

"Read this book, apply the principles, and you can get your trust back, too."

—DR. DAVID CLARKE, Christian psychologist, speaker, and author of *I Don't Want a Divorce*

WORTHY WHAT YOU NEED TO DO TO REBUILD OF HER SEXUAL INTEGRITY AND WIN HER BACK TRUST

STEPHEN ARTERBURN
AND
JASON B. MARTINKUS

Praise for
Worthy of Her Trust

“Can you rebuild marital trust after sexual sin? Yes, and Jason Martinkus and Stephen Arterburn will show you how. Jason and his wife, Shelley, take you on their deeply personal and spiritual journey from betrayal to trust. Read this book and apply the principles, and you, too, can regain trust in your marriage.”

—DR. DAVID CLARKE, Christian psychologist, speaker, and author
of *I Don't Want a Divorce*

“This book opens the reader’s eyes to the difficult truth and reality of what it takes to rebuild trust in a relationship devastated by sexual betrayal. My marriage would not have survived without God’s grace and the wisdom and essential guidance found in *Worthy of Her Trust*. Any man committed to winning back his wife at all costs needs to read this book!”

—CURTIS, Arizona

“No matter how tragic and seemingly irreparable your marriage may be, there is hope. My husband wanted to rebuild trust in a hopeless situation. He learned and continues to implement the amends matrix, and he has kept 242 days of the T-30 journal. We have not only experienced reconciliation, but we have been restored individually. For that I am eternally grateful! If you are both ready to let God redeem the past and help you build trust again, *Worthy of Her Trust* will show you how.”

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“Finally, for one of the darkest periods of any relationship, Jason has delivered a no-nonsense, inspired approach for rebuilding shattered trust. By sharing his compassion and insight, he has opened the door for true transformation and growth. This is a must-read book if moving forward is your goal.”

—DAVE, California

“*Worthy of Her Trust* is the go-to, step-by-step resource for professionals or anyone seeking guidance through the trust-building process. Martinkus presents a model of relationship intimacy—based on closeness and honesty—a connection that becomes both the context and motivation for the redemptive journey.”

—BOB SKLAR, LMFT

WORTHY
OF HER
TRUST

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Every Day for Every Man
(with Fred Stoeker, Kenny Luck, and Mike Yorkey)

Every Man's Battle
(with Fred Stoeker and Mike Yorkey)

Every Young Man's Battle
(with Fred Stoeker and Mike Yorkey)

Preparing Your Son for Every Man's Battle
(with Fred Stoeker and Mike Yorkey)

Every Man's Bible
(with Dean Merrill)

Every Man's Marriage
(with Fred Stoeker and Mike Yorkey)

Every Man, God's Man
(with Kenny Luck and Mike Yorkey)

The Life Recovery Bible
(with David Stoop)

NIV Spiritual Renewal Study Bible
(with David Stoop)

The NLT Kids Bible

Road Warrior
(with Sam Gallucci)

The 7 Minute Marriage Solution

The 7 Minute Marriage Solution Devotional Bible

Young Believer Bible

WORTHY

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Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

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From Jason: I dedicate this book to my wife, Shelley. Without your willingness to wait on God, we wouldn't have made it. Thank you for not leaving me. Without your wholehearted support, I couldn't have written this. Thank you for allowing our marriage to be the canvas on which God is painting a profound portrait. You continue to amaze me.



From Stephen: I would also like to dedicate this book to Shelley. Her willingness to speak of her experience to the men who have gone through the Every Man's Battle Workshop has changed the hearts of many. Thanks for your bravery there and allowing us to share your story here.

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FOREWORD

A Word to Husbands from Stephen Arterburn

I don't know of any assignment more difficult (but more worthwhile) than the job of regaining a wife's trust.

She trusted you enough to marry you, but the bond of trust has been broken. So many men just walk away when they have failed and broken the heart of a loving spouse. They think it's better to walk away and start over than do the work to heal a wound that is so deep. Many men think they will be better off, but they won't. They walk away and take their shame—and the knowledge that they walked away when they most needed to step up. In fact, research shows that those who walk away are not happier later than those who stay and work through the problem.

