

Faithful Disagreement:

*Building Durable Relationships
with God & Each Other*

A Course in Three Parts
moderated by Tom Gamble & David Ealy



FORUM 101: WEEK 3
“Trusting What Is Said”

DEFINITIONS



Trust | trəst |

verb [with obj.]

1 believe in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of: *I should never have trusted her* | [with obj. and infinitive] : *he can be trusted to carry out an impartial investigation* | (as adj. trusted) : *a trusted adviser.*

- (trust someone with) allow someone to have, use, or look after (someone or something of importance or value) with confidence: *I'd trust you with my life.*
- (trust someone/something to) commit (someone or something) to the safekeeping of: *they don't like to trust their money to anyone outside the family.*
- [with clause] have confidence; hope (used as a polite formula in conversation): *I trust that you have enjoyed this book.*
- [no obj.] have faith or confidence: *she trusted in the powers of justice.*
- [no obj.] (trust to) place reliance on (luck, fate, or something else over which one has little control): *trusting to the cover of night, I ventured out.*

2 chiefly archaic allow credit to (a customer).

Speak | spēk |

verb (past spoke |spōk|; past participle spoken |'spōkən|) [no obj.]

1 say something in order to convey

information, an opinion, or a feeling: *in his agitation he was unable to speak* | *she refused to speak about the incident.*

- have a conversation: *I wish to speak privately with you* | *I'll speak to him if he calls.*
- [with obj.] utter (a word, message, speech, etc.): *patients copy words spoken by the therapist.*
- [with obj.] communicate in or be able to communicate in (a specified language): *my mother spoke Russian.*
- make a speech before an audience, or make a contribution to a debate: *twenty thousand people attended to hear him speak.*
- (speak for) express the views or position of (another person or group): *he claimed to speak for the majority of local people.*
- convey one's views or position indirectly: *speaking through his attorney, he refused to join the debate.*
- (speak of) mention or discuss in speech or writing: *the books speak of betrayal.*
- (of behavior, a quality, an event, etc.) serve as evidence for something: *her harping on him spoke strongly of a crush* | [with obj.] : *his frame spoke tiredness.*
- [with obj. or adverbial] archaic show or manifest (someone or something) to be in a particular state or to possess a certain quality: *she had seen nothing that spoke him of immoral habits.*

2 (speak to) talk to in order to reprove or

advise: *she tried to speak to Seth about his drinking.*

- talk to in order to give or extract information: *he had spoken to the police.*
- discuss or comment on formally: *the Church wants to speak to real issues.*
- appeal or relate to: *the story spoke to him directly.*



SESSION OUTLINE

Introduction	3
Semantic Warnings	4
Trusting v. Being Trustworthy	5
Proverbs 3:1-12.....	8
What does it mean to trust what's said?	9
Practice Makes Perfect	10
Space for Notes	12

In what is said what matters more: trusting the other or trusting yourself?

Introduction

Remember the Ground Rules

Be mindful of the covenant we established as a class:

- Have respect for one another**
- Care enough to listen**
- One person speaks at a time**
- Confidentiality**
- Reserve Judgement**
- Speak Up**
- Listen**
- Pray**

Our Manner of Discourse

We established an invitational method of speaking. When one person is done talking, it is their job to invite the next person to speak (not necessarily the person to either side of them). Invitations can always be respectfully declined.

Homework

We will take time at the beginning of each class to review the homework. Think in particular about how it relates to the topic of disagreeing.

Illustrations

The illustrations and pictures used through the study guides are intended to provoke your thinking. It is not daydreaming for one or more of them to capture your attention from what's happening in class. Just be sure to write down a note or two about what an image provokes in you and get back in the fray!

Pushing the Edges

This particular class will press our creative centers in ways that may not have happened since some of us were in school. But we are, all of us, capable of the exercises we will practice, just to varying degrees. In particular, we will be spending time catching up with the concept of poetry: a powerful medium in which much of the Bible is written.

If poetry isn't "your thing", fear not: this is not about how well you can write in meter and rhyme. But we are going to explore as deeply as we can how speech can evoke, inspire and illumine.

Facilitators

TOM GAMBLE has led development of self-managing work teams in manufacturing facilities. His contact information is rtgamble122@aol.com or 336-578-3632.

DAVID EALY has studied and practiced pastoral counseling. His contact information is david@hawfieldschurch.org or 336-524-1234.



