

**MARRIAGE IS NOT FOR WIMPS**

**MARITAL COMMUNICATION  
CLASS**

**SESSION 1**

# Introduction & Opening Thoughts

# Summary of this Study

This study will offer practical skills for better communication and conflict resolution, as well as protecting intimacy, friendship, and fun. It is offered for any married couple that would like to seek some godly advice on how to strengthen and enhance their marriage.

# Ground Rules

- Confidentiality
- Participation
- Honesty

# The Three Groups in this Room

1. Couples who don't know what they don't know (newly married)
2. Couples who are struggling well
3. Couples in crisis

# Opening Questions

- What is communication?
- What is our goal for the next five weeks?
- What is God's perspective?

# Oneness

# Oneness

**Matthew 19:4-6 (NIV)**

“Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”



# Oneness

Oneness is the freedom to speak one's mind to the other about absolutely anything. Oneness is being as comfortable with silence as with speech. Oneness is perfect trust. It's acting the same way apart from one's spouse as with him or her. It's anticipating the other's needs, and feeling the other's hurts as one's own.

- Mike Mason, *The Mystery of Marriage: 20th Anniversary Edition*

# Barriers To Oneness

- Fear of Rejection and Self-Protection
- Sin and Selfishness
- Lack of Knowledge

# Core Convictions about Marriage

- God's Design for Marriage is Oneness
- God's Purpose in Marriage:
  - To reveal His glory
  - To make us holy more than happy
- Good communication is critical to success in marriage

# Two Key Concepts

1. **Team** – We must view our marriages with a team mentality
2. **Safety** – Anything can be said in the context of a safe environment

# Why things spin out of control

# Four Deadly Habits

1. Withdrawal and Avoidance
2. Escalation
3. Negative Interpretations
4. Invalidation

# Withdrawal & Avoidance

These are different manifestations of a pattern in which one partner shows an unwillingness to get into or stay with important discussions.

# Escalation

What goes around comes around. This occurs when partners respond back and forth negatively to each other, continually upping the ante so conditions get worse and worse.



# Negative Interpretations

When perception is worse than reality.

This occurs when one partner consistently believes the motives of the other are more negative than is really the case.

# Invalidation

This is a pattern in which one partner subtly or directly puts down the thoughts, feelings, or character of the other.

## Table Talk Time

What would have to happen for you to consider this class a personal success for you?

What is your default “WENI” mode? How has that been destructive in your marriage?

# Creating Structure and Safety

## The Speaker/Listener Technique

- What is it?: A structured way to communicate safely and clearly when you really need to do it well
- How Does it Help?: It counteracts all of the danger signs covered so far

# Preliminary Statements

- The goal here is to understand the other person's perspective...shut up and LISTEN
- You can't fix what you don't understand. Premature problem solving leads to poor solutions and poor follow through.

# The Time Out

- There is no benefit to hashing through a disagreement when one or both of you cannot engage. Be wary of times when you are:
  - Hungry
  - Angry
  - Late (i.e. running late)
  - Tired
- If someone calls a “time out” you need to set a specific time (preferably within 24 hours) to circle back up.

# XYZ Statements

- XYZ statements are a great way to communicate hurts & frustrations that need to be shared as well as a way to provide positive feedback. Using these types of statements when processing conflict can be very helpful because it forces us to deal in specifics and not vague generalities.
  - When you do X (a specific behavior)
  - In situation Y (a specific setting)
  - It makes me feel Z (a specific feeling)

# Examples for Hurts & Frustrations

- “When you threw your clothes on the floor after you came home from work last night, I felt angry.”
- “When you showed up 15 minutes late for my appointment with the doctor I felt hurt.”



# Examples for Positive Feedback

- “When you brought me that grande, non-fat, extra-hot, three pump, light whip, white chocolate mocha from Starbucks before the marital communication study, I felt really cared for.”
- “Yesterday, when you cleaned the house before I got home from work, I felt really loved.”

# Rules For Both

- The speaker is the one with the floor
- You share the floor over the course of the conversation
- No problem solving
- Stay on one subject at a time
- You can stop the flow for a moment if something is unclear or not going right

# Rules for the Speaker

- Don't go on and on
- After saying a bit, stop and allow the listener to paraphrase what has been said
- Speak for yourself
- You can pass the floor at any time to the listener to hear their side of the issue

# Rules for the Listener

- Your job is to listen well
- Paraphrase what the speaker is saying
- You can ask for examples or explanations of something the speaker said
- Do not offer your opinion or thoughts until you get the floor
- Concentrate on what the speaker is saying and attempt to edit out your internal response

# Benefits of Speaker/Listener

- Safe Haven
- Content Validation
- Personal Validation

# Table Talk Time

## Practice the Speaker/Listener Technique

Here are some safe topics you can use to try out the speaker/listener technique:

- Pretend you just won a million dollars. What would each want to do?
- Talk about your favorite date you ever had together, and why
- Share with each other something about your walk with the Lord.