

MARRIAGE IS NOT FOR WIMPS

**MARITAL COMMUNICATION
CLASS**

SESSION 3

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

Week 3 Opening Thoughts

"Marriage is a noose."

- Miguel de Cervantes, Spanish author

"Marriage is like a cage; one sees the birds outside desperate to get in, and those inside equally desperate to get out."

- Michel de Montaigne, French Renaissance author

Week 3 Opening Thoughts

“If you want to sacrifice the admiration of many men for the criticism of one, go ahead, get married.”

- Katharine Hepburn

Only two things are necessary to keep one's wife happy. One is to let her think she is having her own way, the other, to let her have it.

- Lyndon B. Johnson

Week 3 Opening Thoughts

Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife. But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. *But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.*

- 1 Corinthians 7:27-28 (*emphasis mine*)

Table Talk Time

- What insights did you gain from the Expectation Assignment?
- Did you have any unmet, unspoken or unrealistic expectations this week? Were you able to talk through them with your spouse?

Expressing Criticism Constructively

Expressing Criticism Constructively

- We all need to hear & impart constructive criticism
- It's not just "what" you say, but it's "how" you say it

"The right word at the right time is like a custom-made piece of jewelry, And a wise friend's timely reprimand is like a gold ring slipped on your finger (*The Message*)."

- Proverbs 25:11-12

Destructive Gripping

“And **the tongue is a fire**, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which **defiles the entire body**, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is **a restless evil** and **full of deadly poison.**”

- James 3:6-8

Destructive Gripping

- **Mind Reading**

- Focus on what you are thinking & feeling
- You really don't know what your spouse is thinking

- **Character Assassination**

- "You're lazy" or "You have no integrity" or "You're stupid."
- These types of statements imply that things can't change

Destructive Griping

- **Catastrophic Interpretations**
 - “You always” or “You Never”
 - Perception is frequently worse than reality
 - Who is that consistent anyway?
- **Blaming**
 - “It’s all your fault!”
 - There is plenty of blame to go around.

Constructive Griping

“The tongue of the righteous is as **choice silver**...”

- Proverbs 10:20a

“The tongue of the wise **brings healing**...”

- Proverbs 12:18b

“A soothing tongue is **a tree of life**...”

- Proverbs 15:4a

Constructive Griping

- **XYZ Statements** – Critical to communicating constructive criticism.
- **Example:** “You are so inconsiderate” versus “When you said that what I did for work wasn’t really that hard (X) to John and Susan at the party last night (Y), I felt really embarrassed & under-appreciated (Z).”

Ground Rules for Protecting Your Marriage from Bad Conflict

Protecting Against Damaging Conflict

- Anticipate problems
 - You are a sinner. You married a sinner.
- Take responsibility for your behavior
- Reinforce your partner's efforts to communicate well
 - Success brings success
 - Celebrate even the smallest of victories

Six Ground Rules for Handling Conflict & Differences

1. When conflict is escalating, we will call a “time out” & either:
 - Use the Speaker/Listener Technique.
 - Agree to talk later, using the Speaker/Listener Technique.
 - Involve Community in the discussion.

Six Ground Rules for Handling Conflict & Differences

2. When we are having trouble communicating, we will engage in the Speaker Listener Technique.
3. When using the Speaker/Listener Technique, we will completely separate problem discussion from problem solving.
 - “He who answers before listening – that is his folly and his shame” – Proverbs 18:13

Six Ground Rules for Handling Conflict & Differences

4. Either one can bring up an issue at any time, but the “listener” can say “this is not a good time.”
5. We will have weekly couple meetings.
6. We will make time for the great things of marriage: fun, friendship, and sensuality. We will agree to protect these times from conflict and the need to deal with issues.

Table Talk Time

- How did/do your parents handle the giving of constructive criticism? Toward each other? Toward you?
- Did you have an opportunity to practice the Speaker/Listener Technique? How did it go? What was the most difficult part of this technique? Where did you get tripped up?

