

MARRIAGE IS NOT FOR WIMPS

**MARITAL COMMUNICATION
CLASS**

SESSION 5

Reminders

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

Table Talk Time

- Did you have the opportunity to ask for forgiveness or provide forgiveness to your spouse this week?
- After completing the homework did the Lord reveal any areas of unforgiveness in your marriage? Did you talk about them with your spouse?
- Did you have a chance to use Speaker/Listener this past week?

Conflict Resolution: Problem Solving

Opening Thoughts

"To observe people in conflict is a necessary part of a child's education. It helps him to understand and accept his own occasional hostilities and to realize that differing opinions need not imply an absence of love."

- Milton R. Saperstein

"Whenever you're in conflict with someone, there is one factor that can make the difference between damaging your relationship and deepening it. That factor is attitude."

- William James

Opening Thoughts

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others”

- Philippians 2:3-4

“The first to plead his case seems right, until another comes and examines him.”

- Proverbs 18:17

Four Assumptions

1. All couples have problems

- The kinds of problems couples deal with change over time
- Key Point – it's not what your problems are; it's how you handle them that will matter most in your marriage.

Four Assumptions

2. It is best to handle problems as a team
 - You have a **choice** when dealing with a problem.
 - Either you will nurture a sense that you are working as a team against the problem, or you will operate as if you are working against each other.

Four Assumptions

3. Rushed solutions are poor solutions
 - Two major factors propel couples to rush to premature solutions:
 - Time Pressure
 - Conflict Avoidance

Four Assumptions

4. Most often, though not always, our inability to come to a mutually beneficial solution is rooted in **selfishness & sin**
- We don't want to be flexible
 - We don't want to change
 - We don't want to admit we are wrong

Problem Solving

- Step 1 – Prayer
 - Allow the Lord to participate in finding solutions to important problems
 - Set the tone
 - A physical reminder
 - Doesn't have to be out loud
 - Hypocrisy “governor”

Problem Solving

- Step 2 - Problem Discussion (Understanding)
 - The goal: Understanding
 - Problem discussion vs. problem solving.
 - Only move to problem solving when both agree you have a good discussion of the issues.
 - Speaker/Listener Technique / The Time Out / XYZ Statements
 - Those who take their time will find that many solutions are self-evident once you understand the issues

Problem Solving

- Step 3 - Problem Solving
 - As you enter the problem solving phase do not use the Speaker/Listener technique.
 - Drop the structure of that technique and follow the flow of the following steps.
 - Set agenda
 - Brainstorm
 - Agreement & Compromise
 - Follow Up

Problem Solving - Set agenda

- Set a specific topic
- Some problems are large and have many “sub-issues” – pick one of the smaller pieces to work through
 - ex. Finances might be the issue – but you may have problems with credit cards, retirement accounts, budgeting problems, etc...
- Stay focused

Problem Solving - Brainstorm

- Any idea can be suggested.
- Take notes
- No evaluation of ideas during brainstorming: verbally or nonverbally
- Be creative
- Try to have fun with it if you can

Problem Solving - Agreement & Compromise

- The Goal: Come up with a specific solution or combination of solutions that you **both** agree to **try**
- Work through the different brainstorming suggestions
 - Try out different combinations.
 - Look for a solution that would work in light of your understanding of what is important to each other.
- You will not have a great marriage if either of you gets your way all the time.

Problem Solving – Follow Up

- Set specific time frame for evaluation
- Evaluate
- Make adjustments as needed

Getting Bugged Down or When Emotions Flair Up?

- Use time out
- If you get stuck in problem solving phase, it often means issues are more complicated or unclear
 - It can be helpful to cycle back to the understanding phase.
- Break problems down into even smaller pieces.

When There is No Solution

- Some problems have no mutually satisfying solutions.
 - However, there are far fewer un-resolvable problems than some couples might think.
- If you've worked through the process for some time and no solution is forthcoming then you can:
 - Let the lack of a solution damage the rest of your marriage.
 - You can plan for how to live with the differences. You can choose to live together graciously in the absence of a solution.
- Problems with no clear solution or where a compromise cannot be reached must be handled with care & **in the context of your community.**

Table Talk Time

- How have you traditionally handled conflict resolution within your marriage? Only the strong survives? Compromise? Take turns “winning”? Ignore the conflict?
- In your marriage who generally leads out in conflict resolution?
- “Most often, though not always, our inability to come to a mutually beneficial solution is rooted in selfishness & sin” Agree? Disagree? Why?

