Bob: There was a period, early in their marriage, when Ann Wilson wondered if her husband Dave was someone who could be trusted.

Ann: What I think I did in my heart was I kind of shut down my heart. When you put your heart out there, it's kind of like: “I'm handing you my heart, because I trust you with it. I'm trusting your word of saying that you're going to commit to this, and we're going to be together.”

My heart got hard; and I no longer trusted him to care for it, because I felt like he wasn't putting the time or energy into caring for it.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Monday, May 25th. Our hosts are Dave and Ann Wilson; I'm Bob Lepine. You'll find us online at FamilyLifeToday.com. Rebuilding trust in a marriage relationship, once it's been challenged or threatened—that takes some work/that takes some time. We'll talk about how we do that today. Stay with us.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us on the Monday edition. Here in the United States, it's Memorial Day. Kind of an interesting Memorial Day because, in past Memorial Days, you might have had people over for a cookout; or you might have been on some kind of a road trip. Folks are trying to decide, “Is that okay to do now?” Some are; some aren't.

I've always loved when there's been kind of a three-day weekend, and there's been a travel trip. One of the things we do is—I'll download some podcasts or some sermons to listen to, and as we travel, we listen to those things and talk about those things. It's something I look forward to.

Ann: And Mary Ann is going to listen to the same things, so you're listening together?

Bob: We're listening together, and maybe debriefing on what we've heard, depending on whether she stayed awake.

Dave: You guys are so productive on your travels.

Bob: Well, I love travel time.
Ann: Me too; I love car trips.

Bob: Yes, and I love being able to listen to things. If I'm just listening and doing nothing else, that feels unproductive to me. But if I can be driving and listening at the same time—

Dave: You know what always happens when we drive? [Laughter] Why are you laughing? You know what I'm going to say? She loves to read me stuff!—“Let me read you this story.”

Ann: He hates it.

Dave: And I'm like, “Really?”

Ann: I'm like, “I'm going to read my Bible out loud to you.” [Laughter]

Dave: So, being the good husband that I am, I'm like, “I would love for you to read your Bible out loud to me for five hours.”

Bob: Well, we thought today, since there are people traveling; and they're tuned in and they're listening to us: “Thank you for tuning in and listening to FamilyLife Today as you travel or as you go about whatever you're doing, here on the Memorial Day holiday.”

We started this past year the FamilyLife® podcast network. One of the podcasts that we feature, that a lot of people have started listening to, is a podcast called Married with Benefits that features Shaunti Feldhahn, best-selling author and speaker, and Brian Goins, who works here at FamilyLife. It's all about the questions that every husband is asking/things he wants to know about his wife. They had you as a guest.

Ann: They did, and I love them; I really love them. I really love Shaunti, and I've gotten to know her; she's pretty amazing. It was fun to be with them.

Bob: One of the questions that they tackled on this season was the question of: “Why doesn't my wife trust me?” “Why is she suspicious?” I don't know why they brought you on to be a guest on this.

Ann: Why did they?

Dave: I have no idea. [Laughter]

Bob: Trust is an issue in a lot of relationships. Brian just introduced the subject as the podcast began, so let's hear a clip. This is from one of the episodes in the current season of Married with Benefits.

[Married with Benefits Podcast]
Brian: So the question is this: “What happens when my wife says she doesn’t trust me and she’s growing distant or cold? What do I do?”

Shaunti: Well, to me, the starting point—and I’d love to hear Ann address this because I know this is part of your story in *Vertical Marriage*/in your book—but when I hear that kind of question—“She says she doesn’t trust me anymore, and she’s becoming distant; what do I do?”—like, “Wake up fast. Because that’s a really big signal of something that—it’s something you need to take very seriously as a husband.”

One of the biggest trends that we see—in the research across all the different studies and, frankly, across more informal settings like when we do events—is pretty often, we’ll have a husband come up to us and say: “My wife just suddenly shut down,” and “She says she wants a divorce,” and “I didn’t even know we had such a big problem.” It just didn’t register that there was something/such a big deal going on.

