

**MARRIAGE IS  
NOT FOR WIMPS**

**COMMUNICATION  
CLASS**

**SESSION FOUR**

**DAVID LEVENTHAL**

## A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

Throughout this course I refer to the book, *A Lasting Promise: A Christian Guide to Fighting for Your Marriage* by Scott M. Stanley, Daniel Trathen, Savanna McCain & Milt Bryan. Much of the material in this class is a synthesis of their groundbreaking research. I highly recommend this book for you and your spouse.

Key concepts discussed from their book include:

- Four Deadly Habits
- Speaker/Listener Technique
- Filters & Miscommunication
- Expectations
- Expressing Criticism Constructively
- Ground Rules for Protecting Your Marriage from Bad Conflict
- Events, Issues & Hidden Issues
- Problem Solving

Additionally, in lesson five we discuss concepts from a book titled *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman. I have not included The Five Love Languages assessment which helps you identify your love language. I encourage you to purchase Dr. Chapman's book so that you can cover the content in more detail and be able to take the assessment.

## S E S S I O N   F O U R   O U T L I N E

- Week 3 Recap & Opening Thoughts
- Table Talk Time – Homework
- The Role of Forgiveness in Communication
- Table Talk Time - Forgiveness
- Testimony: Cary & Sarah Tucker
- Video: Problem Solving
- Table Talk Time – Speaker / Listener

## **Reminders from Week 3**

### **#1 – Destructive Griping**

1. **Types of Destructive Griping**
  - a. Mind Reading
  - b. Character Assassination
  - c. Catastrophic Interpretations
  - d. Blaming
2. **Protecting Against Damaging Conflict**
  - a. Anticipate problems
  - b. Take Responsibility for your behavior
  - c. Reinforce your partner's efforts to communicate well

### **#2 – Events, Issues and Hidden Issues**

1. **Events, Issues and Hidden Issues**
  - a. Events – The small day to day happenings that all couples argue about
  - b. Issues - The more important areas of life that you have to cope with, such as money, sex, communication and in-laws
  - c. Hidden Issues – Deep, core level issues that take more work to uncover and deal with.
    - i. Control and Power
    - ii. Needing and Caring
    - iii. Recognition
    - iv. Commitment
    - v. Integrity
    - vi. Acceptance

### **#3 - Two key concepts**

1. **Team** – Continue to remind each other that you are a team. When one of you wins, the other wins. When one of you loses you BOTH lose. It's you AND your spouse, not you VERSUS your

spouse. The goal is to attack problems and issues together, not to attack each other about issues and problems.

2. **Safety** – Anything can be said in the context of a safe environment. If there is an environment of acceptance then every hurt, unmet expectation and frustration will have a place to be voiced. No one will reveal their deepest thoughts if there is a fear of not being heard.

### **\*\*\*Table Talk Time\*\*\***

1. Did you have the opportunity to convey constructive criticism to your spouse this week? How did it go?
2. What insights did you gain from the homework?
3. Were you able to identify any hidden issues in your marriage? If so, how have they been playing themselves out?

### **Week 4 - Opening Thoughts**

“Forgiveness has been described as a quality by which one ceases to feel resentment against another for a wrong he or she has committed against oneself. Forgiveness can be granted with or without the other asking for forgiveness. Some people also believe that persons can forgive themselves that it is possible to forgive groups of people, or that it is possible to be forgiven by God.”

– Wikipedia

“Always forgive your enemies -- nothing annoys them so much.”

- Oscar Wilde

“Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive.”

– C.S. Lewis

“Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”

- Matthew 18:21-22

“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

- Ephesians 4:32

### Forgiveness: The Restoration of Oneness

#### 1. Thesis

Our ability to forgive one another has its genesis in God’s forgiveness of us. The forgiveness, grace and mercy granted to us in Christ forms the basis of our security, our sure footing and our precedence to forgive others. ***Failing to embrace this concept will set you up for significant future frustrations.***

#### 2. Why spend time on forgiveness in a martial communication class?

- a. You will have the opportunity to practice the ***discipline of forgiveness*** with your spouse more than with any other person on earth
- b. An unforgiving spirit will put a marriage on life support
- c. Good communication requires trust and safety. Trust and safety are eroded when one or both parties are unwilling to forgive.

#### 3. The Logic of Forgiveness

- a. Before we can properly discuss forgiveness in the context of marriage we need to spend some time better understanding the logic of forgiveness.

