

STUDY GUIDE

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New York Times bestselling author of *Boundaries*

TRUST

KNOWING WHEN TO GIVE IT,
WHEN TO WITHHOLD IT,
HOW TO EARN IT, AND HOW TO
FIX IT WHEN IT GETS BROKEN
IN LIFE AND BUSINESS

TRUST

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FIX IT WHEN IT GETS BROKEN

HENRY CLOUD



NASHVILLE NEW YORK

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*Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her,
and she will watch over you.*

— Proverbs 4:6 NIV

INTRODUCTION

Hello, and welcome to this study guide for *Trust*.

As you will see throughout these pages, trust is a foundational element for just about every aspect of human life. It is essential for happiness, success, and fulfillment. For these reasons and more, I am grateful you have chosen to trust me as your guide through this critical topic, and I am excited for everything you will experience throughout this resource.

We're going to cover a lot of ground in these pages. We'll examine what trust is, why it is necessary, how to build it, how to repair it, and how to avoid making the same mistakes that keep causing damage in our lives.

My goal is for you to become an expert in your own unique needs and abilities connected to this critical proficiency we call trust.

As you work through the material, you'll notice that each of the eight sessions is divided into two sections: one for personal study, and the other for group discussion. That first element is necessary because growth and development can be boosted by comprehension. Learning helpful information and skills allows us to change not just what we do, but *why* we do it.

Yet the second element—group discussion—is also critical. Learning something new is only half the battle. It is crucial to apply that knowledge in real-world situations in order to truly incorporate the new information into your actions and attitudes. And that kind of practice is greatly enhanced when you have the help and support of others.

Before we get started with session 1, let me say that my goal for you in engaging this study guide is more than informational—it's transformational. I want these pages to change your life for the better.

When combined with the *Trust* book, the content in this study guide can be a catalyst for that kind of change. Therefore, I hope you'll do the work of engaging these pages with honesty and sincerity.

If so, I'm confident you will be rewarded.

—Dr. Henry Cloud

SESSION 1

THE NECESSITY OF TRUST

In this session, you will:

- Learn what trust is and why it is necessary in our lives.
- Explore the reality that human beings are wired for trust at our most basic levels.
- Review a brief overview of the five essentials of trust.
- Join with others to review these themes and discuss how they apply to your lives and your community.

Prior to engaging this session, read chapters 1–3 in the *Trust* trade book.

Personal Study

There are many concepts in our culture that are simultaneously known and unknown. They are easy to understand in a general sense yet difficult to define in any specific way.

Take peace, for example. If I said to you, “Be at peace,” or, “You need to build more peace in your life,” you would understand what I’m saying. On a general level, you and I both know what we mean by the word *peace*.

But if I asked you to write out a definition of peace, or if I asked you to draw a picture of what peace looks like in your daily routine, that would take some deeper thinking. How does peace become manifested in your specific life as a unique

individual? Is it the absence of conflict? The absence of pain? Is it the presence of healthy relationships? Is it having enough time to achieve your goals each day? Is it the luxury of an afternoon nap?

The same principle applies to most high-level concepts that impact us as individuals. Happiness. Wealth. Fear. Faith. Depression. Love.

And trust.

As I wrote on p. 4 of the *Trust* trade book: “Trust is the fuel for all of life. Nothing in life works without it—especially relationships. We are wired biologically, neurologically, emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically to trust. Trust is the currency that drives everything.”

As one of the foundations of human society, trust is too important to leave in the realm of generalities. We must not settle for vagueness when contemplating what it means to trust other people and what it means to live as a person who can be trusted. For that reason, let’s begin this session by getting more specific.

How would you define the concept of “trust” in your own words? What is it?

Use the space below to list three people whom you actively trust. Next to each name, write a brief explanation of why you trust that person.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

“Trust no one” has been a popular motto for decades. Many people believe that they live outside of the need for trust. They carefully cultivate a guarded stance in their relationships with family, friends, coworkers, organizations, and even God out of a desire to protect themselves from being required to trust.

Such people are fooling themselves. Trust is a necessity for all people in every phase of our lives.