Using the National Survey of Families and Households, a team from the Institute for American Values (comprised of Linda J. Waite, Don Browning, William J. Doherty, Maggie Gallagher, Ye Luo, and Scott M. Stanley) developed a 2002 report titled *Does Divorce Make People Happy? Findings from a Study of Unhappy Marriages*. Couples surveyed in the late eighties who rated their marriages as unhappy were surveyed again five years later—after some had divorced, separated, or stayed married. The findings were very convincing but seemed to have little impact on the way the world viewed divorce as a solution for unhappiness. The world seems to remain unconvinced. Here are some of the conclusions reached from the study:

- Unhappily married adults who divorced or separated were no happier, on average, than unhappily married adults who stayed married.
- Divorce for unhappily married adults did not reduce their symptoms of depression, raise their self-esteem, or increase their

sense of mastery, on average, compared to unhappy spouses who stayed married.

- Two out of three unhappily married adults who avoided divorce or separation ended up happily married five years later.

The obvious point here is that divorce does not fix things. But I have to add that staying together without doing the needed work does not fix things either. And without work, no trust will be regained.

If you have become dependent on a lifestyle that lacks sexual integrity and now want to be free forever, you're embarking on a path that is highly possible and being lived out by thousands of men. If you are married, your wife is on a path also. The best thing you can do to help her heal is to build a life of consistency, predictability, compassion, and connection to her heart. She has been through a lot. Don't expect her to just simply "get over it."

I am so glad you obtained this book and are on a path to healing and rebuilding trust in your marriage. You may not realize this, but in the process you are also rebuilding the core of your manhood. You are constructing a new man who is free of addiction and obsession. You are building a man you can count on and be proud of when you look in the mirror. You are building a man of integrity, consistency, and clarity—a man who can be counted on and trusted.

You are that man or you can become that man, and this book will provide a path to help you be and remain the man God wants you to be.

In 1999 I was grateful to receive a phone call from Fred Stoeker with an invitation to help him write *Every Man's Battle*. The book later became a series, which to date has sold over three million copies. As the Every Man series developed over many years and numerous projects, I saw, witnessed, and heard from thousands of men and women who were on a path of sin and destruction who are now healing, growing, and living a life of freedom. One of the needs that became obvious from the books and the stories of these struggles was the need to help men rebuild and regain trust from their broken

spouse. When Jason Martinkus developed the relevant and powerful information contained in this book, I was more than happy to help out. Both of us want to see you walk with a new sense of purpose and meaning as well as to break free from any shame that might drag you back into a relapse.

Over the years I have made a few discoveries that have helped me in my own journey toward wholeness and healing. One of those discoveries is the power of shame. Shame is the cancer that can completely eat away a soul. It is most likely what kept you from getting help long ago. You probably believed that the shame of being known and openly dealing with your problem was greater than the shame of leading a double life full of secrets and duplicity. Shame kept you in the problem for other reasons too. Every time that shame started to overwhelm you and drive you toward the worst of who you had become, you had an instant fix for the feeling. You acted out or “acted in,” filling your mind with the forbidden. And every time you did, shame grew just a little bit more, took a little stronger hold, and continued to erode at your life and your connections with others.

I think shame is one of the more powerful triggers to bring a man back into lust and unfaithfulness. It makes us feel unworthy of God’s love or the love of a spouse. So in our secrecy, isolation, and pain, when we feel like we don’t deserve the taste of transformation we have experienced, we jump right back into the cycle that created all of the shame in the first place.

Once I was counseling a minister who had fallen from the pinnacle of ministry success. There was no one more respected in his community; no church was bigger or growing faster; no man felt more pain as a result of God’s amazing gifts to him bearing such amazing fruit. When he came to me, he had been out of ministry for some time and he really wanted to change. I could have given him a *Life Recovery Bible* or a textbook on addiction. But instead I suggested we study shame. I wanted him to understand everything he could about shame so he would grasp the condition that had kept him down, as well as the enemy that would drive him to relapse. And he

did. I believe his recovery has been strong because of his willingness to follow a restoration plan coupled with his great knowledge of shame.

If you are struck by a club, a rock, or a fist, it lands on the outside of you. The damage is painful but will heal. But shame is something that hits your soul from the inside. It doesn't heal. It scars and rips you up from the inside out. It becomes you, and you become it. You feel shameful, and so you predictably do shameful things. And while you are engulfed by shame, life feels so hopeless, because there is no place to take it and deal with it, and because the added shame of being known would be too great to handle.