Semantic Warnings

READ:

The definitions on page 2, paying particular attention to how the definition of one informs the other.

WRITE:

In the spaces below, take time to reflect on each question and to write down examples. Be prepared to share at least one.

What does it mean to you to trust someone?

What does it mean for someone to trust you?

What does it mean to you to speak?

What does it mean for others to speak to you?

Who do you have to trust in order to believe something that is spoken to you?

What do people have to know about you to trust what you say?

How do you know if you can trust what someone says?

How can someone know to trust what YOU say?



Trusting v. Being Trustworthy

READ: The excerpts from *Faithful Disagreement* and from *Strength to Love* below.

It's the dirty laundry...our tendency to demonize our opponents, brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, to view them not merely as erring or misguided but in caricature fashion as demonic, as agents of evil and deception. Sharp polemic was common enough in the rhetoric of the first-century world, but throughout history church fathers, medieval theologians, Protestant reformers, Westminster divines, and others in their wake have found within this Johannine oratorical arsenal a sorry means by which to denounce other Christians. Sadly, to declare that believers we disagree with are simply not true Christians and never were to this day remains a common way of dealing with fundamental theological differences. The problem with this, as David Rensberger has observed, is that once you've claimed your opponent is the devil, "it is no longer possible to consider what he or she says thoughtfully; there is no chance that any portion of their reasoning could be correct or worthwhile." It is no longer possible "that they could have any good intention of faithfulness to Christ."²⁶ Has anyone called you demonic lately? Or have you heard yourself suggesting that a fellow member of your fellowship is simply not a true Christian and never was? At a recent presbytery meeting I attended, in the midst of heated, polarized debate over a contested motion, a member of the clergy came forward to share news of her recent trip to the Holy Land, the view from Mt. Carmel, and her conclusion from this experience: that fully half of the presbytery, those who disagreed with her, were prophets of Baal! Given that Elijah exterminated 450 of those prophets, I think people took it personally, and responses from the other side of the aisle were no more charitable. It was one of those experiences that confirmed for me the truth of that aphorism that goes, "Ministers are like manure. Spread them all around and they do a lot of good. But put them all in one place and sometimes they smell bad."

...Of course, some would say that we have talked long enough and it is time to leave. But the task force on which I served begged to differ.

I think my colleague Victoria Curtiss said it best: *We have debated for many years on some issues, but we have not engaged in substantive Bible study, theological reflection, and prayer with those with whom we differ. We have voted yes or no on some issues repeatedly, but we have not explored the full range of values, beliefs, concerns, hopes, and fears present within the church around those issues. We have sharpened our differences, but we have not articulated the theological convictions that bind us together. We have sought to gain or retain the majority vote for "our side," but we have not sought a common direction that moves us all forward. We have talked about gay and lesbian persons, but we have not knowingly included them in the conversation. We have taken formal disciplinary action against one another, but we have not first sought mediation and reconciliation. We have focused on the question, "Which side is right?" but we have not lived into the questions: "How is Christ at work through the multiplicity of voices?" and "How can we live together faithfully in the midst of our differences?"*

Could these observations describe your own experience of church conflict? Until we have had these conversations, we have not fully embraced the season of discernment and testing of spirits that the Johannine Epistles urge upon us.

Frances Taylor Gench. *Faithful Disagreement: Wrestling with Scripture in the Midst of Church Conflict* (Kindle Edition 235-247; 288-296).

Trusting v. Being Trustworthy

DISCUSS:

- What stands out to you from either excerpt?
- What do you trust about those with whom you speak? What should they trust about you?
- What should be your starting place in a given conversation?
- Is it possible to trust/believe what someone says if you don't trust or believe in yourself? Is it possible to trust/believe anyone if we don't trust/believe in God?
- If I hate someone, will I trust what they say? If I love someone, will I trust what they say?
- If I hate someone, can they trust what I say? I love someone, can they trust what I say?

...But we must remember that abnormal fears are emotionally ruinous and psychologically destructive. To illustrate the difference between normal and abnormal fear, Sigmund Freud spoke of a person who was quite properly afraid of snakes in the heart of an African jungle and of another person who neurotically feared that snakes were under the carpet in his city apartment. Psychologists say that normal children are born only two fears—the fear of falling and the fear of loud noises—and that all others are environmentally acquired. Most of these acquired fears are snakes under the carpet.

