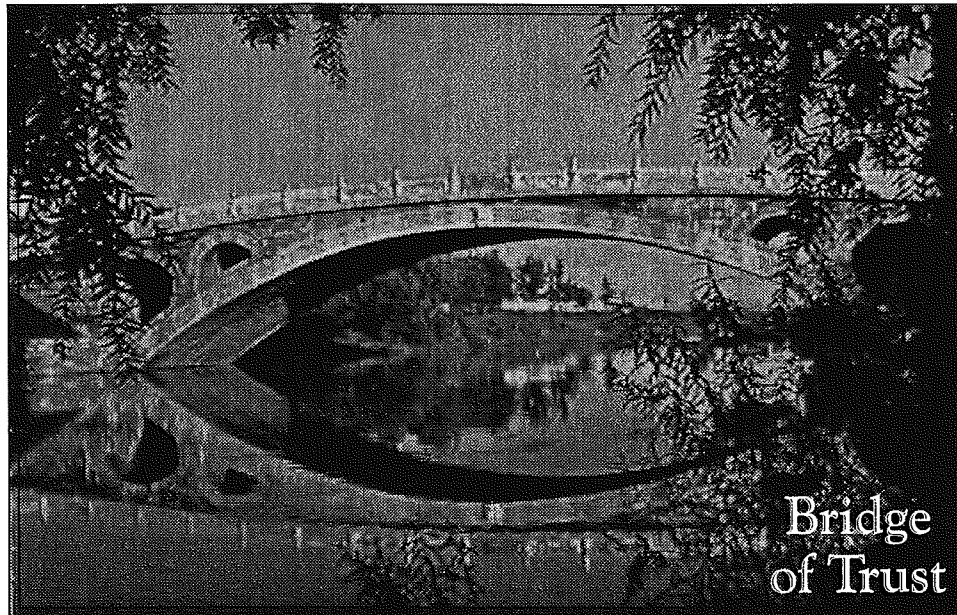
Let’s present ourselves together in faith before our God.

Yours in Him,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis T. Peacocke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dennis T. Peacocke  
President, Strategic Christian Services

Let’s Talk:  
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Discussion Session One:  
“The Nature of  
Communication and Intimacy”

## “The Nature of Communication and Intimacy”

### DISCOVERY QUESTION:

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

### POINT #ONE:

Deep relationships are built on communion, *not* coercion.

1. “Communion” is commonly defined in dictionaries, aside from the act of taking “The Lord’s Supper,” as the act of intimate conversation or fellowship. Its root concept is the act of “going with” someone.
2. “Coercion,” on the other hand, is the act of attempting to force someone to do something or believe something against their will. This may take the subtler forms of intonation, body language, anger, emotions, or other forms of manipulation.
3. “Community,” “conversation,” and \*”communication” are all words based on the act of “going with,” rather than coercing.
4. In order to “go with,” there must be real trust that opens us up to intimacy.
- \*\* 5. Deep relationships are based on intimacy and grow in intimacy. “Intimacy” may be described as the act of letting people inside of us to the point of *real risk*. This is the ground of deep relationships. It is the power of our conversation that opens us up to deeper levels of communication.
6. This study together is about how to achieve intimacy in our key relationships and communicate more clearly and effectively with everyone.

### PRINCIPLE #1

Deep relationships require definition; time; investment; communication skills; and communion, not coercion.

### POINT #TWO:

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

Some of the reasons are:

1. We have fewer and 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.
2. Few people seem to know, practice, and teach the principles of effective relationship-building and clear communication. (Schools, churches, etc.)
3. The Western culture, as evidenced by a divorce rate of nearly 50% and the unmarried, “disposable relationships,” tells us that conflict leading to shut down or separation is “inevitable.”

### POINT #THREE:

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

1. We tend to hit what we aim for, for better or worse! The first and key question is, “What do you want out of your specific relationships?” We would be wise to think about this.

2. If we don’t know the answer in terms of our relationships, we are limited to “chance” or circumstances in terms of what they give us!
3. Modern life seems designed to keep us moving so fast that we seldom take the time to evaluate properly our relational priorities. This is what the “time out” of biblical Sabbaths were designed to give us.