The Five Love Languages

The Love Tank

“Could it be that deep inside hurting couples exists an invisible ‘emotional love tank’ with its gauge on empty? Could the misbehavior, withdrawal, harsh words & critical spirit occur because of that empty tank? If we could find a way to fill it, could the marriage be reborn? With a full tank would couples be able to create an emotional climate where it is possible to discuss differences and resolve conflicts? Could the tank be the key that makes marriages work?”

– Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages*

The Love Tank

“I am convinced that keeping the emotional love tank full is as important to a marriage as maintaining the proper oil level is to an automobile. Running your marriage on an empty “love tank” may cost you even more than trying to drive your car without oil”

- Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages*

The Five Love Languages

- Preliminary Thoughts:
 - Our focus should be on how we can love our spouse better (other-focused). **This is service based!**
 - God does not call us to change our spouse – He calls us to grow in our ability to love them with the love that Christ displayed for us.

Words of Affirmation

- Verbal appreciation speaks powerfully to persons whose primary Love Language is “Words of Affirmation.”
 - Simple statements, such as:
 - “You look great in that suit”
 - “You make the world’s best steak fajitas”
 - “Thank you for going to the office today to provide for us”

Words of Affirmation

- Another way to communicate through “Words of Affirmation” is to offer encouragement. Some examples are:
 - Reinforcing a difficult decision
 - Calling attention to progress made on a current project
 - Acknowledging a person’s unique perspective on an important topic.

Words of Affirmation

- In the spaces provided in your notes take two minutes & write down two positive traits about your spouse.

Quality Time

- More than mere proximity. It's about focusing on your mate.
 - Quantity Time \neq Quality Time
- Quality conversation involves sharing experiences, thoughts, feelings and desires in a friendly, uninterrupted context.

Quality Time

- Self-revelation
- Activities can be a very important part of quality time
 - The activity is incidental; the important thing emotionally is that we are spending focused time with each other

Receiving Gifts

- Visual symbols of love
 - If you speak this love language, you are more likely to treasure any gift as an expression of love and devotion.
 - People with this love language often feel that a lack of gifts represents a lack of love from their mate
 - Be creative – money is not the answer
 - Make a card
 - Pick a flower
 - Grab a Starbucks or Jamba Juice

Receiving Gifts

- “A gift is something you can hold in your hand and say, ‘Look, he was thinking of me,’ or ‘She remembered me.’ You must be thinking of someone to give him a gift. The gift itself is a symbol of that thought. It doesn’t matter if the gift costs money. What is important is that you thought of him. And it is not the thought implanted only in the mind that counts, but the thought expressed in actually securing the gift and giving it as the expression of love.”

- Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages*

Acts of Service

- Sometimes simple chores around the house can be an undeniable expression of love
 - Simple things like laundry, washing the car and taking out the trash require some form of planning, time, effort, and energy.
 - Doing humble chores can be a very powerful expression of love and devotion to your mate.

Acts of Service

- It is important to do these acts of service out of love and not obligation.
 - A mate who does chores and helps out around the house out of guilt or fear will inevitably not be speaking a language of love, but a language of resentment.
- Demonstrating the acts of service can mean stepping out of the stereotypes.

Acts of Service

- In the spaces provided in your notes take two minutes & write down two things your spouse could do to make you feel loved.

Physical Touch

- For a mate who speaks this love language loudly, physical touch can make or break the relationship.
- Sexual intercourse makes many mates feel secure and loved in a marriage. However, it is only one dialect of physical touch
- It is important to remember that this love language is different for everyone. What type of touch makes you feel secure is not necessarily what will make your partner happy. It is important to learn each other's dialects.
 - Hugging, holding hands, arm around the shoulder, etc...

Closing Thoughts on the Five Love Languages

- The foundation on which the five love languages are built is service
 - “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. **Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.** Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”
 - Philippians 2:1-4

Closing Thoughts on the Five Love Languages

- The five love languages may obligate us to do things that may not be the easiest or most natural thing for us.
- When we consistently love our spouses well it is difficult (though not impossible) for them to respond negatively.
- This takes practice, **time** & communication.

The Five Love Languages Assessment

- The profile consists of 30 pairs of statements (one for the husbands & one for the wives). You can only pick one statement in each pair that best represents your desire. Reach each pair of statements, and then, in the right-hand column, circle the letter that matches up with the statement you choose.
- It may be tough at times to decide between two statements but you should only choose one per pair to ensure the most accurate profile results. Once you've finished making your selections, go back and count the number of times you circled each individual letter.
- List the results in the appropriate spaces at the end of the profile. Your primary love language is the one that receives the most points.

Table Talk Time

- Please complete the Marital Communication Evaluation Form
- The Five Love Languages Assessment
 - What is your primary love language?
 - Your spouse?
 - Can you see how their love language plays out in your marriage?
- Homework
 - Problem Solving Assessment