Sometimes there’s been a reason for the lack of trust: you know, he had a pornography problem; he just didn’t realize how big of a deal it was to his wife. Or he had become a workaholic; and she was like: “I need you,” “I need you,” and he just thought “You know, it’s fine; we’ve got to make sure we can provide for the family”; and then she’s done.

Brian: Yes.

Shaunti: And I’m curious, because I know that’s part of Ann’s story as well.

Brian: Yes; so Ann, was there a time where it felt like, man, Dave was just clueless? I know we might be throwing Dave under the bus. I will say we talked to him yesterday; he’s like, “Tell all these stories; they’re in the book.” So we’re not sharing anything, and you’re not going to be sharing anything, that has not already been vetted by Dave, which is very important for couples when they share stories: “Always get permission.”

Shaunti: Yes!

Brian: But Ann, was there a time where it felt like, man, he was just clueless as to where trust had been broken? How did that develop in your story?

Ann: You guys really are describing our marriage/our lives. Shaunti, I would agree with you; I think that guys—when their wife is crying out, or complaining, or saying, “We need to fix this,”—they need to perk up their ears, because it’s serious.

It was really—and I’m sure some listeners have heard this story—but it was our ten-year anniversary. I thought we were doing terrible. Dave was gone all the time; he was traveling with the Detroit Lions, because he was their chaplain. We had two little boys: a four- and a two-year-old. We had always been doing ministry together and, suddenly, he’s just gone all the time.
We were also starting a new church, and so he’s at meetings; he’s kind of helping start this whole thing, which was a dream come true for both of us. But I also felt like: “You’re leaving us in the dust. Our boys don’t know you anymore—I feel like.” I was saying those things to him—like, “Dave, we need you.” He’s like, “I know, but this is so important,” and he was gone all the time.

I started out so angry and I would yell; but I found that, after a while, I stopped yelling; and I started becoming really bitter. Then my bitterness turned to resentment; then my resentment turned to numbness, and I didn’t even care.

Here’s the thing you guys—he thought we were doing great—exactly what you said, Shaunti—he thought we were like at a 10 [on a scale of 1-10]. I’m like, “We’re a .5; are you kidding me?”

Shaunti: But another example of that is—this has actually happened to a friend of mine; they went through some financial hardship. They lost their home and had to move back in with his mother. The problem was that he didn't realize—and I totally believe he didn’t kind of get this—he didn’t realize that, from that moment on, he kind of started prioritizing his mother rather than his wife.

Literally, I was asking her if—I was giving her a gift of some kind; and she was like, “Oh I don’t have any place to put this; because we’re in the guest room in his mom’s house.” I’m like, “Well, maybe she can just store it in the storage room.” She’s like, “Well, I don’t really have any status to ask that.” I thought, “Oh.” That’s a signal that he’s—all of these ways, he’s prioritizing his mom over his wife and not standing up for his wife.

Now, that’s an extreme example: you’re living with your in-laws. However, think through; there may be things like that, where you, as a husband, don’t realize maybe you are sort of not standing up for your wife with a difficult situation with your parents or not protecting her in that way. That could also be broken trust.

Brian: Yes; I almost wanted to give the guys something to go: “Hey, here are the five or six things that are broken trust issues that we may not be thinking about.” Like I’m hearing you say: “Prioritizing mom over the wife.” Ann, I’m hearing you say: “I just don’t feel like you’re cherishing my heart. You’re cherishing/you’re valuing something more than my heart.”

What are some other things? Again, we know about porn; we know about affairs—we’ll get to that later—but what are some other ways, where you go: “This is a signal of broken trust in that arena of my relationship”?—that a guy might not be thinking about.

Shaunti: The thing that occurred to me immediately when you said that Brian is, to some degree: “How you handle the kids.” Women and men tend to have, sometimes, very different ways of handling the kids. Sometimes, a wife can feel your way of handling the kids is too harsh. That doesn’t mean that you change everything you are as a dad; dads and moms just handle things differently. But if she is consistently worried
about that, in her mind, if you’re hurting her children, you’re hurting her and breaking some trust there.

[Studio]

**Bob:** Well, that's an excerpt from the *Married with Benefits* podcast—Brian Goins, Shaunti Feldhahn, and their special guest, Ann Wilson—talking about the issue of trust in marriage. You know, we don't necessarily recognize how critical it is to maintain trust in a marriage relationship. When trust is broken, it's like there is a big crack in the foundation of your marriage; and that's hard to rebuild.

**Dave:** I think it's one of the most important building blocks—you know, obviously, we've heard that today—but you're right, Bob; if it's been broken—and it can be broken in a second—and it takes days, months, years to rebuild trust. It's essential to do it.

**Ann:** Yes; we have to be really intentional of working on that to build the trust back, and it's not easy.

**Bob:** We're listening here to just excerpts from the complete episode of *Married with Benefits*—this subject of: “Why doesn't my wife trust me?” The whole season is about questions every husband is asking. I'd just point you to our website—FamilyLifeToday.com—if you want to listen to the entire episode. If you'd like to subscribe to the podcast and listen to all the episodes, you can; information about this and other podcasts available here, from us, at *FamilyLife*. Go to FamilyLifeToday.com and the information is available there.

One of the areas that you got into, as you were having this conversation, was: “How do you diagnose, in your marriage, whether there’s a trust issue going on?” Brian, at one point, was talking about the fact that husband's have a sense about this.

[Married with Benefits Podcast]

**Brian:** I was thinking about this; and Ann, you started feeling cold. You mentioned the word, “bitter,” and that you just started getting resentful; you started pulling away.

I would imagine if I'm Dave—because this happens with Jenn and I a lot—is that I have this unbelievable super power, where Jenn can walk into a room, and I can take her temperature from across the room. [Laughter] I’m like this—it's like a meat thermometer but for a woman’s heart—she comes in and I can go: “Okay, she’s cold,” and “I need to find a warmer room, preferably with a TV and a bag of chips.” I could see how this problem exacerbates because, when a woman gets colder towards a man, it’s not like that signals to a guy: “Hey, let's move closer.” [Laughter]

So what is it that a guy—I'm hearing Shaunti say, first of all, “Wake up”; but what else did Dave do to really help move towards that restoring?—“Okay, trust has been broken,”—that’s been communicated—“I’ve woken up. Now what do I do? Where do I go next?”
Ann: And I’ll just add that I really had a piece in this as well. Because I think what we can do, as women, is we can put all of our hope—just as men kind of go out to their career and be a provider—what I started doing is I took my eyes off of Jesus as my Provider, and Provision, and Security; and I put them on Dave. It was like I had a magnifying glass on him, and I started pointing out and seeing all the ways he wasn’t making my heart feel secure.

What Dave ended up doing, which was first of all, he said he repented—he said “I’m not right with God. I need to get right with God. I need to apologize to you.” Which even that—an apology of saying “I’m hearing you right now, and I’m really sorry that I haven’t been listening.”—that right there was like “Whoa!; because before, we would just go into combat mode, where Dave would be defensive; I would be defensive. So for him, first of all, to apologize.

What ended up happening was we would go out for lunch. I was so amazed by this; because we would sit down for lunch or dinner once a week or once every couple of weeks. Here’s what he would say: “So tell me how you think we’re doing,” and “How am I doing as a husband?” I thought, “Are you kidding me?”—that is the most vulnerable thing he could say. As he’s kept doing that—because he’s like, “I’m going to be so bad; she’s going to give me a 1 again,”—you know, out of a 1-10 [scale]—“How are we doing?”

But what happened was I saw that—wow, just having that conversation; it was so simple just to ask that—but that conversation made me feel more secure, like, “Oh, he means this; this is really important to him—that he’s going to the point of having conflict that could happen, and he would ask me that question—that really began to restore my trust in Dave.

Brian: What was the thing for him that he was able to go: “Okay, I woke up; I apologize.” Walk through that quickly with us about how he did that with you.

Ann: Yes, and that was something that took a while, too, because Dave had been—and let me add—this was way back at the beginning of our marriage. He’s really found victories; he’s doing great. But in the beginning of our marriage, he kind of came in with this in his background. He went through a spell, where he was really kind of just hiding it from me; but I could tell something was off.

I kept asking him/asking him; he said: “No,” “No,” “No.” So then it finally came out, which I felt like, “Oh, well, you’ve been lying all this time,”—which is really hard. But what ended up happening—he would go through times of victory/times of failure. This went on for a couple of years. I realized I was doing a terrible job of responding, which made him feel total shame.

What Dave ended up doing was—he brought other men into his life and said: “You guys need to help me. I’m hurting Ann; I want to be open with her.” I think, when I saw him
really attacking this—when I realized this isn’t an overnight fix; there are a lot of deeper issues that he’s kind of getting into that needs to solve; which I had my own issues and created such insecurity—but as I watched him pursue other men to get help/pursue what was at the core of this, and he was committed to sharing this part of his life with me, and was open to giving me every device everything that he had—and back then, we didn’t even have it on any of our devices; but still, that really helped.

I was amazed at Dave—in my response, because I was so horrible—that he continued to work on it. It really said a lot about his relationship with God.

Brian: Well that’s a big deal too.

Shaunti: That is.

Brian: I hope you’re hearing that because, guys, this should not be dependent upon our wife’s response.

Shaunti: —because some of us, as women, are not going to understand it and are not going to respond in a compassionate way.

Brian: Right; and it also serves as, again, another wake-up call to go: “If she’s not responding well, it’s probably because the trust was pretty significant at what’s been broken.

Shaunti: “Don’t minimize it.”

Brian: “Don’t minimize it. Keep moving on this path.” I think—and the whole idea of just waking up to the realization that this is a big deal—repenting consistently with God and apologizing to your spouse; then continue to check in: How am I doing?” “Am I rebuilding trust?’

Ann: And I would say this to men: “It was the most courageous thing I’ve seen Dave do, because of my response.” I did get better; because I realized like, “Oh, we’re partners; I’m his partner to get better.” But to watch him—like talk about respect—I saw him battle this and want to win. I know it’s kind of an up and down thing; but man: “Men, I would say, ‘Find some help; because this is an area, where I feel like Satan the enemy wants to destroy, not only our men, but our kids/wives.’” It’s kind of running rampant everywhere; I think we really need to go to battle with this.

[Studio]

Bob: Well, again, we’ve been listening to a portion of a podcast produced by the FamilyLife podcast network. Brian Goins and Shaunti Feldhahn, talking about questions that every husband is asking, with their guest, Ann Wilson: “Why doesn't my wife trust me?”
You guys got into talking about workaholism; talking about how the kids are handled and whether a wife feels like she can trust her husband to take care of the kids when she's gone; you talked about boundaries with other women; there's a lot more on this podcast. You can go to our website, FamilyLifeToday.com, and listen to the entire episode.

You get into this in the conversation, but is there a way to rebuild trust in a marriage relationship when that trust has been broken?

**Ann:** Absolutely. I've seen Dave rebuild trust, and I totally trust him with everything. He worked at it; he rebuilt trust. And part of it's not just Dave; but part of it is me, trusting God with Dave. That was a big piece of it, as well.

**Dave:** And I think, you know, having walked through that—every wife and every husband will walk through it daily—there can be no secrets.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Dave:** It has to be an open book. I'm not sharing my stuff with a lot of people—but with my wife and with a couple of guys in my life—I have to. That's integrity; that's being trustworthy. Every man struggles/every woman struggles: “Who knows about those struggles?”—if it's only you, you're going down.

**Bob:** And you have to, as a wife, not freak out when he shares that: “This is something I'm struggling with.”

**Ann:** And I did freak out; I really did. I wish that I wouldn't have, but I also had to grow. I didn't understand it; I didn't know that it wasn't about me. By understanding it more, and understanding that this just can be a battle for men and women, it helped me to realize that: “I want to be Dave's teammate in this; I want to be his partner, and I want to know everything that he's battling with, so that I can be his partner in it.”

**Dave:** I want to add that I think that trust continues to be built with consistency.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Ann:** That's true.

**Dave:** You know, Ann has watched me set boundaries with women. I want to say: “Hey, I set that boundary 20 years ago; you can trust me.” But it's like, “No, every day, I have to see it continually be built up.”

**Bob:** I used to have an algebra equation for how you rebuilt trust—it's “C” “B” over “T”—it's Consistent Behavior over Time. When a wife, or a husband, can see their spouse consistently living in a new way, over a period of time, that's how trust is rebuilt.

Sometimes a guy will say to me, “Well, how long is that time?” And I go: “Well, it's probably longer than you think it should be.” There's probably a relationship with: “How
long were you violating trust?” or “How deep did the wound go?” It's going to take a while if there's been a deep wound. If there's a violation of trust—if there's been adultery in a relationship—don't expect that two weeks of consistent behavior and your wife's going, “Okay, I can trust him now”; right?

**Dave:** I've heard—guys have said to me—that had an affair/that committed adultery: “I repented. She knows about it; she should trust me.” I'm like: “Give her your phone; give her your calendar; and it could be years—

**Bob:** Right.

**Dave:** —“at least, months—for her to go, ‘Okay, I see; you really are a changed man.’"

**Bob:** Yes; I'm thinking about an interview we did, years ago, with Chris and Cindy Beall, where there was a massive violation of trust in that marriage. It did take years, and it took commitment and perseverance for the trust to be rebuilt. Cindy wrote a book called *Rebuilding a Marriage Better than New*. It's a book that we've got in our *FamilyLife Today* Resource Center, where she talks about the process they went through in rebuilding trust.

In fact, there's a link on our website, FamilyLifeToday.com, to the interviews we did with Chris and Cindy, where you can hear their story and hear about the process they went through in rebuilding trust. Go to FamilyLifeToday.com for more information about Cindy Beall's book, *Rebuilding a Marriage Better than New*, and for the link to the podcasts with the Bealls about rebuilding trust in their marriage.

In fact, this is what we're all about, here at *FamilyLife Today*. We're about bringing practical biblical help and hope to marriages and families. If you're new to the ministry, go to our website, FamilyLifeToday.com for more information about this daily radio program. You can subscribe as a podcast; there are articles available online. We've got a whole library of past programs you can listen to.

All of this happens because listeners, like you, help make it happen. Those of you who support this ministry regularly: “Thank you for making this content available to hundreds of thousands of people, every day, all around the world—people who are coming to us for help and hope for their marriage.”

This week, we're in the final week of a special matching-gift opportunity that has been made available to us, here at *FamilyLife Today*. Every donation we receive to help cover the cost of producing and syndicating this program—we're entirely listener-supported—every donation is going to be matched, dollar for dollar, up to a total of $345,000. We're hoping that listeners will help us take full advantage of this matching gift opportunity.

If you can make a generous donation today, know that your donation is going to be matched, dollar for dollar. We'd love to send you, as a thank-you gift, a copy of Barbara Rainey's new book, *My Heart, Ever His*, a book of prayers designed to help you pray more effectively during challenging seasons, like the season we're living in right now.
If you become a new monthly supporter of *FamilyLife Today*—what we call a Legacy Partner, agreeing to make monthly donations—in addition to Barbara's book, we'll send you a certificate so you and your spouse can attend an upcoming *Weekend to Remember*® marriage getaway when those resume this fall. You can make a donation or sign up as a Legacy Partner, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; or you can call 1-800-FL-TODAY. Thanks, in advance, for supporting us and helping us take advantage of this matching-gift opportunity. We look forward to hearing from you.

Now, tomorrow, we want to talk about how we can stay focused on the important things, the things that matter most when life is coming at us fast. How do we make sure we’re winning at home in the midst of all the other priorities we’re dealing with? Cory Carlson’s going to join us. We hope you can join us as well.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, along with our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our hosts, Dave and Ann Wilson, I’m Bob Lepine. We will see you back next time for another edition of *FamilyLife Today*.

*FamilyLife Today* is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas; a Cru® Ministry. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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