**POINT #FOUR:**

**Our relationships tend to reflect our heart desires, our communication skills, and our willingness to invest in them.**

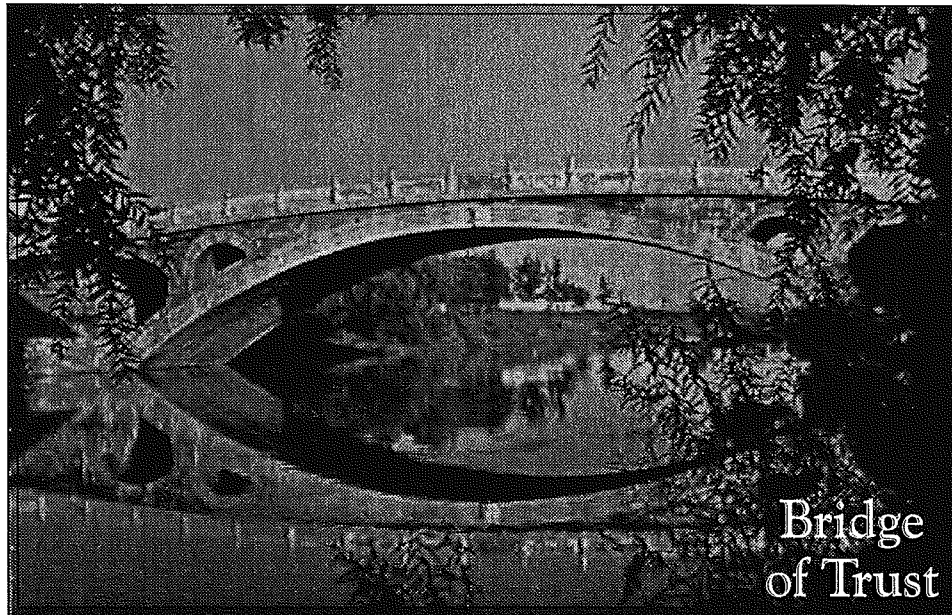
1. Our heart desires: Is this relationship about me, you, or us? Do I really think and act out of a desire for intimacy? With whom? How would my relationships describe me?
2. Our communication skills: What skills have we been taught? Can you list them? How do you know they work?
3. Our willingness to invest in them: We reap what we sow.
- \* 4. All deep relationships and real change begin with real self-examination and self-confrontation.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

**1. What have I learned from what we’ve shared?**

**2. What will I do to begin to change my skills in relationship building?**

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Discussion Session Two:

“Foolish Things We Must Stop Saying, Doing,  
and Believing that Help Destroy Intimacy”

Part One



## “Foolish Things We Must Stop Saying, Doing, and Believing that Help Destroy Intimacy”

### Part One

#### DISCOVERY QUESTION:

List and share three things people do to help destroy relationships.

#### POINT #ONE:

We must stop and recognize what works, and what doesn’t work: we must learn to discern “patterns” that don’t tear down our relational intimacy.

1. Am I really as dumb as I sometimes act? (recognizing neurosis and “strongholds”)
  - When I’ve been in the same losing experience or conversation over and over again, why do I do the same things expecting a different result?
  - Do any examples come to mind?
  - Neurosis is doing the same nonproductive thing over and over again.
  - \* In order to change we must learn to recognize destructive patterns and commit ourselves to discovering new responses that are constructive.
2. We must learn to “post” and then practice it.
  - “Posting” is a self-defense technique that involves getting yourself together by a) getting physical space, and b) taking control of your breathing. Fear, shock, or pain cause us to react without thinking clearly first.
  - When conversations lead to pain, we should “post” before we simply react or speak.

#### PRINCIPLE #2

Deep relationships require us to watch out for destructive patterns; playing the right-wrong game; and punishing people emotionally for sharing their true opinions.

#### POINT #TWO:

Don’t get into “Destruction Derbies.”

1. 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— I hurt you; you hurt me; I escalate; you escalate. Our trust in each other goes down the tubes!
2. When we smell a “derby” coming, we must politely disengage and wait to re-engage until the possibility of resolution is more likely. (More time; different setting; third party; cool down; acts of caring; etc.)

#### POINT #THREE:

The first issue is not who is right or wrong!

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? (Discovery)

2. After establishing perceived intent, we then may move on to ethics, agreements, and standards.
3. The “right-wrong” game is the usual result of personal pride, fear of being wrong, or relational insecurity.
4. The issue is change and growth, not comparative right-wrong stances.
- \* 5. There *are* real right and wrong issues, but the first relational issue is disclosure: the whys, the facts, and then the ethical issues.

