Marriage Ministry



Lesson Topic: Intimate Communication

Week One Homework

Intimate communication nourishes and sustains a relationship. Our words are one of the most influential aspects of the communication in marriage; however, intimate communication is much more than talking or the words we use. It is about understanding and being understood along with the risks and rewards of knowing and being known. It is identifying a tone of voice and detecting non-verbal cues. It is responding appropriately to any offenses and resolving conflicts. When we communicate well, we know what to say, when to say it and how to say it.

God knew that intimate communication would NOT come easily for us, so He gave us His Word to teach us. It is essential to learn how to communicate in a way that honors God and others. We can only do this in humility and dependency upon the Lord, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The homework and Small Group discussion time for Week One will deepen our understanding of the 5 Rules of Healthy/Biblical Communication that we were taught. Our goal this month is to focus our attention towards improving the communication in our marriage. Next month we talk about how to resolve conflict in a healthy way that honors the Lord and each other.

**Scripture Memory Verse:**

“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.” (Ephesians 4:29)

**In the Word Together**

Read and discuss the following verses with your spouse:

What do the following verses teach us about the 5 Rules of Healthy/Biblical Communication?

* Ephesians 4:15 and Ephesians 4:25-32

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* Proverbs 18 verses 2, 13 and 15

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**Talk About It Together:**

Refer back to your notes from Large Group as well as the additional summary of the “5 Rules of Healthy Biblical Communication” sent to you along with the homework as an additional resource. Discuss the following questions with your spouse and write down your shared responses. You now have the chance to share some intimate communication about your communication . Please remember that transparency and openness in your marriage is developed by creating and being a safe place for your spouse to express his/her thoughts.

1. What was one thing that you learned at Large Group that you want to personally improve in your communication with your spouse?

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1. Discuss how you are doing with each of the 5 communication rules in your marriage. Talk about what you are doing well both individually and also as a couple. What plan do you have to improve your communication in regards to each rule both individually and as a couple?

Rule #1: Be Honest - Speak the Truth in Love

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Rule #2: Keep Current (resolving things quickly but also leaving old issues in the past)

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Rule #3: Attack the Problem and Not the Person

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Rule #4: Act, Don’t React

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Rule #5: Listen Attentively to Understand

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1. Our communication with our spouse can be impacted by what was modeled for us by our parents. We can bring these learned patterns of communication into our own marriage.
2. Thinking of the five rules above, what specific positive communication patterns were modeled for you by your parents that you would like to follow in your marriage?

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1. Thinking of the five rules above, what specific negative communication patterns were modeled for you by your parents (if any) that you are trying to avoid in your marriage? Have you brought any of these negative communication patterns with you into your marriage? What will you do to change this pattern to improve the communication in your marriage?

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1. Think of a couple that you believe have good patterns off communication. What specifically do you believe that they do well as far as their communication?

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**Recommended: Apply What You Learned:**

* Practice positive communication this week: Call your spouse some time during the day when you are not interrupting them at work. Have no agenda other than asking them how they are doing and if there is anything that you can do for them. Keep in mind some of the things we learned in our lesson this week from Scripture and from the communication “rules” we covered.
* Take a sheet of paper and spend a few minutes writing out positive things you love about your spouse. Keep this paper to yourself, but several times during the next couple of weeks pick a positive attribute from the list and thank your spouse for having that characteristic.
* Plan a date night to have more focused time to talk about the communication in your marriage.

**Recommended: Additional Resources to Read:**

* *Five Rules of Healthy Biblical Communication in Marriage* (included with this week’s homework)
* *When Sinners Say “I do”* by Dave Harvey
* *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande

**Come prepared to discuss your answers to the following questions during the Small Group Breakout Time:**

1. How have you followed through with the goals you set last month to improve the oneness in your marriage?

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1. What has the Lord taught you during your personal times with Him this past week? How many days this past week were you in the Word and prayer? What are you reading?

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1. Based on your time discussing Homework Question #2 with your spouse, which of the “5 Rules” do you need to work on the most in regards to your communication with your spouse? What is one way that you could start on that this week?

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1. Reflect on any negative habits you may have formed in the way you communicate with your spouse. What are they? Ask the Lord to help you to recognize and change any habits that harm the unity and oneness in your marriage.