It is to such fears that we usually refer when we speak of getting rid of fear. But this is only a part of the story. Normal fear protects us; abnormal fear paralyzes us. Normal fear motivates us to improve our individual and collective welfare; abnormal fear constantly poisons and distorts our inner lives. Our problem is not to be rid of fear but rather to harness and master it. How may it be mastered?...

...Fear is mastered through confrontation, courage, and love...The New Testament affirms, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear." (1 John 4:18)

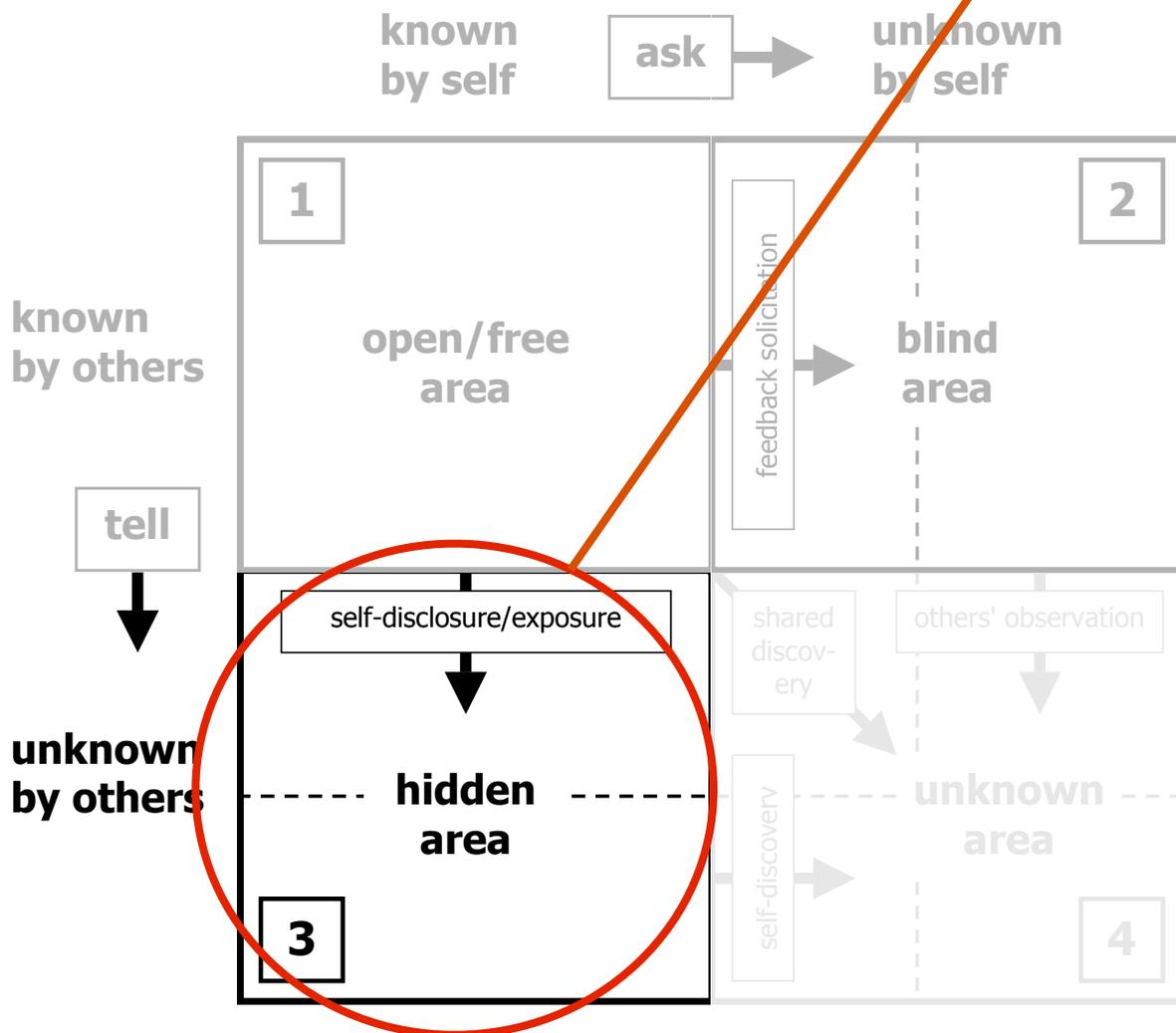
Martin Luther King, Jr. Strength to Love. pp.117-120



Trusting v. Being Trustworthy

Johari Window model

What do you disclose/expose about yourself to engender trust from others? If a friend never told you anything personal about them, would you trust them with anything substantial?