**POINT #FOUR:**

**Don’t punish people for sharing their hearts.**

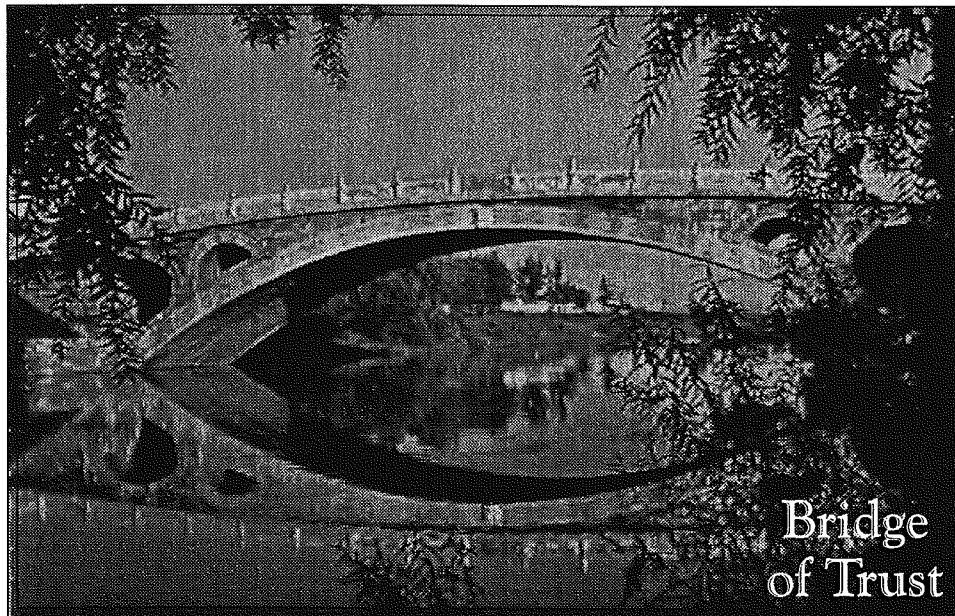
1. Often times people say, “Tell me what you really think or feel,” and when they do so, they pay a price for doing it! Of course we never do that to others, do we?
2. True, deep relationships are built on truth, freely shared and freely processed.
3. To punish others for sharing their heart guarantees either separation, quiet rebellion, or people expressing what they think we want to hear (deception).

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

**1. What have I learned from what we’ve shared?**

**2. What will I *do* to begin to change my skills in relationship building?**

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Discussion Session Three:

“Foolish Things We Must Stop Saying, Doing,  
and Believing that Help Destroy Intimacy”

Part Two

## “Foolish Things We Must Stop Saying, Doing, and Believing that Help Destroy Intimacy”

### Part Two

#### DISCOVERY QUESTION:

What is your single greatest strength and single greatest weakness in terms of communication skills?

#### POINT #ONE:

We must find the balance of “discovery and asserting.”

1. “Discovery” is the heart desire to discover how someone really feels, thinks about, or sees something apart from any coercion on our part.
  - Not talking often means simply waiting to speak.
  - When we stop genuine discovery and move only to assertion, communication stops.
2. “Asserting” is the act of sharing what we believe, or the points we want to make.
  - \*All true communion takes place when there is the proper balance of discovery and assertion appropriate to the conversation.

#### PRINCIPLE #3

Deep relationships require that we balance our “asserting” and our “discovery”; that we accept valid diversity; and that we avoid “round words” or “war words.”

#### POINT #TWO:

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

1. There are absolutes (like “moral 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.”
2. In our fallen human condition, we frequently respond in an “either-or” mode (simplicity) rather than in a “both-and” mode (complexity or diversity).
3. In a world of polarity (north-south; male-female; salesman-accountant; warrior-priest), we must seek to discover the strengths diversity adds to us, and the breadth diversity adds to our life.

#### POINT #THREE:

Stop using “Round Words”!

1. “Round Words” are words used to keep accountability to a minimum and pad situations so as to be able to maneuver in them. In some situations they may be usefully diplomatic, but as a character trait or communication style, they destroy relational trust and intimacy.
2. Examples: “I’ll be home about six”; “I’ll call you sometime soon”; “I think I might do that”; “I really can’t remember that”; etc.
3. Round words reveal a flawed character; they should be confronted or explained.
4. We need to listen for them in ourselves and others. They reveal where trust exists, and the levels of accountability people truly desire.

