

HOME SWEET HOME

• THE MISSION STARTS AT YOUR FRONT DOOR •

WEEK FOUR



HOME SWEET HOME

A Seven-Day Devotional — Week 4

Know & Trust

Welcome to Week Four

The first three weeks of Home Sweet Home focused on marriage as God designed it in Genesis and Ephesians 5 on the specific callings of wives and husbands. This week widens the lens to any close relationship whether dating, marriage, family, or friendship through the first two bonds of the Relationship Attachment Model: Know and Trust.

Relationships get better when they're done God's way. There are five bonds that every healthy relationship needs: Know, Trust, Rely, Commit, Touch. For them to stay in balance with each other, they must be pursued in a particular order. This week walks through the first two: Know & Trust. We will focus on what it means to know someone and how to build and rebuild trust.

Each day includes the full text of Scripture, an expanded teaching section drawn from the sermon, three reflection questions, one practical step, and a closing prayer. Move through a day at a time and let God do His slow work.

DAY 1 The Mindset of Christ

Philippians 2:5, 8

“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. ... He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

“I’ve been in so many relationships that fell apart, I don’t know how to do one right.” Those were the words of a struggling young woman after church one Sunday. Does God actually have a way of doing this and do I even know what it is?

Relationships get better when they’re done God’s way, period. Whether you’re single and hoping to date, dating right now, married and working to keep it healthy, or just trying to keep your family and friendships intact, it all runs on the same underlying design whether you’ve ever thought of it that way or not.

Philippians 2:5: “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.” That word mindset is a Greek word describing the basis of how you look at something. Mindset isn’t a mood. It’s a lens. Paul is saying there’s a way of looking and approaching people, like Jesus did, that can be developed on purpose.

Three verses later, Paul names exactly what that mindset looks like: Jesus humbled himself, even to the point of death on a cross. Every Christ-like relationship has certain qualities: Humility & selflessness. Honestly, most of us need to admit that our current way of doing relationships isn’t fully working. That honest admission is the doorway into something better not a failure of which to be ashamed.

This week draws on Scripture alongside the research of a Christian therapist, Dr John Van Epp, who spent over twenty-five years studying both the Bible and the empirical science of relationships and found the same conclusions in both. There are five bonds present in every relationship: Know, trust, rely, commit, and touch. Over the next seven days, this devotional will walk through the first two of those bonds, know and trust, and what it looks like to build them the way God designed.

Before any of the specifics, though, everything starts here with the mindset. Paul said to have the same one Jesus had toward people. Every bond that follows only works when it's built on that foundation first.

Reflection

- Where has your current approach to relationships quietly stopped working, even if you haven't said so out loud?
- What would it look like, practically, to bring “the mindset of Christ” into your closest relationship this week?
- Which relationship in your life most needs the humility Philippians 2 describes right now?

Take It Further

Read Philippians 2:1–11 slowly today, and name one specific relationship where you're being invited to trade your current mindset for Christ's.

Prayer

Lord, give me the mindset of Christ in my relationships: humble, self-giving, and willing to die to my own way of doing things. Show me where I need a new foundation, not just a new technique. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY 2 Faders on a Soundboard

1 Corinthians 13:11–12

“When I was a child, I spoke like a child ... For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.”

Picture five faders on a soundboard: Know, Trust, Rely, Commit, Touch. When they're all up at their proper level, a relationship has harmony. This is the Relationship Attachment Model. They are five bonds that are present in every close relationship that work together in a particular cadence. You get to know someone. Once you know them, you can begin to trust them. Once you know and trust them, you can rely on them. Once

you've known, trusted, and relied on someone, you commit. Only after all four of those comes touch.

If you're single or dating, that's the progression a healthy relationship follows. In Colorado, I did some rock climbing. One of the things you learn is that you never reach for the next handhold until you have a strong foothold. Trusting someone more than you know them or getting physically involved before the first four bonds are built is reaching for a handhold with nothing to sustain it underneath. That's the danger zone, not because intimacy is bad, but because it's out of order.

If you're married, these five bonds aren't a progression to complete once and forget them. They're faders that need to stay in balance for the life of the relationship. Every relationship drifts out of balance eventually. That's not a sign something's broken. It's just the gravitational pull of ordinary life, work, kids, exhaustion, and time. But the problem is that relationships out of balance don't self-correct. They take real intentionality to maintain.

When one fader drops, it drags the others down with it. Picture a young couple who are newly married. You might say that every fader is balanced and everything is easy. Then a baby arrives. It's pure joy in the hospital and then the first sleepless night happens at home when the crying that won't stop. They both get up every time to care for the baby. Night after night, the same routine. Over time, she gets up more than him and, eventually, he stays sleeping. She wonders what happened to him. She thought she knew him, but now, she doesn't know this side of him.