##### b. Our State as Sinners

- i. Romans 3:10-18 - As it is written: "There is **no one righteous**, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. **All have turned away**; they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, **not even one**. Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. **There is no fear of God before their eyes.**"
- ii. The Bible compares sinners with the following list of things:

1. Abominable branches (Isaiah 14:19)	22. Grass (Psalm 37:2;92:7)
2. Ashes under the feet (Malachi 4:3)	23. Moth-eaten garments (Isaiah 50:9;51:8)

3. Bad fish (Matt. 13:48)	24. Passing whirlwinds (Prov. 10:25)
4. Animals (Psalms 49:12; 2 Peter 2:12)	25. Potsherds (Prov. 26:23)
5. Blind people (Zephaniah 1:17; Matt.15:14)	26. Raging waves of the sea (Jude 1:13)
6. Bronze and iron (Jer. 6:28; Ezekiel 22:18)	27. Reprobate silver (Jeremiah 6:30)
7. Carcasses trodden underfoot (Isaiah 14:19)	28. Scorpions (Ezekiel 2:6)
8. Chaff (Job 21:18; Psalm 1:4; Matt. 3:12)	29. Serpents (Psalm 58:4; Matt. 23:33)
9. Clouds without water (Jude 1:12)	30. Smoke (Hosea 13:3)
10. Corrupt trees (Luke 6:43)	31. Stony ground (Matt. 13:5)
11. Deaf adders (Psalm 58:4)	32. Stubble (Job 21:18; Malachi 4:1)
12. Dogs (Prov. 26:11; Matt. 7:6; 2 Peter 2:22)	33. Swine (pig) (Matt. 7:6; 2 Peter 2:22)
13. Dross (Psalm 119:119; Ezekiel 22:18,19)	34. Disturbed sea (Isaiah 57:20)
14. Early dew that passes away (Hosea 13:3)	35. Visions of the night (Job 20:8)
15. Bad figs (Jeremiah 24:8)	36. Wandering stars (Jude 1:13)
16. Fading oaks (Isaiah 1:30)	37. Wayward children (Matt. 11:16)
17. Fire of thorns (Psalm 118:12)	38. Wells without water (2 Peter 2:17)
18. Fools building upon sand (Matt. 7:26)	39. Wheels (Psalm 83:13)
19. The fuel of fire (Isaiah 9:19)	40. White-washed gravesites (Matt. 23:27)
20. Garden without water (Isaiah 1:30)	41. A wild donkey's colts (Job 11:12)
21. Goats (Matt. 25:32)	

iii. “Christianity tells people to repent and promises them forgiveness. It therefore has nothing (as far as I know) to say to people who do not know they have done anything to repent of and who do not feel that they need forgiveness.” – C.S. Lewis

c. **The Consequences of Our Sin (in relation to God):**

- i. Romans 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is **death**, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- ii. Hebrews 9:22 - “...the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is **no forgiveness.**”

d. **God’s Plan to Deal with our Sin - Forgiveness and Restoration**

- i. John 3:16 – “For **God so loved** the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him **shall not perish** but have eternal life.”

- ii. 1 John 1:9 – “If we **confess our sins**, he is faithful and just and **will forgive us** our sins and **purify us** from all unrighteousness.”
- iii. Ephesians 1:3-8 – “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed us** in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For **He chose us** in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love **He predestined us** to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will — to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has **freely given us** in the One He loves. In Him we have **redemption** through His blood, the **forgiveness of sins**, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that **He lavished on us** with all wisdom and understanding.”
- iv. Colossians 1:13-14, 19-23- “For he has **rescued us** from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom **we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins**...For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to **reconcile** to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by **making peace through his blood**, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now **he has reconciled you** by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, **without blemish and free from accusation** - if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.
- v. Colossians 2:13–15 - When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God **made you alive with Christ**. He **forgave us all our sins**, having **canceled** the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; **he took it away**, nailing it to the cross. And having **disarmed** the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

**e. The Obligation Between Men**

- i. Colossians 3:12-14 - Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved; clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and **forgive** whatever grievances you may have against one another. **Forgive as the Lord forgave you**. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.
- ii. Ephesians 4:31-32 - "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, **just as God in Christ also has forgiven you**"
- iii. 2 Corinthians 13:11 - Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, **be of one mind, and live in peace**. And the God of love and peace will be with you.
- iv. Hebrews 12: 14 - Make **every effort to live in peace** with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.
- v. "To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you." - C.S. Lewis

#### 4. Keys to Forgiveness

##### a. **Recognize that time alone does not heal**

- i. "We have a strange illusion that mere time cancels sin. But mere time does nothing either to the fact or to the guilt of a sin." – C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*
- ii. "Every uncorrected error and unrepented sin is, in its own right, a fountain of fresh error and fresh sin flowing on to the end of time." – C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

##### b. **If you are the offended party**

- i. If we are the offended party, our responsibility is to take the first step. "And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother" (Matthew 18:15)
- ii. We should do it in love and meekness, but you must do it.