When I paid to abort a pregnancy that was a result of my own addiction, I woke up with an overwhelming sense of shame for what I had done. A man's role in reproduction ends at conception, and then it is his duty to provide for and protect the life he has created. But I did not do that. I woke up realizing I had moved to destroy my own child because I was too much of a coward to do the right and responsible thing—providing for my baby and being there for her and her mother. My internal shame injured my health, and I ended up with about seventy ulcers that would kill me if something did not change. I lived as if the worse I made myself feel, the more deserving I would be of God's forgiveness. Of course I could never do enough, and my shame distorted the man I was and cut me off from others. And it cured nothing. I could not feel enough shame to stop the addiction. So, sadly, I went back to my promiscuous ways after the abortion.

To turn it all around, I had to surrender my pride and shame as well as my efforts to fix myself or earn favor from God. I sought help and began to open up to my parents, a minister, a counselor, friends, and my boss. And as I brought my shame into the open, its power began to erode.

I hope you have discovered that the sickness of your secrets and the power they have over your life diminish greatly when you simply open up rather than stew secretly in your shame.

The reason this is so important is that a shame-filled person is not a trustworthy person. When shame is the definer of your life, integrity won't be. That powerful shame will grab you when you least expect it and drag you down even further.

I challenge you to look at the shame you still possess within you. Open up about it and do whatever you can to resolve it. God does not want shame in your life. It separates you from God and from those you love. And life is so much easier when you don't have to work to compensate for it.

You have made a decision to change your life. You are making an impact on the world simply by showing that transformation is possible. People around you have seen that what you once valued most is now meaningless to you. I honor you for these bold moves. But the toughest move you may face is regaining the trust of your spouse. It takes more time than most people want to give it. It takes an ironclad commitment to consistency, predictability, and accountability. But every time you are where you say you will be and do what you say you will do, you build security in her heart that will enable her to trust you again.

I am praying God's blessing upon you and your wife. I want her to trust you and respond to your dedication to winning her back and becoming the man you need to be.

If you have any comments or questions, I would love to hear from you at sarterburn@newlife.com.

God bless you each day of your journey.

“How Can I Ever Trust You Again?”

There is no response sufficient to answer the question posed above, no response that quite matches the gravity of a question originating from a place so deep within that it seems almost unanswerable.

What elements might the answer contain? Time? Space? Specific tasks? Counseling? Prayer? Words? Actions? Only God?

The answer can feel beyond reach. And restoration may seem unattainable. Unfortunately, amid the stress and hopeless feelings of a trustless relationship, many men hit the Eject button. The odds appear so stacked against them, they write off the relationship regardless of how many years have been invested.

In my counseling office, many men tell me they feel so behind the eight-ball when it comes to restoring trust that they don't see the point of even trying. In these cases, divorce occurs prematurely. There is very little attempt at restoration, much less the full investment of time and energy required for such a venture. It is terribly sad, because truth be told, these men don't really know if divorce has to be the final outcome.

In the shameful wake of their disclosure of a sexual failure (or, more commonly, being found out), many men can't muster the courage to look beyond the carnage of the present and glimpse the horizon of what could be

a hopeful future. If these men could only see that trust building is possible. If only a man could see that someday his wife would risk her heart with him again. Someday it would be possible that she'd have more respect and adoration for him than ever before.

Building trust back in a relationship damaged by sexual integrity issues is a culmination of all the aforementioned things—and then some. It is like building a sculpture out of Legos. Some of the pieces include time, energy, planning, vision, willingness, creativity, persistence, patience, intentionality, hope, failure, and commitment. That's a lot of Legos!

Trust building is an ongoing process that consists of multiple intentional factors divinely pieced together over the course of time with a heart attitude of humility and commitment.

In reality, there is no formula for rebuilding trust. The process cannot be precisely prescribed or predicted. Trust building happens when it happens. What is required of the trust builder is to continue to faithfully place pieces into the structure, not haphazardly, but methodically. Not carelessly, but carefully.

My wife, Shelley, and I gave a talk at a MOPS (mothers of preschoolers) group recently, and one of the women asked Shelley how she knew she could trust me again. Shelley's response was simple yet incredibly complex. "I just knew," she stated.

Not rocket science, huh!

To explain, she gave an example of one of our trust-building tools: the five-minute phone call rule. This rule is a mutual agreement between us that Shelley can call me at any time and expect me to answer the phone. Should I not answer, I have a five-minute window in which to call her back. Beyond that time frame, Shelley has the right to immediately think the worst and assume I am again betraying God, her, and our relationship. Any work I've done to that point to rebuild trust is in jeopardy—and she can feel that way without apology.