To know someone means you have accumulated, honest information about the other person: their history, values, character, and patterns under stress. Not just what they say they believe, but what's confirmed over time through your own experience. When someone you think you know lets you down, then trust drops with it. That's the pattern that almost every long-term relationship will face in some form which is exactly why this keeping these five balanced matters for couples and families.

Wherever you are this week --- single, dating, newly married, or married with decades in --- the invitation is the same: Notice which faders have quietly slipped, and give them real, intentional attention before they drag everything else down too.

Reflection

- Which of the five faders — know, trust, rely, commit, touch — feels lowest in your closest relationship right now?
- Has a season of life (a new baby, a job change, a hard stretch) caused one fader to slip without you noticing at the time?
- What would it look like to give real, intentional attention to one fader this week rather than hoping it self-corrects?

Take It Further

Name the one fader that needs the most attention in your closest relationship right now and take one concrete step toward raising it this week.

Prayer

Father, show me where the faders in my relationships have quietly slipped out of balance. Give me the intentionality to tend to them before they drag everything else down. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY 3 Leading With Your Head, Not Just Your Heart

2 Timothy 2:22

“So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”

A recent survey of millennials found nearly half agreed it's fine to be physically intimate with someone before a first date has even happened. That's the water most people are swimming in in this culture. We live in a culture where people jump straight to touch before any of the first four have been built.

Physical intimacy bonds you to someone, and intimacy is never only physical. No matter how much our world wants to ignore it, it's emotional and spiritual too. Should that bond happen before you know someone, before you've determined whether you can trust or rely on them, before there's an actual God-given commitment? That's not an arbitrary rule from the Bible. It's God's design that He created to protect something real and lasting.

When you bond too fast, you lead with your heart, and your head never catches up. That's the most dangerous place to be in a relationship. It's not because feelings are always wrong, but because a racing heart makes it nearly impossible to evaluate a relationship clearly. It's why so many people, looking back, can't quite explain the decisions they made in the middle of it.

Most dating couples are evaluating chemistry, not compatibility, at the start. When compatibility isn't being evaluated, someone isn't actually being known. They're going on their feelings. Song of Solomon 8:4 tells the young women of Jerusalem: "Do not awaken love until the time is right." There's no substitute for time in getting to know someone. You can't skip the process of knowing and trusting someone without it costing you big time. If you're single and in a relationship that is moving too fast, take a step back and evaluate your relationship. It's always best to get to know someone and trust them more so the relationship can be built on something sturdier than chemistry alone.

This isn't only a caution for singles. Anyone --- married or not --- can find themselves leading with heart instead of head in a hard season. It might be making a big decision, extending trust to someone you don't know enough, or reacting to conflict. Sometimes these things happen before the head has had time to catch up. The discipline of letting knowledge lead feeling applies far beyond romantic relationships.

Reflection

- Where in your life — romantic or otherwise — has your heart been leading a decision your head hasn't caught up to yet?
- If you're dating, are you currently evaluating chemistry or compatibility — and how would you tell the difference?

- What would it look like this week to take a step back in any relationship that's moved faster than it should have?

Take It Further

If you're in a dating relationship, have an honest conversation this week about whether physical or emotional intimacy has outpaced how well you know each other.

Prayer

Lord, teach me to let my head catch up to my heart. Protect me from bonding too quickly and give me the patience to know before I trust, rely, or commit. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY 4 The Ceiling and the Pattern

Galatians 6:7–9

“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ... And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”

All of us have influence over someone. We all probably know someone (or are someone) who is dating. It might be your son, daughter, nephew, niece, grandchild, neighbor or friend. In helping them sort the harsh waters of the dating world, there are two things worth repeating. First, how someone treats you now is usually the ceiling for your marriage, not the floor. While dating, you're seeing someone's best version. They wear their best clothes, shave, show more patient, act more attentive, and are more put-together than on an average day. If you don't like the ceiling as it stands today, don't assume it will simply rise on its own after a wedding.

Second, the bad usually gets worse, not better. This isn't to discourage anyone. The most consequential decision most people will make outside of following Jesus is who they marry and that decision needs honest clarity. There are exceptions, especially where God genuinely transforms a heart. But whatever's already a problem tends to compound under the weight of bills, careers, kids, and stress. A ring doesn't change

anything. A wise statement to a person who is looking to be married is: We don't date potential, we pay attention to patterns. People will change, but marriage itself doesn't mature someone automatically. The traits that frustrate you while dating tend to get magnified once life gets harder, not softened by it.

One of the most useful things to watch for isn't whether someone has weaknesses — everyone does — but how they respond to them. Do they recognize where they need to grow? Do they take responsibility after a poor decision, or does someone else always end up holding it? Do they seek wisdom? Are they teachable? Are they becoming more responsible without needing to be managed or does the relationship increasingly feel like parenting instead of partnership?