**POINT #FOUR:**

**Stop using “War Words”!**

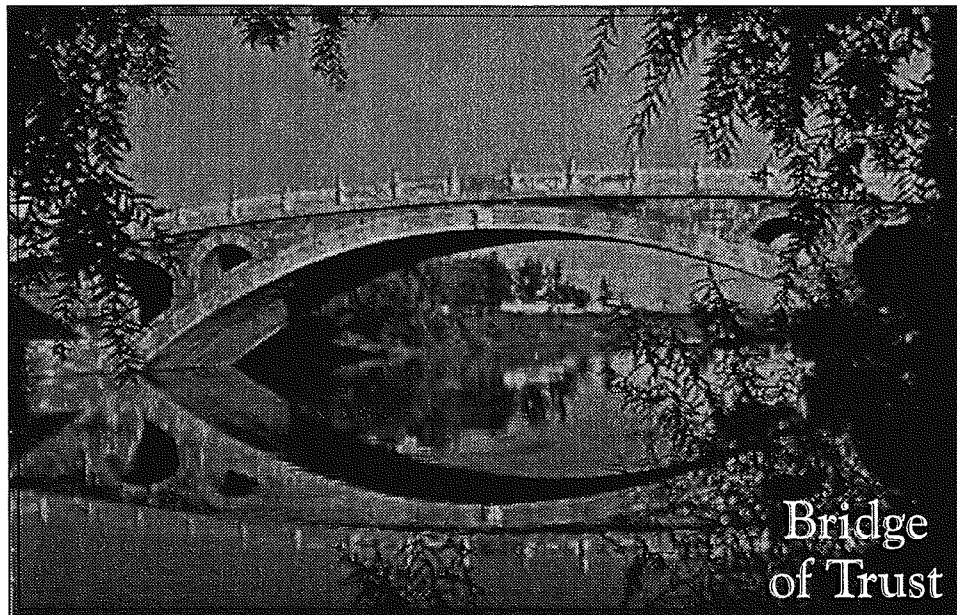
1. “War words” are words we use to attack others or ourselves. They are destructive by design, and except on very rare occasions, are totally inappropriate in most relationships.
2. Some examples of these are: “You never”; “You always”; “I don’t believe you”; “You’ll never change.” These words accuse, usually inaccurately, and leave people no room for change or credit for the proper responses they actually have done. Don’t use them!
3. What they do is shut the conversation down and cause people to withdraw and resent us.
4. What we should say is, “I feel like” (feelings are not “facts”), or “It seems to me that you often or usually..” In our pain, we need to give people some space to breathe as we move toward resolution of the issues.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. What have I learned from what we’ve shared?

2. What will I *do* to begin to change my skills in relationship building?

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Discussion Session Four:

“How to Build or Rebuild the Bridge of Trust”

## “How to Build or Rebuild the Bridge of Trust”

### DISCOVERY QUESTION:

Name three things that people say or do that makes us tend to deepen our trust of someone.

### POINT #ONE:

Building trust often begins by asking, “Where have I hurt you?”

1. 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.
2. 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 done 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).

### PRINCIPLE #4

Deep relationships require that we resolve past hurts; build with transparency and good will; and commonly examine our assumptions and expectances.

### POINT #TWO:

Let’s commit ourselves to building a “Bridge of Trust,” built on being self-revealing (inner conversation), assuming mutual goodwill, and investing the time to grow together.

1. “Self-revealing” means I will share with you my inner conversation, not just my outer conversation. Relational integrity is when our inner-outer conversation is the same. It is also what the Bible means by “faith.”
2. “Assuming mutual goodwill” means believing the best about your intentions and motives, rather than giving in to accusations coming out of my pain or misunderstanding of why you did what you did or what you said. *The assumption of goodwill is absolutely critical to creating an atmosphere (climate) of trust and love. It is the first thing under attack from the enemy of our souls and relationships.*
3. “Investing the time to grow together”: intimacy, communication, and problem solving take time. Relationships tend to reflect the time we invest in them.

### POINT #THREE:

“Tell me how you got there”: Examining the ladder-of-influence.

1. The illustrative story: “Keep your old jack anyway!”
2. Here is the principle: All of us tend to come to conclusions or opinions based upon a set of “orderly assumptions” (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 come

to the conclusions we come to and examine whether or not our reasonings are appropriate or productive.

3. Unexamined assumptions (ladders) usually make a fool out of you and me!

**POINT #FOUR:**

**We must define and describe the power of our expectations, and what our hopes look like.**

1. Expectations, defined or undefined, are incredibly powerful and often determine the nature of our relationships, whether we know it or not.
2. What we “expect” is what we hold each other accountable to produce or do.
3. It is critical that we define and describe our expectations to see if we are in agreement and on the same page. If we are not, then we must sort through the differences and clearly redefine what we expect from one another.
- \* 4. Describing or picturing what we think something or some emotion or action should look like is unbelievably helpful in clarifying our expectations of each other.