Consider this excerpt from page 22 of the *Trust* trade book:

Think about this: As human beings, our natural chemical makeup is designed to trust and to bond. We literally can't help it. God wired us this way, as Scripture attests, as a beautiful first step in even trusting Him: “You made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast” (Ps. 22:9 NIV).

Humans are literally wired for trust, as trust is the fuel and currency that makes all of life work, from the very beginning until the very end. Placing our trust in other human beings makes every system develop. This happens emotionally, as a child grows and develops. It happens physically, as the emotional attachment that trust brings causes brains to develop normally, immune systems to function, body weight to hit normal levels, brain sizes to achieve milestones, and on and on. It takes place socially, as the child enlarges his or her circle of trust to include more than parents and family members and ultimately includes friends and peers. Trust begets more trust. And this happens professionally, as he or she enters the world of commerce, which can only function if trust is secure. For example, if we cannot trust our markets, the entire financial system comes tumbling down, as we see when trust is leaky, such as in 2008.

Trust is the most important tool we have in life, in every area. Nothing works without it.

The argument I am making here is crucial for our understanding of trust: It is *not* optional if we are going to have a good life or realize any kind of success. Period.

Where do you see evidence in your community that trust is a necessary part of human life?

What are some of the main ways you have benefited from trusting others in recent years?

When have you suffered harm because you trusted a person or an organization that was not worthy of that trust?

It's common for people to perceive trust only as an emotional response. A feeling. Something we experience in our gut rather than our brain. There is some truth to that approach. There are times when we can have an intuitive reaction to people, organizations, or situations that give us strong guidance for the best way to respond.

There are individuals who have the ability to discern and assess trustworthiness in a way that is almost instinctual.

But that is not the most complete way for us to approach questions of trust. Feelings can be fooled. What seems like a positive connection can quickly turn into a nightmare relationship. How often we feel the sting of these painful words: “I thought I could trust . . .”

We are better served to approach issues of trust not only as moments for interpreting feelings but as opportunities to make decisions based also on data. The question “Can I trust you?” is answerable. It’s definable because trust is definable.

Specifically, trust is rooted in these five essential qualities:

1. **Understanding:** Does the person (or organization) in question understand who you are and what you need?
2. **Motive:** The “Why?” question. What motivations are driving a potential interaction or relationship?
3. **Ability:** Is the person (or organization) in question truly able to provide what you need? Can they be trusted in the specific ways that you need to depend on them in the situation or circumstance that has brought you together?
4. **Character:** This essential speaks to how the person (or organization) is wired on the deepest levels. Do they possess the moral qualities necessary for trust? Do they possess the other personal qualities that you will need from them besides “moral” integrity?
5. **Track Record:** The best predictor of the future is the past. So, what does this person’s (or organization’s) past say about their trustworthiness in the present?

Review the story of Shannon and Colin from pp. 27–38 of the *Trust* book. In that story, Shannon and Colin engage five questions designed to help them evaluate a relationship based on the five essentials of trust listed above.

Let’s conduct an exercise to help ground these five essentials in real-life circumstances. To begin, think of a company, an organization, or a person with whom (or

which) you currently feel conflict or tension. Use the space below to describe what makes you feel dissatisfied about your interactions with that company, organization, or person.

Next, work through the following questions to evaluate your relationship with them based on the five essentials of trust. Each question includes a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest score.

1. **To what degree does the company, organization, or person understand what you are looking to receive from your relationship? How well do they understand your needs?**

1 2 3 4 5

2. **How much do you feel their motives are based on satisfying you rather than meeting their own needs?**

1 2 3 4 5

3. **To what degree are they capable of meeting your needs? Do they have the capacity to satisfy you?**

1 2 3 4 5

4. **How pleased do you feel about the character or integrity of the company, organization, or person?**

1 2 3 4 5

5. **Given their track record in the past—their performance for both you and others—how confident do you feel they can meet your needs in the future?**

1 2 3 4 5

Based on your answers above, which of the five essentials of trust have been deficient in your reliance upon the company, organization, or person in question?

It's time to look at the other side of the mirror. The issues impacting and affecting trust in our lives run both ways. Meaning, it's useful and helpful to assess our interactions with other people and organizations based on the five essentials of trust—and that is what we'll be doing over the next two sessions in this study guide. But it's also critical for us to evaluate ourselves based on those essentials.