There are plenty of things worse than ending a dating relationship. There are many things worse than being single. Unhappily married is certainly one of them. Dating exists to discover whether this is the person you should marry. If a person discovers that the answer is no, that is exactly what the process is for. Walking away from a poor pattern isn't giving up on love. It's taking the process seriously.

None of this is about finding someone flawless. It's about paying attention to the ceiling being shown right now, and to the pattern of how weakness gets handled. Both tend to tell the truth long before a wedding day ever could.

Reflection

- If you're dating, what is the current “ceiling” being shown to you and would you be content if it never rose?
- How does the person you're evaluating (or married to) respond to their own weaknesses? With growth or excuses?
- Have you ever felt more like a parent than a partner in a relationship? What did that reveal?

Take It Further

If you're dating, write down honestly one pattern (not a single incident) you've observed in how the other person handles their own weaknesses, and pray about what it reveals. If you are friends or family of a person dating, how might you help them with this information?

Prayer

Father, give me clear eyes to see patterns in people, not just potential. Help me pay attention to how the people I'm close to handle their own weaknesses and give me courage to act on what I see. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY 5 The Standard and the Static

Psalm 139:1–4

“O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. ... Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.”

For those who are married, the single most common complaint in marriage research is A feeling of not being known or understood by your partner. Psalm 139 shows how thoroughly God knows us. He examines the heart, knowing every thought and every word before it's spoken. While we can never know what God knows, we can work toward a better understanding of our spouses. Philippians 2:2 asks for something related: “Being like-minded, one in spirit and mind.” How can you be one in mind with someone if you genuinely don't know what's going on in theirs? Knowing someone that well doesn't happen by accident or by being near them alone. It happens through deliberate, ongoing attention.

It's hard to know someone for a few concrete reasons. First, men and women often communicate differently. Most of what erodes the “know” in a marriage isn't anger. It's misunderstanding. When a person speaks, a lot of going on with that sentence. What one person meant to say, what they think they said, what they actually said, why they

said it, what the other person heard, how each of them felt about it. That's not one version of events. That's seven. Often our response to a misunderstanding is: "I'm sorry you heard it that way." That's not an apology. It is an accusation. In other words: "I'm sorry you are incapable of understanding the brilliant words coming out of my mouth." It puts the misunderstanding entirely on the other person's hearing rather than us taking responsibility for being understood.

Second, people change. It's easy to assume you know your spouse simply because you've been married a long time. But the reality is that tastes shift, interests shift, and what stresses someone out shifts. A well-known long-term study on divorce found one of the top reasons couples give is simply that they grew apart and stopped talking. A slow decay of not keeping up with each other.

Third, ordinary daily distractions like social media and television. These distractions quietly eat the time that used to go toward knowing your spouse. The average couple talks less than twenty minutes a day while spending hours combined on screens. Whether single or married, the challenge is that knowing someone takes real time, real effort, and real conversation. There's no shortcut for time. That might mean less screen time, a scheduled date night, joining a small group, or seeing a counselor when you feel stuck. None of those are signs of failure. They're simply what it takes to keep a fader from slipping.

Reflection

- Where has misunderstanding, rather than anger, caused the most friction in your closest relationship recently?
- What has changed about you or your spouse in the last year that the other person may not have fully caught up with?
- How much of your daily time currently goes toward screens versus toward knowing the people closest to you?

Take It Further

Schedule one real, undistracted conversation this week with phones away specifically to ask your spouse or a close friend to get to know them better.

Prayer

Lord, you know me completely, and I want to know the people you've given me that same way. Help me to know them patiently, attentively, and on purpose. Help me fight for understanding instead of settling for assumption. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY 6 The Trust Picture

1 Corinthians 13:7

“Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

Knowing someone and trusting someone are two different things. The New Testament uses the word “trust” 241 times. The dictionary defines trust as a feeling of confidence in someone. But trust runs deeper than those feelings. Your feelings of trust don't come only from what you know about someone. They come from what you decide to think about what you know. Call it a trust picture.

There's a well-known optical illusion you may have seen. It's a single image that looks like a young woman to some viewers or an older woman to others. It all depends on which lines the eye locks onto first. That's how trust pictures form. We see a few things about a person and we make conclusions about them. Everything that doesn't fit that picture quietly gets pushed to the background. When contradictions appear in the person that don't seem to line up with what we know about the person, we often explain it away. That's how trust works for most people.

Scripture's clearest illustration of a broken trust picture is Samson and Delilah. Samson was the strongest man alive and a judge of Israel, but his weakness was beautiful women. With Delilah, he rushed headlong straight past knowing and trusting into physical involvement. When she asks him to reveal the secret of his strength (which is essentially asking him how to defeat or kill him), he lies. She asks four times. Even after

she's already hired men to tie him up and he's broken free, he keeps trusting her anyway. A compromised trust picture doesn't just miss red flags. You dismiss ones an outside observer would catch instantly. That's exactly why God created us for community. We need trusted people around us who have permission to speak the truth you might not want to hear. This is especially true for people who are dating.