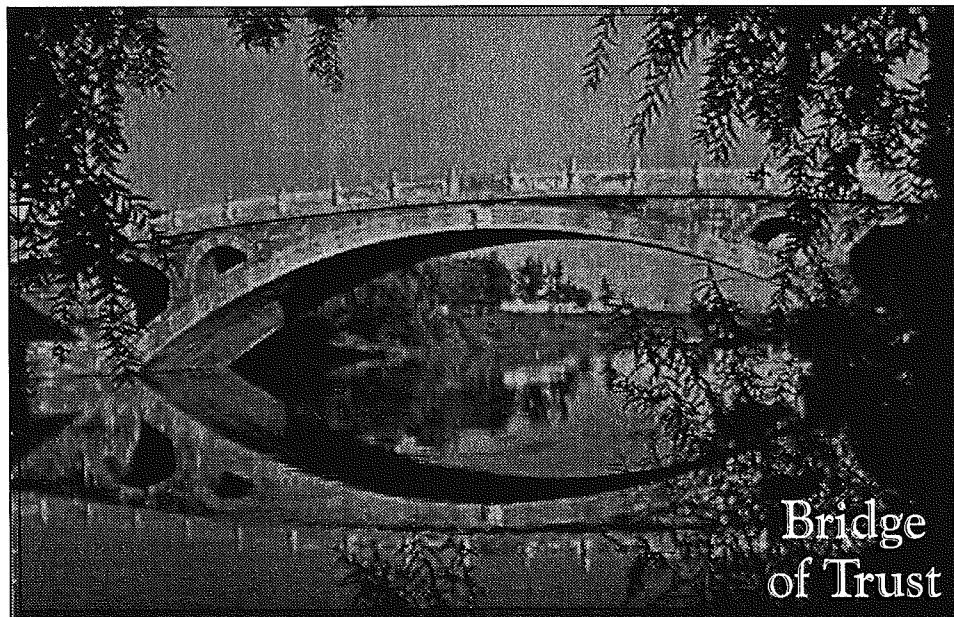
**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

**What have I learned from what we’ve shared?**

**What will I *do* to begin to change my skills in relationship building?**



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Discussion Session Five:

“How to Make the Bridge of Trust Stronger”

## “How to Make the Bridge of Trust Stronger”

### DISCOVERY QUESTION:

How do we know when we have really communicated our heart with someone?

### POINT #ONE:

“Help me understand how important this is to you, using a scale of one-to-ten.”

1. Frequently we have no way of knowing how important something is to someone else, or how to communicate how important something is to us. A very simple way to help solve this mystery is to share on a scale of one-to-ten in terms of importance.
2. 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.

### PRINCIPLE #5

Deep relationships require clear communication on the importance of specific issues to us; the ability to “play back” what we hear; not taking the part for the whole; and the ability to make and hold clear agreements.

### POINT #TWO:

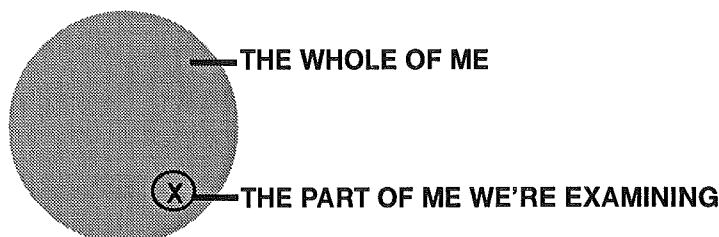
“Let me play back what I heard you say.”

1. The jokes about communication, especially male-female communications, are endless and often true.
2. Another way to better insure that real communication has taken place is to “play back” to each other what we think we heard for clarification and confirmation.
3. “Play back” also allows us to respond not just to the words that were used (don’t play lawyer!) but also to what we perceived was the heart intent of the communication. This often takes us to a much deeper level of communication and allows the motives, expectations, and actions to be clarified.

### POINT #THREE:

When giving and receiving correction, don’t take the part-for-the whole

1. *This is a critical issue in communication*, especially when the communication involves any kind of correction or conflict resolution.
2. This diagram should help pictorially better explain the concept:



3. 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.
- \* 4. Parents (authority figures) need to be especially careful of this distinction when bringing correction lest that correction becomes “war words” of total rejection or error by emphasis.