**c. If you are the offender**

- i. If we are the offender, our responsibility is to take the initiative.
- ii. “If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering” (Matthew 5:23-24).

**d. Give up our right to get even.**

- i. “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.” - Romans 12:17
- ii. Forgiveness is more than pretending the offense didn’t happen, or pretending it didn’t hurt.
- iii. Forgiveness is facing the fact that it did happen, admitting the hurt, and deciding to move toward oneness

**e. Do not hold it over the person’s head.**

- i. Forgiveness is not partial. We can’t mouth forgiveness with our lips but hold onto resentment with our hearts.
- ii. “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” - Romans 12:18

**f. Become understanding of others**

- i. Forgiveness begins with learning to be understanding of others and their flaws, which should not be all that difficult. We know what we are like. At least if we are honest with ourselves, we do. We know how proud, how selfish, how spiteful, how jealous, how inconsiderate and how inept we can be. People who refuse to forgive may have the foolish notion that they themselves are almost perfect.
- ii. “If we are to forgive freely, we need a tolerance of others as generous as the tolerance we display toward our own errors. It is remarkable how understanding we can be of our own flops in interpersonal dealings—we didn’t intend the error or it happened in a moment of stress, or we weren’t feeling right that day, or

we'll know better next time. We tend to see ourselves not for what we are but for what we strive to be, whereas we see others for what they are" - Alan Loy McGinnis, *The Friendship Factor*. pp. 159-160.

**g. Pray, pray, pray**

**h. Humility**

**5. What Forgiveness is Not**

- a. Forgiveness does not absolve one of the consequences of poor decisions.
- b. Forgiveness does not mean all memory of the event is erased.

**6. What Does It Mean to "Forget"?**

- a. When we truly forgive, the wrong will not dominate our thoughts anymore.
  - i. When it comes to our minds, we will be able to dismiss it promptly. We won't keep reliving it and talking about it to others.
  - ii. Some people say they have forgiven, but they can talk about little else. They want to keep rehearsing the awful thing that was done to them. Their inability to stop thinking about it and talking about it exposes their lack of forgiveness.
- b. The offense won't hurt anymore.
  - i. The fact will be there, but the deep emotions will be gone. We can think of it without bitterness and resentment, without feeling the pain all over again.
  - ii. Note – this may take time! This may take a long time.
- c. We will be able to treat the offender as though the offense never happened. Not pretend that it never happened.
  - i. It did happen, and we need to be honest about that. But treat him as though it never happened. If we forgive as God forgives and keep no record of the wrong, then we will be free to reach out with warmth, kindness, openness and trust to restore the relationship.

**\*\*\*Table Talk Time\*\*\***

- 1. Growing up, did you see forgiveness modeled in your house? How has your family of origin shaped your concept of forgiveness?

2. Are you harboring bitterness toward someone as a result of an unforgiving spirit?
3. How has the following statement played out in your marriage? “We tend to see ourselves not for what we are but for what we strive to be, whereas we see others for what they are” - Alan Loy McGinnis, *The Friendship Factor*

### **Testimony: Cary & Sarah Tucker**

#### **\*\*\*Table Talk Time\*\*\***

Practice the speaker/listener technique (each couple takes turns practicing the Speaker / Listener in front of the other couples):

1. Is there a specific offense that the Lord has brought to your mind where you need **to ask for** forgiveness?
2. Is there a specific offense that the Lord has brought to your mind where you need **to grant** forgiveness?
3. Another safe topic.

### **Homework**

**“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” - Psalm 139:23-24**

Take 30-45 minutes and answer these three questions. Take some time to really think through what is in your heart (pray through Psalm 139:23-24 and ask the Lord to illumine the dark places in your heart). When you have completed the questions come together to discuss your responses. Use the Speaker / Listener technique to assist you in any sensitive topics.

1. Are there any events or memories that you have not forgiven your spouse for? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Spend the next 5 – 10 minutes in prayer asking the Lord to reveal if there is anything you need to go to your spouse and ask forgiveness for. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Do you find the concept of forgiveness to be especially difficult for you? If so, why do you think this is? \_\_\_\_\_

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