If you are married, blind love can be an asset. The truth is you live with two spouses. There's the spouse in your home and the spouse in your head. Whatever picture you have in your head about your spouse shapes your connection to them. Do you focus more on that they're occasionally late or that they work hard to provide? That they're a little messy or that they're easygoing and rarely lose their temper? Did they mean to come home late to hurt you intentionally or did they genuinely lose track of time because they were busy? 1st Corinthians 13:7 says love always trusts. The same word is used for "believe." Love chooses to believe the best about the other person. That's a decision, not a feeling. 1st Peter 4:8 says love covers a multitude of sin. The word "covers" literally means to conceal. In other words, we choose to believe the best about someone we are married to and look past their imperfections. This doesn't mean being blind to big issues (like Samson), but in the small things that don't matter in the big scheme of things, we keep extending grace and believing the best.

Reflection

- Whose trust picture of someone in any relationship have you kept fixed even after contradicting evidence appeared?
- Who in your life has permission to speak an uncomfortable truth to you when your trust picture might be off?
- Which "spouse in your head" have you been choosing lately? Do you have a gracious view or a judgmental view of them?

Take It Further

Today, deliberately choose the gracious view of one small annoyance in your closest relationship instead of the critical view and notice what shifts.

Prayer

Father, teach me to choose the best interpretation of the people I love, the way your love chooses to believe and cover. Give me people around me who will tell me the truth when my own picture is off. In Jesus' name, amen.

DAY 7 Forgiveness Looks Backward, Trust Looks Forward

Romans 8:28

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

Sometimes trust is broken over something big. If you have been through a serious breach of trust --- an addiction, an affair--- it's important to remember that trust and forgiveness are not the same thing. Forgiveness is letting go of the right to get even. Trust is restoring the relationship. Forgiveness can be immediate. The Bible tells us to forgive for our own sake so that bitterness and resentment don't take root in us. Trust, however, has to be rebuilt over time. There is nowhere in Scripture where we are commanded to trust someone who hasn't yet proven trustworthy again. Confusing the two damages people. Sometimes people refuse to forgive because they assume forgiving means trusting someone immediately again. That's not true.

Rebuilding trust takes time, transparency and real change. It also happens on the offended person's timeline, not the offender's timeline. There are two important points to make to whoever broke the trust. First, it's natural to want things back to normal faster than the other person is ready for. “I've been forgiven, so let's just move on.” It sounds reasonable but confuses trust with forgiveness. Second, you'll be tempted to want trust extended to you without real, visible changes to match it. When you break your arm, you put it in a cast. You don't wave it around because you've decided you're healed. The restriction is what allows the healing. Real change isn't only an apology and a request to be believed again. It's real change.

When trust breaks, the “know” fader drops too. I’ve spent time with husbands and wives who will tell me “I just don’t know him/her anymore.” It sounds ridiculous, but it’s true. They don’t because their trust picture has been shattered. They thought they knew them and could trust them. Now, they can’t. It takes time for a new trust picture to emerge. Time, transparency and real, sustained change are required to build a new trust picture.

The good news is that if both people are willing, the best days can still be ahead. Trees don’t grow strongest on the mountaintop. They grow strongest in the valley. God can take the darkest moment in a relationship and make it the brightest one still to come. Romans 8:28 promises that in all things --- including a broken trust --- God works for the good of those who love him.

A woman who’d just lost her husband of fifty-three years once vented to a grief counselor about the one thing that drove her crazy for over five decades. Every morning, he’d leave his dirty breakfast plate out, no matter how many times she asked. The counselor asked if he’d done it on purpose to hurt her. Through tears, she said no. Then in complete honesty, she said she’d give anything to walk downstairs tomorrow and see that dirty plate one more time. Don’t let the little things shift your whole trust picture of someone worth protecting. With the big things, if both people are willing, there’s a real, proven process for rebuilding what’s broken.

Reflection

- Where have you confused forgiveness with trust either withholding forgiveness, or demanding trust before it was earned back?
- If you’re the one who broke trust, what would real, visible change (not just an apology) look like in your specific situation?
- What’s one small, recurring annoyance you could choose to hold more loosely, the way the widow wished she still could?

Take It Further

If you're carrying an unresolved breach of trust, take one concrete step this week toward forgiving, toward transparency, or toward simply naming the situation honestly to someone who can help you process it.

Prayer

*Lord, thank you that you work all things, even broken trust, together for good.
Teach me to forgive freely and to rebuild trust patiently, with time and real change.
Where I've been hurt, and where I've caused hurt, meet me there. In Jesus' name,
amen.*