**POINT #FOUR:**

**Let’s build our relationship on clearly defined agreements we mutually enforce.**

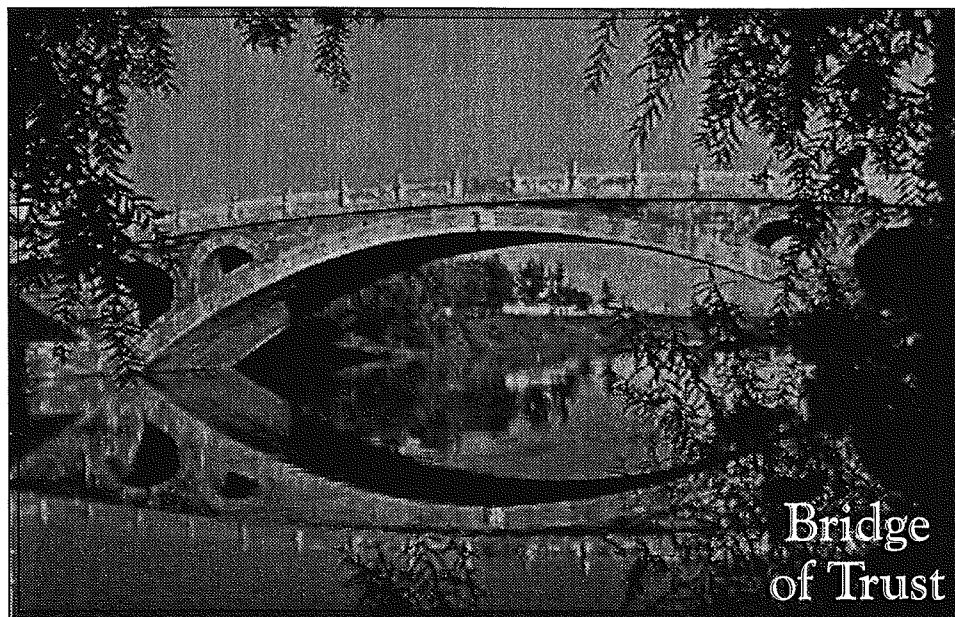
1. Our agreements and expectations tend to define our relationships, and that is why they must be:
  - Clear and defined
  - Freely entered into without coercion
  - We hold them by mutual accountability
2. *Broken* commitments tear up the planks on the bridge of trust, and *kept* agreements make the bridge ever stronger.
- \* 3. 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.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

**What have I learned from what we’ve shared?**

**What will I *do* to begin to change my skills in relationship building?**

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Discussion Session Six:

“What to Do When It Ain’t Working”

## “What to Do When It Ain’t Working”

### DISCOVERY QUESTION:

Why does pressure on a person or relationship reveal where they really are?

### POINT #ONE:

“Please help me see what I’m not seeing.”

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

### PRINCIPLE #6

Deep relationships require the desire and ability to get past “sticking points”; confusion over the meaning of common words; the recognition of key missing ingredients; and the ability to align our activities with our agreements.

### POINT #TWO:

“Are we meaning the same things with our words?”

1. The English and the Americans are often described as “two people separated by a common language.” So it often is of all of us. Words matter.
2. Our language, in terms of exactness, is falling apart in many ways. People use words to mean what they want them to mean rather than what the dictionary meaning truly is. The result is broken relationships.
3. For example, what do we mean by “love”; “freedom”; “I believe in God”; “political correctness”; “you can count on me” (for what?); etc.
- \* 4. Deep relationships are only possible when we mean the same thing in our key words and phrases. Remember, the Tower of Babel was destroyed by a separation of language!

### POINT #THREE:

We must cultivate patience and insight: I know we are a work-in-progress, but is the “plug in the sink”?

1. As already pointed out, time is an essential factor in building trust and deep relationships. Patience and insight are essential ingredients in successful relationships.
2. “Time” produces character and reveals the commitments of our heart.

3. Sometimes time is not the key issue; the key issue is, is “the plug” in the sink?
4. Let me explain. The “plug in the sink” is the *key missing idea*, insight, character distinctive, skill, or commitment that is letting all the water you pour in go down the drain.
- \*\*5. The ability to describe or bring to the relationships “the plug” is a gift from God. The ability to then put the plug in and change requires insight, coupled with a resolve to change; driven by the *necessity of love*.