© design alan chapman 2001-4 based on [Ingham and Luft's Johari Window concept](#)

Not to be sold or published. More free online training resources are at www.businessballs.com.
Sole risk with user. Author accepts no liability.

Proverbs 3:1-12

READ: Proverbs 3:1-12, paying particular attention to verses 5-7.

WRITE:

- Much of Scripture is in poetry, Hebrew poetry. This means a lot of the nuance of that poetry is lost to us reading it in English. How do we trust what we're reading if we don't get the whole picture of what's written?

- Is it really possible to DO verses 5-7? If so, how? If not, why not?

- Do you *trust* the promises of verses 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12? If you do, in what way do you trust them?

- What do you use to measure whether or not you're trusting God if it is not your intelligence?

Proverbs 3:1-12

- ¹My son, don't forget my instruction.
Let your heart
guard my commands,
²because they will help you
live a long time
and provide you with well-being.
- ³Don't let loyalty and faithfulness
leave you.
Bind them on your neck;
write them on the tablet
of your heart.
- ⁴Then you will find favor
and approval
in the eyes of God and humanity.
- ⁵Trust in the Lord with all your heart;
don't rely
on your own intelligence.
- ⁶Know him in all your paths,
and he will keep your ways
straight.
- ⁷Don't consider yourself wise.
Fear the Lord
and turn away from evil.
- ⁸Then your body[a] will be healthy
and your bones strengthened.
- ⁹Honor the Lord with your wealth
and with the first of all your crops.
- ¹⁰Then your barns will be filled
with plenty,
and your vats will burst with wine.
- ¹¹Don't reject the instruction
of the Lord, my son;
don't despise his correction.
- ¹²The Lord loves those he corrects,
just like a father
who treats his son with favor.

Footnotes:

[a] [Proverbs 3:8](#) Heb "navel"

©2011 Common English Bible

What does it mean to trust what's said?

WRITE:

Are you a trustworthy conversation partner?



DISCUSS:

In pairs or groups of three to four, discuss the question above as well as this: “What does it take for you trust what someone is saying?”

Homework:

Take time to journal or talk to someone about how you trust God and how you don't, and further, how that all affects (if it does) how you decide to trust other people.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; don't rely on your own intelligence.”

Proverbs 3:5

Practice Makes Perfect

CONCEPT:

Poetry is a technique used for expression. While that may sound obvious, what sets it apart from prose is its distinctive use of style and *rhythm*. The Bible is full of poetry, songs, hymns and other kinds of specialized, stylized writing. The study of poetry can help us as we consider each other's speech and learn what to trust about what someone is saying. Sometimes we speak in poetry and don't even know it.

PRACTICE:

There are three exercises to choose from for today. *Exercise A* is to choose a Psalm or a Proverb and to rewrite it using contemporary terms or concepts. Pay particular attention to the emotion you think is being conveyed by a particular line or lines and replicate that in what you write.

Exercise B is to read the Beattitudes (on the right). Then take turns reading it using various affects—read it sarcastically, with sadness, with happiness, with urgency, etc.—which affect feels right to you? What difference does it make to the meaning of the passage.

Exercise C is to use the phrase “I am fine” and come up with as many different meanings for that phrase as you have experienced or can imagine. Then talk with a partner or group about how you can know which meaning a speaker is using.

Matthew 5:3-11

³“Happy are people who are hopeless, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

⁴ “Happy are people who grieve, because they will be made glad.

⁵ “Happy are people who are humble, because they will inherit the earth.

⁶ “Happy are people who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, because they will be fed until they are full.

⁷ “Happy are people who show mercy, because they will receive mercy.

⁸ “Happy are people who have pure hearts, because they will see God.

⁹ “Happy are people who make peace, because they will be called God's children.

¹⁰ “Happy are people whose lives are harassed because they are righteous, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

¹¹ “Happy are you when people insult you and harass you and speak all kinds of bad and false things about you, all because of me. ¹² Be full of joy and be glad, because you have a great reward in heaven. In the same way, people harassed the prophets who came before you.

©2011 Common English Bible

Notes



Notes



Build. Grow. Share.



HAWFIELDS
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH