



FROM RUIN TO RENEWAL:

*A 7-Day Devotional for
Those Rebuilding Trust*

TONY AND LYMARI NAVARRO



DAY 1

A TANGLED MESS

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: ...a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance...

ECCLESIASTES 3:1, 4

I can't always explain the sudden tears or the swirl of emotions surging inside as I continually try to process the diagnosis my sister received six years ago. A recent visit formed a fresh reminder: She's not the same.

Frontotemporal Dementia is known as the long goodbye. I've found I grieve in stages as her personality, function, and person slowly but suddenly slip away.

My counselor friend said, "Lymari, grief is jumbled and knotted." She's right.

Like betrayal, grief isn't a straight line, or even a wavy one. It's more like a tangled ball of yarn after a cat's play. And when relational loss or betrayal hits, we're thrown into waves of anger, bargaining, denial—a rollercoaster of emotions.

Like knotted yarn, a simple swipe of the hand won't untangle the mess our hearts are enduring. Before we navigate ourselves out of the grief, we must first learn to sit in it, to block out space for it rather than rush through it.

Real healing creates room for real grief, and vice versa.

This ultimately brackets space for the Divine Counselor, the Holy Spirit, to counsel us, comfort us, and sit with us.

Betrayal may have thrust you into this knotty process, and you're staring at the jumble of losses that betrayal has brought. In my marital experience, that can feel scary and overwhelming.

But like what I'm experiencing with this sister I've shared my life with—grief isn't a weakness. It's a process. It's also the place God can meet us and comb through slowly, gently releasing the knot it created. That untangling can't happen overnight.

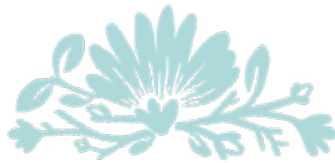
That's why Ecclesiastes says there is a time for it. So it's important we make time for it, in the process of healing and rebuilding.

Don't rush or push past pain. Instead, name it: Healing begins with honesty.

Feel it: We were created with emotions—and numbing is not healing.

Then bring it to Jesus. Invite Jesus into your loss. The Holy Spirit comforts and consoles and knows what we need.

God doesn't rush us through grief. He walks with us in it.



REFLECTION QUESTION:

What does grief look like for you in this season,
and what emotions do you need to bring to Jesus?



DAY 2

CAN IT HOLD THE WEIGHT?

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

ACTS 3:19, NIV

As our friend settled herself on what I thought was a sturdy chair, I heard the crack of wood. A second later—bam—the chair and our friend collapsed to the ground. No one was hurt, just a bruised ego and sore bottom.

The chair had looked solid, but the nuts holding the back had loosened over time. All it took was the right weight, the right moment. Kaplunk.

My husband Tony and I still owned three chairs from the same set, which we reinforced after The Incident. But for months, every time someone sat in one, I held my breath. *Is it going to hold up?*

We'd solidly repaired them. But I no longer saw them the same.

Trust in a marriage, whether broken through lying, neglect, or infidelity, feels like that chair. On the outside, things may look fine. But something beneath the surface has unwound. And when life applies pressure, everything can collapse.

Trust is delicate. It takes years to build and only a moment to break.

So how do you learn to trust again?

Simply put: I need to know I can put weight on it and it'll hold. That I'll never fall again.

When infidelity shattered the trust in Tony's and my marriage, rebuilding was slow. You could say three R's helped us reestablish trust.

1. Repentance.

Real repentance begins with a changed heart and mind leading to changed behavior. It's not just regret. It's owning the offense, seeing it the way God sees it, and turning away from actions that led to breaking trust.

2. Repair.

"I'm sorry" means little without consistent action. Repair requires humility, accountability, and intentional effort. Matthew 3:8 says, "Bear fruit in keeping with repentance." There should be signs you're changing: fruit you can pick off the tree.

3. Remain faithful.

Trust is rebuilt through daily displays of integrity. Time and consistency answer the silent question: *Can I trust you again?*

Rebuilding a relationship able to bear the daily weight of trust is possible. But it takes more than a promise.

It takes a pattern of change.



REFLECTION QUESTION:

What will it take to rebuild trust between you?

CLEAR THE DEBRIS

*Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander,
along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another,
forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

EPHESIANS 4:31-32, NIV

A few months ago while we were out of town, a storm ripped through our small neighborhood. When we returned, we were shocked. Trees had been uprooted, homes gouged by powerful gusts; power lines scattered on the ground. This wasn't the same neighborhood we'd left.

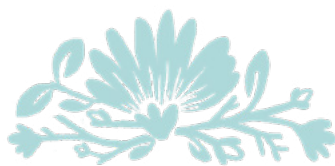
We drove around, checking on neighbors. Some had needed to evacuate. Others remained, patching holes with plastic and salvaging structure and furniture. Though our home was untouched, area power was out for five days. And our hearts were heavy. Months later, fallen trees still block yards, and debris clings to treetops, a haunting reminder.

The damage didn't just disappear. Neither did the obstacles to rebuilding.

The same is true in marriage after storms of betrayal, distance, or deep disappointment leave lingering destruction. Before rebuilding can begin, the debris must be cleared.

In marriage, that debris often looks like pride—our unwillingness to admit the ways we've hurt one another, or say sincerely, "I'm sorry." Pride erects walls meant to protect us, but they end up blocking connection. The dump truck of humility hauls away what no longer serves the relationship.

Resentment and offense are like downed power lines. They cut off connection, keeping couples in the dark. The longer they remain, the longer the lights stay off. Picture forgiveness like the long-awaited electric company truck: It lifts what's fallen and reconnects what was broken. Each act of forgiveness solders the power lines, bringing light and life back in.



REFLECTION QUESTION:

What “debris” currently blocks the rebuilding of your marriage?



DAY 4

BE WERY, WERY QUIET ... I'M HUNTING WABBITS

*Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards,
for our vineyards are in blossom.*

SONG OF SOLOMON 2:15

My husband Tony has recently started gardening; turns out he has quite the green thumb. He started a vegetable garden in pots, but his plan is to eventually transplant everything into the raised beds he's building, with a gate and fence to keep out pesky intruders. His tomatoes, green peppers, squash, jalapeños, zucchini, and fresh herbs have become his precious jewels, treasures to protect from the pests of our neighborhood: rabbits!

And let me tell you, the varmints are everywhere. They've been multiplying like, well, rabbits. They've eaten my hostas and dug holes all over our yard.

Tony is so done with these rabbits that I've found him outside with a BB gun, shushing me so I wouldn't scare them off in his attempts to show them who's boss! I had to stop him, because as annoying as those rabbits are, I still don't want them dead. He even trained our dog to chase them.

I now affectionately call our rabbits "Bugs" and Tony "Elmer." I can just picture him: "I'll get that wascally wabbit!"

In frustration, Tony built a makeshift gate of crates, coolers, and wood to block off our patio, protecting those vegetables so they can grow strong and healthy before being moved to their permanent home.

And the lush garden of marriage needs its own fences: "Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom" (Song of Solomon 2:15).

Incubate your marriage.

In broken trust, your marriage enters a fragile season. Like Tony's garden, it needs care, time, tenderness, and protection from outside elements—including destructive outside voices and any threat that contributed to the breach. Whether it's a person, a habit, or a pattern of secrecy or lying, it can't stay if restoration is the goal.

Don't isolate; insulate.

Insulate with the right things like Bible study, prayer, and community. Surround yourselves with people committed to your growth, healing, and restoration.

Don't catastrophize or minimize. Instead, prioritize.

In broken trust, emotions can swing on a pendulum of extremes which shut down healing. One spouse may believe the situation is hopeless. The other might sweep pain under the rug. Instead, prioritize the healing process.

Put up guardrails, not walls.

Don't emotionally block out your spouse. Instead, create support structures of accountability, transparency, vulnerability, and wise direction to keep you on track. You might involve daily check-ins, emotional honesty, software to protect your computer, and/or a trusted mentor for a season.

Invite God into the garden.

No matter how strong your fences, the Lord is your marriage's ultimate protector of your marriage ([Psalm 127:1](#)). Ask Him to prune what's unhealthy, bind up what's weak, water what's dry, and defend what feels defenseless. When you can't yet see fruit, trust God is at work ([John 5:17](#)). He can bring bloom and beauty where there once was destruction.

**REFLECTION QUESTION:**

What unguarded places need attention in your marriage;
which could become destructive if unchecked?

HEADS UP—YOUR COMMUTE JUST DOUBLED

And it will be said: “Build up, build up, prepare the road!

Remove the obstacles out of the way of my people.”

ISAIAH 57:14, NIV

Tony and I live in a small town in rural Indiana. I’m originally a city girl; our location was ... an adjustment. But one thing I appreciate is the straight shot to our house that gets us home from the highway in under seven minutes.

So when I saw the sign warning the bridge on our route would be closed for months—adding 10 extra minutes to my daily commute—I wasn’t thrilled.

I’m from Chicago, where going six miles can take an hour. In theory, ten minutes shouldn’t have been a big deal. But Chicago has shortcuts. Bloomington, not so much. Only a few main roads take you where you need to go, and they’re narrow, winding, and steep. No streetlights—just you, your car, and your headlights curving through the darkness.

I white-knuckled my way through those drives. Every day was a reminder of how frustrating it is when the easiest road is blocked.

Sometimes the road between the two of you in marriage is under long-term repair. Maybe pain, betrayal, or bitterness block its bridge. The detour back to connection feels long and uncertain.

While there are no shortcuts to restoring that intimacy, you can take steps to remove the barriers.

The barrier of offense: Offense is the enemy’s bait. Once taken, we get stuck in cycles of hypersensitivity and unforgiveness adding to the required mileage of our intimacy. To remove this barrier, we must choose mercy.

But more than that, we must intentionally shape a home where grace lives. Colossians 3:13 tells us to make allowances for each other's faults—not excuses, but space for grace: “bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” This means maintaining a reserve of love for times when we're disappointed or hurt. Without regular deposits of encouragement, affirmation, and grace, we can find ourselves emotionally overdrawn.

The barrier of contempt: When small offenses go unresolved, contempt creeps in. It's the eye-rolls, the sarcasm, the sharp tone, the perpetual annoyance making people around you wondering if you even like each other.

Contempt is the opposite of grace. It keeps a running list of every wrong—one subtracting its toll from intimacy.

To remove it, first recognize it and begin honoring your spouse again. Look for the good. Say thank you. Speak life. Build a culture of honor where their words, thoughts, and dreams matter to you again.

The barrier of pride and self-protection: Pride tells us we don't need to apologize and, stuck in offense, keeps us from changing. But Proverbs 16:18 warns us that pride wreaks destruction.

To remove it, first confess it. Take the risk to be vulnerable again. Vulnerability can feel like navigating a dark and narrow road, but on the other side is freedom and connection.

You don't have to stay stuck in the detour. Ask God to help you clear the obstacles.



REFLECTION QUESTION:

What would it look like to begin repairing the road back to intimacy?



DAY 6

I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER

*Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ,
and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.*

ROMANS 13:14, NIV

“I hate the person I was.”

Her confession sagged with the weight of deep pain. A hidden sin had caught up. Consequences unfolded in her marriage and her community. And with each person who found out and whispered, she spiraled.

That’s the power of shame. In exposure, it convinces us we’re unworthy. Shame lies to us, condemns us: We not only did wrong (or had wrong done to us), but we *are* wrong, and we *are* our failure. It clings to our souls like a heavy cloak, smothering worth and purpose.

In marriage, shame builds walls of isolation, mistrust, disconnection. Even when the truth comes out, shame doesn’t let go. It whispers, *You are your worst mistake*. Or even, *You are the shameful ways others have treated you*.