**POINT #FOUR:**

**We must recognize the critical distinction of agreement-and-alignment.**

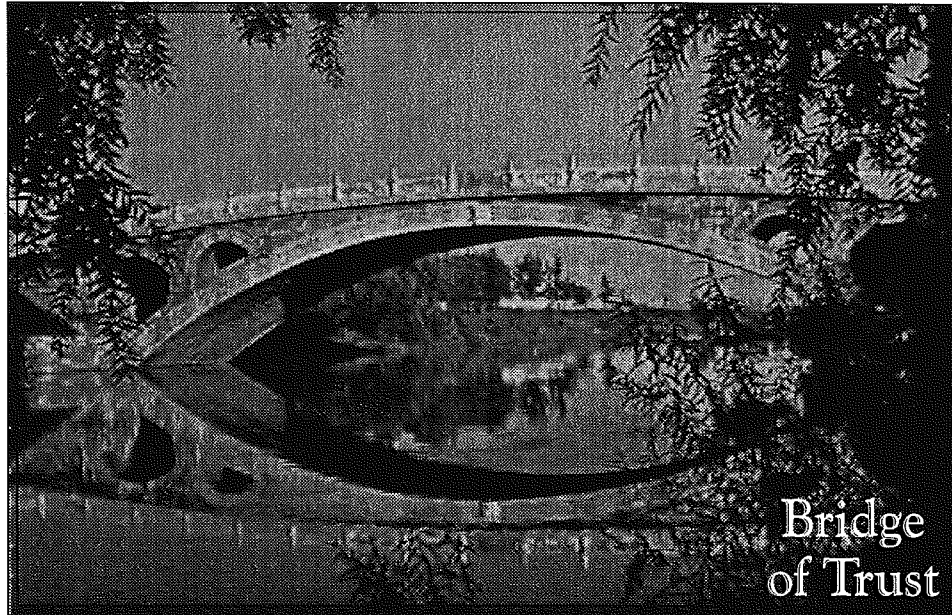
1. It is one thing to agree on ideas, principles, or actions.
2. It is quite another to line up our actions, emotions, or thoughts with what we say we conceptually agree upon!
3. The distance between agreement and alignment creates dissonance, disharmony, and frustration, especially if it isn’t recognized!
4. Jesus, the Master Teacher, talked about the need for the wineskin to properly fit the needs of the wine.
- \* 5. 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.
- \* 6. We must search for and change areas where we say we agree but we’re not yet acting or thinking in the new way.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

**What have I learned from what we’ve shared?**

**What will I *do* to begin to change my skills in relationship building?**

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Discussion Session Seven:

“Living in the Power of the Triangle”

## “Living in the Power of the Triangle”

### DISCOVERY QUESTION:

Do you believe people ever need a third party in their relationships to help them get through “the knots,” and if so, why?

### POINT #ONE:

We must discover the reality of “mediating grace.”

1. God and truth come to us through others, not just our own internal processing.
2. None of us truly make ourselves. We are a composite of those who have influenced us for good or ill.
3. Once we see the reality of this truth and the myth of being “self-made,” we begin to see who other people really are to us. They are truly God’s “mediating grace,” His gift to us through other people.
4. Who has God given to you to share truth; love; courage; provision; male or female friendship and bonding; etc.
- \* 5. We draw life *in relation* to other people, and out of other people.

### PRINCIPLE #7

Deep relationships require us to constantly acknowledge the debt we owe to others for adding to our lives and to likewise acknowledge that, as created beings, the One who knows us best should be invited into all our relationships.

### POINT #TWO:

It makes sense to invite a mediator into our relationships

1. All relationships get “stuck” at places and can’t get out without outside help. Pride, fear of exposure, fear of correction, or simply not knowing whom to go to for help can block us and keep us stuck.
2. So whom should we go to? The answer: someone who *demonstrates* in their relationships they know how to do themselves what they counsel others. If you really care and seek help, you’ll find it.
3. Jesus is God’s bridge between God and man, a mediator.
4. Mediators are “for” both parties, and they also get walked on!

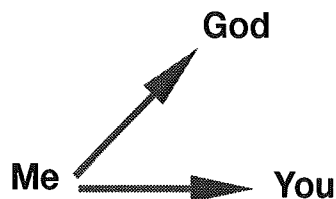
### POINT #THREE:

Only God can help people really change

1. The Zen parable asks, “How can hand grasp hand?” or “How can we lift ourselves up by our own boots?”
2. People can make remarkable changes, but everyone runs into something they *cannot* change by themselves. The issue then becomes change through help or choosing instead the pride and isolation that keeps people stuck.
3. The author’s experience of this teaching, over 30 years of working with thousands of people, is that God brings change with Him once He’s invited to do so.



\*\* 4. Here is a diagram of what “living in the triangle” looks like”:



\*\* 5. 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!

#### **POINT #FOUR:**

**Wow, this stuff really works!**

1. The real issue is, “Does it work?” The answer is yes. If you are trying these truths already, you know they work.
2. Our invitation to you is to continue to look for opportunities to apply what you’ve already learned and further refine these truths.
3. If love for people is really in you (and it most likely is), you’ll share these truths you’ve learned with others and also consider helping us enlist new people for this class. Does the world need better communication? What are you going to do about it?
4. Our goal is simple: God says He is love (1 John 4:8), and that He loves the world (John 3:16), and we know of no better way to demonstrate that love than to help people experience love through deep, healthy relationships with God in their “triangle.”
- \* 5. Let us now look at what we have learned about the “bridge of trust” (our picture).