Events, Issues & Hidden Issues

Events, Issues & Hidden Issues

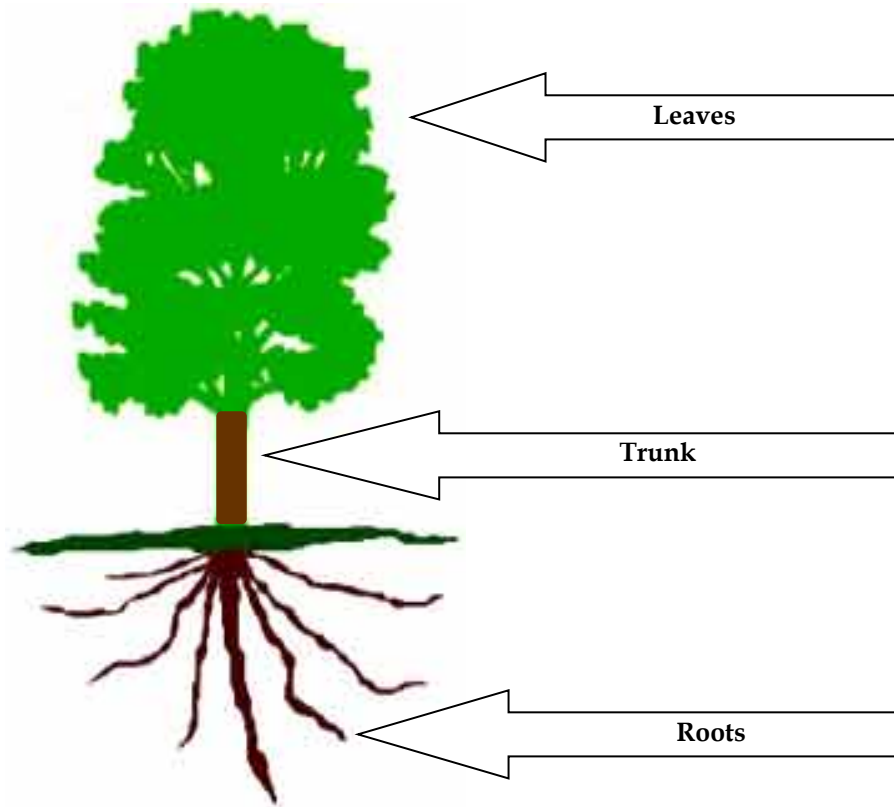
“The four major issues that most married couples say cause problems are money, sex, communication and children. Other things couples commonly fight about are in-laws, recreation, alcohol and drugs, religion, careers, and housework. We call all these things issues. Actually, issues are not the things that couples argue about most frequently...

Events, Issues & Hidden Issues

...What they do argue most often about are the small, day to day happenings of life. We call these events. We want to help you handle issues separately and then separate the issues that are more apparent – like money, communication, sex – from the deeper, often hidden, issues that affect your relationship.”

- Scott Stanley, Daniel Trathen, Savanna McCain & Milt Bryan,
A Lasting Promise: A Christian Guide to Fighting for your Marriage

Events, Issues & Hidden Issues



Events

Bill sent late, check bounces, argument over dishes, etc...

Issues

Money, sex, communication, careers, alcohol, children, in-laws, etc...

Hidden Issues

Power, caring, recognition, commitment, integrity, acceptance

Events

- The small, day to day happenings that all couples argue about.
- Events often trigger the more important issues in your relationship (“Triggering Events”).

Events

- Events tend to come up at the most inopportune times
 - You're ready to leave for work
 - You're getting ready to leave for a marriage conference that your mother-in-law paid for as a 1-yr anniversary gift
 - You're trying to get everyone ready to go to church
 - You're going to bed
 - The kids are fighting
 - Friends are coming over
 - etc....

Issues

- The more important areas of life that cause angst
- Most Common Issues:
Money* Sex* Communication* In-Laws
Children Recreation Alcohol Careers
- Most couples only deal with their issues in the context of events.

Hidden Issues

- Sometimes we get into fights about trivial events that don't seem to be attached to any particular issue (toilet seat, milk jug, etc....)
- Repeated arguments about these kinds of things could be a sign that you aren't getting at the real issues.
 - It's not about money, or careers, it's not about housework, it's not really about leaving the toilet seat up.
 - The real issue may be deeper and more elusive.

Hidden Issues

- “Hidden” in the sense that:
 - They are usually not talked about openly & constructively.
 - They may require more work to discover
- There are six hidden issues that capture a lot of the things that go on

Six Main Hidden Issues

1. Control and Power

- Who's in charge?
- Do you feel controlled?
- Are the needs of both individuals equally important?
- Whose input is most important in key decisions?

Six Main Hidden Issues

2. Needing & Caring

- The main theme is the extent to which you feel loved and cared for?
- Does your partner's love seem clear?
- Does it seem conditional?

Six Main Hidden Issues

3. Recognition

- Do you feel valued by your partner for who you are and what you do?
- Are your accomplishments recognized?
- Although caring issues involve concerns about being cared for or loved, recognition issues are more about feeling valued by your partner for who you are and what you do.

Six Main Hidden Issues

4. Commitment

- The focus here is long term security.
- Is the marriage relationship secure?
- “Are you going to stay with me?”

Six Main Hidden Issues

5. Integrity

- Integrity is triggered when you feel challenged in how you see yourself.
- How do you respond when your spouse questions your motives or intent?

Six Main Hidden Issues

6. Acceptance

- Underlies all the others listed: **The desire for acceptance and fear of rejection.**
- We are motivated to find acceptance & avoid rejection in our relationships.
- We are called to accept our mates with a richness that frees them to feel safer in the relationship.

Four Signs of Hidden Issues

1. Spinning Your Wheels

- Is there a “here we go again” issue?

2. Trivial Triggers

- When minor things blow up out of proportion.

Four Signs of Hidden Issues

3. Avoidance

- Is there an “off-limits” topic?

4. Score Keeping

- A reflection that there is something there is an issue that needs attention

Handling Hidden Issues

- Try to avoid dealing with important issues in the context of triggering events.
- Speaker / Listener
- Keep short accounts
- Create a safe environment

Table Talk Time

- Practice the speaker/listener technique:
 - About an event that you often have arguments about (are there any issue or hidden issue underneath?)
 - About an issue that keeps coming up and you seem unable to resolve.
 - Another safe topic.