I recall the trailer for a horror film, where a bride-to-be was laughing at her bridal shower—until she opened a card that read simply, *I know what you did last summer*. Terror overtook the bride’s joy.

It’s what shame does: creeping in when least expected, haunting celebrations, robbing peace, turning dreams into nightmares. It’s one of our enemy’s weapons to swiftly steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10).

He declares, “If they knew, they’d never accept you.” Hoping to restrain God’s

restoration, he shouts, “Look what you did. This defines you. You’ll never outrun this.” He’ll convince you to hide. Then accuse you for keeping it secret. Then torture you when it’s brought to light. The enemy is a strategic accuser.

But God is a gracious redeemer.

Healthy guilt—as opposed to shame—can be redemptive (2 Corinthians 7:10). Telling us we’ve done wrong, guilt can propel confession, repentance, and ultimately restoration.

A pastor once mentioned that sin covered by Jesus’ blood becomes a weapon for the gospel (see Revelation 12:11). But what stays hidden, I have come to know, becomes a weapon for the enemy.

To disarm shame, we must confess and connect—to others and Jesus.

We ask God for forgiveness, trusting times of refreshing will follow (Acts 3:19-20). We confess to others for healing (James 5:16)—wisely, to a grace-filled, cross-centered community restoring purpose and belonging rather than shame.

Intimacy in marriage requires clearing the clutter of sin and its shame, reframing our past with the truth of Jesus’ finished work on the cross, stamping the price for our sin as paid in full, once and for all. This cross—not failure—defines you.

Shame feels naked, but Jesus’ righteousness covers us. So don’t just take off shame. Put on Christ, and your identity as His beloved.

The enemy may remember what you did last summer, but heaven remembers who you are in Christ—and extends the promise of a better tomorrow.



REFLECTION QUESTION:

What cloak have you been wearing that doesn’t belong to you, and what truth about your identity in Christ do you need to put on today?



DAY 7

“ARE YOU HUNGRY?”

Love covers a multitude of sins.

1 PETER 4:8

When I was younger, whenever there was tension between my mom and me—perhaps hurt feelings or a quiet distance—she would quietly set a plate in front of me. “Are you hungry?”

It was her olive branch, her bridge back to connection. Her unspoken, *I still see you. I still love you.*

Come back to the table.

So it makes perfect sense that nestled in the backdrop of one of Scripture’s most tender scenes, there was a fire, some bread, and fresh, charbroiled fish.

I imagine morning mist, the crash of waves, the call of seagulls, and the gentle crackle of fire on sand. Bread toasting. Fish sizzling. And a seated, resurrected Jesus, waiting.

They had shared three years. Jesus, commissioning Peter out of Peter’s fish-heavy boat, had proceeded to heal the sick, give sight to the blind, and set Peter’s heart ablaze with purpose.

Yet Peter’s last encounter had been laced with denial, shame, and a rooster’s crow, perhaps now playing on mental repeat.

Jesus would surely understand why Peter reverted to the only trade he knew: fishing. But even that didn’t work. Toss after toss, perhaps the bare, defeated nets became reminders.

Had failure left Jesus' calling slack and empty?

Then, the voice that had once called Peter to be a fisher of men called to him again from the shore.

Peter hurled himself overboard. If he could've walked on water, he would've run.

And when he reached the shore, there was no lecture. "Come and eat breakfast," Jesus said. *Are you hungry?*

Jesus then restores His beloved Peter with the same question—asked a deliberate three times.

"Do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord."

"Feed my sheep."

This wasn't just forgiveness or an olive branch. This was a recommissioning.

And it communicates powerful truth. When we inevitably fail, our spouses don't need our pressure. They need our presence. Not accusations, but gentle questions opening the heart. Restoration happens through small acts of service, kindness, and safe spaces of connection.

This isn't a natural response to someone turning their backs on us. We need the Holy Spirit.

Jesus didn't just restore Peter's past; He reignited Peter's purpose. And in marriage, healing builds something stronger, usable for God's mission.



REFLECTION QUESTION:

In what area(s) might your spouse need your presence more than your explanation?