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

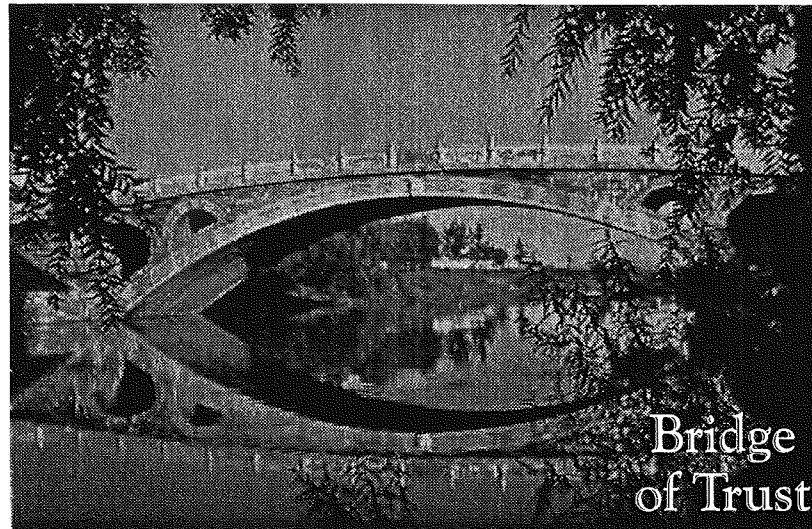
**What have I learned from what we’ve shared?**

**What will I *do* to begin to change my skills in relationship building?**

**Since you are not able to remember or do all these things yet, why don’t you consider going through these principles with us again and bring a friend or loved one?**

## Building the “Bridge of Trust” that leads to life-giving relationships

Me —



— Those  
I care about

### **What I will do to keep my bridges strong and growing:**

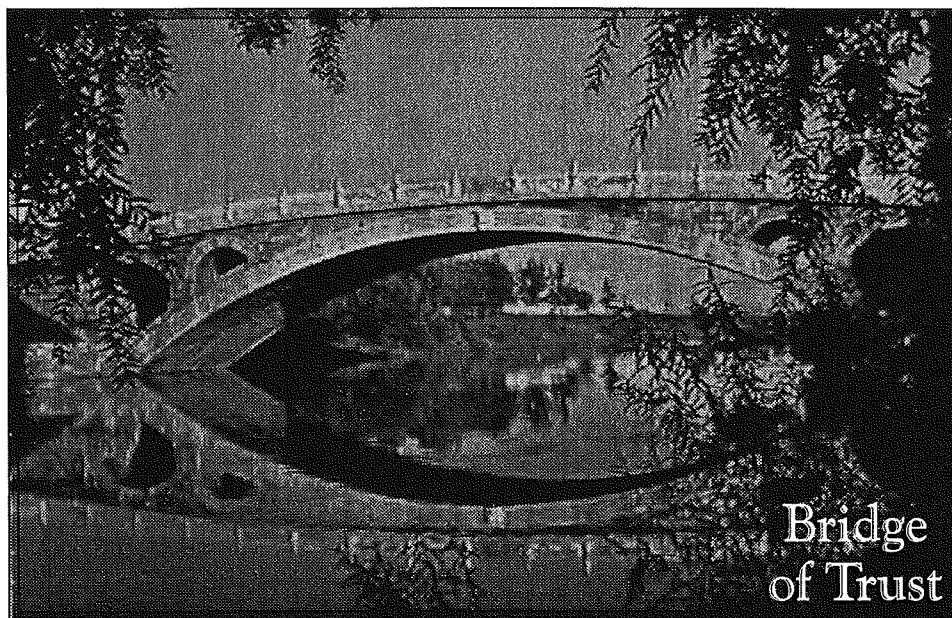
1. Seek communion (to go with) in my conversations.
2. Work on my relational priorities and skills.
3. Discern destructive patterns and change them.
4. Find the balance between discovery and asserting in my conversations.
5. Accept the reality that “different” may not be “wrong.”
6. Seek and extend forgiveness in the process of restoration.
7. Assume good will about motives and intentions toward me.
8. Be self-revealing (share my inner conversation) with you.
9. Share mutually with you our ladder of influence (how we came to our conclusions)
10. Describe and “word picture” our expectations.
11. Use the scale of one-to-ten to help quantify our 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 our actions with our agreements.
16. Look for help (mediators) when we get stuck.
17. Seek to live out all my relationships in the “power of the triangle.”

### **Because these sinful practices help destroy “the bridge” and other people, 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 the “part-for-the-whole.”
9. Not taking time to define our words, and what we mean by them.
10. Putting one-hour problems into five-minute time slots.



Let’s Talk:  
Communication Skills  
for People Who  
Want Deeper Relationships



Discussion Sessions  
Ten, Twelve, Thirteen

## Session Ten

Major Discussion Points from Lessons 1 through 3

## Session Twelve

Major Discussion Points from Lessons 4 through 6

## Session Thirteen

Major Discussion Points from Lesson 7; Summaries