The woman who asked the question looked puzzled. She didn't say anything, but the look on her face revealed skepticism that it could be that simple. She looked as if she wanted to say, “That's it? That's all you've got? A five-minute phone call rule?”

Yes—but also no. Every phone call I get from Shelley gives me an opportunity to place a Lego on our trust sculpture. Every time I pick up her call, and she verifies my whereabouts, or every time I return her call within the time window, a small element of trust is built.

Over time, combined with many other Lego-placement opportunities, trust is gradually built and restored. Shelley began to “just know” that she could trust me, because she could make out the essence and form of the trust sculpture, which we saw as safe, secure, and verifiable.

She could sense it, see it, and experience it.

More than anything, though, what enabled Shelley to begin to trust me was recognizing and accepting her source of security in someone other than me. Shelley came to terms with the reality that she would be okay even if everything in life weren't okay. In particular, even if I was not okay. Even if I was not trustworthy and never placed another Lego on our relational work of art, she would be okay.

Like Shelley, in order to change and engage the process of trust building, I, too, needed to come to terms with the truth that God was ultimately the change agent and healer. He is the true trust builder. He is the master architect and artist shaping any sculpture. If both Shelley and I lean on him for our journey of rebuilding our relationship, then neither of us must lean against each other. Because, inevitably, one of us will tire and let the other down. If we're leaning on each other for our ultimate source of strength and comfort, we will disappoint each other.

Every time.

And that can lead to a deep sense of hopelessness that has only one outcome: calling it quits.

This point cannot be overemphasized. If we are counting on our spouse to ultimately fulfill, complete, and restore us, we will be perpetually disappointed. We will long for the next relationship, which by chance might be better, easier, more fulfilling, more exciting, or more secure. But probably not. The wise King Solomon chased the next thing over and over again and came up empty. He called this “chasing after the wind” (Ecclesiastes 2:11).

If a relationship is to be restored and trust reestablished, it requires the master artist crafting the sculpture. We are simply responsible for placing the Legos. I repeat this point because there is so much confusion about what builds trust.

Speaking of confusion about what builds trust, our starting point must be to clear up some of the confusion. We must deal with some common misconceptions about trust building. Too often I find that people have a misinformed idea of how and what builds trust. It’s scary to me how often I hear clients quote (sometimes unwittingly) a random television series line or a celebrity’s theory on relationships, especially as it pertains to sexual integrity.

We’re bombarded daily with messages about how fidelity in relationships should work. These are sitcom snapshots of how forgiveness and trust should look, and we are coached on how to respond to our spouse when things don’t go well. In the unreal entertainment world, any relational damage is quickly patched up in an episode or two. If that’s what you think, let me tell you straight that real life and real healing are nothing like that.

Part of the motivation for writing this book is to give husbands and wives a more accurate idea of what the process of healing trust looks like. It is long, arduous, messy, absolutely not formulaic, sometimes comical, often depressing, and always mysterious. It is a process of trial and error. Certainly there are similarities in the way people experience the rebuilding of trust, but at the end of the day, the process is *your* process.

As you embark on the journey of trust building, my hope is that this book will help you with insights and tools. I want you to understand how trust is built after it’s been shattered by sexual integrity issues. I also want you to have specific examples of how to employ these tools to maximize their effectiveness. What good are tools if you don’t know how to use them?

In addition, there are two other features of this book that I hope you find useful. At various points, you’ll find reflection and encouragement from my wife in sections labeled “Shelley’s Thoughts.” These sections are designed to give you a different angle on what’s required for effective trust building. I urge you to carefully read Shelley’s insights and allow her input to be a voice representing your wife.

Finally, my coauthor, Stephen Arterburn—respected author, counselor, and host of the radio program *New Life Live*—offers his wisdom on the topic of rebuilding trust in a foreword, afterward, and a series of comments throughout the text that are set off as “Insight from Stephen Arterburn.” You will find his thoughts both challenging and encouraging as you journey through this book.

So let’s dive in. But before we begin, I want to tell you the story of a man who totally destroyed his wife’s trust and then, by God’s grace, slowly won it back.

That man is me.



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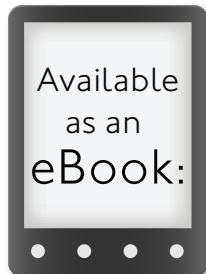
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