In other words, are you and I worthy of trust? Of being trusted? In what areas do we need to grow in order to repay the trust that others have invested in us?

Here is another way of phrasing the five essentials of trust:

1. People can trust you when they feel you deeply understand, feel, and care about their needs.
2. People can trust you when they feel your motive is “for” them, not just for yourself.
3. People can trust you when they believe you have the ability to meet their needs and deliver results.
4. People can trust you when they feel confident in your personal character and internal makeup.
5. People can trust you when you demonstrate a track record of performing in the ways they need you to perform.

Based on those five essentials, where do you see evidence in your life that suggests you are a person who should be trusted?

**In which of the five essentials do you have the most room for growth?
What makes you choose that one?**

GROUP DISCUSSION**Icebreaker**

Choose one of the following questions to begin your group's discussion on "The Necessity of Trust."

- What are the primary images that come to your mind when you hear the word "trust"? Why?
or
- When has a corporate brand done something to earn your trust in a big way?

Content Review

What ideas or principles did you find most interesting from chapters 1–3 of *Trust*?

What questions have been on your mind since reading those chapters? Or, what seemed confusing that you'd like to have resolved?

Look again at this paragraph from p. 12 of *Trust*:

You know your history of broken trust. You know who was involved, and you know what happened. The list of ways humans can betray one another is almost infinite, but the pain is always the same: hurt, betrayal, disillusionment, anger, withdrawal from trusting others, reticence in future transactions, suspicion, and more. In short, when trust is broken and we are betrayed, we suffer.

What does it mean for trust to be “broken”? Work as a group to set some specific parameters or definitions around that phenomenon.

How have betrayals and broken trust influenced the person you are today?

Chapter 2 makes the case that human beings are wired for trust. Given that reality, what are some possible reasons why trust is so difficult to achieve and maintain?

Look again at the five essentials of trust:

1. **Understanding**
2. **Motive**
3. **Ability**
4. **Character**
5. **Track Record**

Which of those essentials feels most lacking in our culture?

Which of these essentials have you found to be the biggest challenge when considering whether or not someone is trustworthy? Why?

Case Study

Sarah is preparing for a meeting with her daughter's high school principal. There have been recurring instances of bullying in recent weeks involving Sarah's daughter Rachel.

According to Rachel, several students in her class have been teasing her and ridiculing her because of a photo she posted on social media. Rachel erased the photo after the first incident, but other students had already saved it. Every few days, those students find a way to tease or embarrass Rachel with that picture.

Sarah has already had several conversations with various teachers at the school, and they all seem convinced that the incident has been resolved. The aggressors were told to delete the photo and to stop their behavior. But Rachel says they are teasing her now in ways that cannot be traced or confirmed.

As a working mom, Sarah is already feeling exasperated in advance of this meeting with the principal. She needs this situation to be resolved.

Where do you see specific opportunities for the principal (and/or the school) to earn Sarah’s trust in this scenario?

Work as a group to review Sarah’s situation in light of the five essentials of trust.

- **Understanding:** What does Sarah want the school to understand about her needs? Her daughter’s needs?
- **Motive:** Where do you see a possible clash between the school’s motives and Sarah’s needs?
- **Ability:** Think through all the people involved in this scenario—Sarah, Rachel, the bullies, the teachers, and the principal. Who might have the ability to resolve things successfully?
- **Character:** What virtues or character traits are needed to achieve a successful resolution?
- **Track Record:** What steps can Sarah take to assess the school’s track record on the issue of bullying?

Wrap Up

Remember these truths as you conclude this discussion of session 1:

- Trust is a critical foundation not only of our culture at large but of the specific relationships and interactions that make up your everyday life.
- All people are hardwired for trust.
- The decision to trust a person or an organization is just that—a decision. It's a choice we can make based on evidence and logic, as well as instinct and emotion.

What is one action you would like to take this week based on what you've learned?

*Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord,
And whose hope is the Lord.
For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters,
Which spreads out its roots by the river,
And will not fear when heat comes;
But its leaf will be green,
And will not be anxious in the year of drought,
Nor will cease from yielding fruit.*

— Jeremiah 17:7–8 NKJV