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1. How is the Lord leading you to pray this week for your spouse and your marriage specifically in regards to your communication together? What personal goal towards deepening the intimacy of your communication with your spouse will you commit to? [Keep your goal “SMART” – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time (done by a specific time). Pray with each other about these things, encourage each other to pursue them, and lovingly hold each other accountable for applying what you are learning and committing to do.]

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**Five Rules of Healthy Biblical Communication in Marriage**

1. **Be Honest**
2. **Keep Current**
3. **Attack the Problem, not the Person**
4. **Act, Don’t React**
5. **Listen to Understand**

**#1: Be Honest - Speak the Truth in Love**

*Ephesians 4:15: Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ.*

*Ephesians 4:25: Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.”*

*Galatians 6:1: Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.*

When I am speaking the truth in love, I have my spouse’s best interest at heart and I avoid speaking the truth harshly. When we speak the truth in love we build our trust in each other and creates oneness. As I strive to be honest in my communication with my spouse I need to be motivated by love. I ask myself if what I want to say is because I love my spouse more than I love myself. My goal is to pursue what is in the best interest of my spouse. I lay aside all falsehood, lying and misrepresenting the truth with self-serving motives. I gently and lovingly press ahead in conversations that might make me feel uncomfortable or that I want to avoid. I avoid creating a diversion or changing the subject. One way that I may fail to be honest is to deny that I have a problem, when I really do and I just do not want to acknowledge it. In this case my denial is being dishonest by not acknowledging the truth. There may be times when I need to lovingly confront my spouse’s sin, and this can be difficult. I will choose the proper time wisely. This should always be approached, first with prayer, as I ask God to bring His conviction to my spouse. I will examine my own heart in this matter first to make sure that it is a biblical and specific sin on my spouse’s part, and not just an offense or expectation that I may be experiencing as hurtful. Then prayerfully, and with humility and gentleness I will go to my spouse. I cannot neglect my responsibility for honesty just because I might think that my spouse may not respond as I hope he or she will. My spouse’s response to me is between him or her and God and I need to leave it in God’s hands. My responsibility is to speak the truth in love, and guard my heart so that I do not sin in the process

**#2: Keep Current**

*Ephesians 4:26-27: Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.*

I am to resolve any conflict quickly and once resolved, to leave the issue in the past. When an issue has been resolved and forgiveness has been given, I should not bring it up again. If I find myself still angry or have become bitter. I need to take that to the Lord and ask Him to reveal my sin in the matter. Unresolved anger flings opens the door to temptation and to sin and gives the devil an opportunity. When the devil has gained a foothold in me, he has wedged himself between me and my spouse. Allowing Satan to do so weakens our oneness. God’s solutions are always proactive and never defensive. Persistent hurts should be talked about. God wants me to head off conflict by catching things before they have a chance to take root in my heart, which can produce the ugly fruit of bitterness. I need to remember that my spouse and I are on the same team. I will choose to believe the best about my spouse, for love covers a multitude of sins. If a particular issue cannot be discussed and resolved immediately, I will reaffirm my commitment of love to my spouse, acknowledge my desire to work out the problem together, and then schedule a time as soon as possible to do so.

**#3: Attack the Problem, Not the Person**

*Ephesians 4:29-30: Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*

I need to work toward solutions to anything that divides us or makes me angry by addressing the problem without attacking my spouse. To have healthy biblical communication, I need to “put off” unwholesome, corrupt speech that will tear down my spouse. Instead, I need to “put on” edifying speech that builds him/her up. I need to avoid using “always” and “never” as accusatory words in my communication. I will strive to use “I” statements rather than finger-pointing “you” statements. I should never accuse or attack with “cutting down” or harsh words, such as name calling. Silence or stonewalling can also be a subtle way of attacking my spouse. It can easily be interpreted as saying, “You are not worth the energy it takes to communicate towards resolving our problem.” Unity and oneness happen when we as teammates address the problem. Disunity happens when we attack each other and this grieves God. If I stumble with this rule of communication, I should repent to the Lord and ask my spouse for forgiveness. I should then replace what I did say with what I should have said if I had I followed this principle from the beginning.

**#4: Act, Don’t React:**

*Eph.4:31- 32: Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

I am to lay aside any malicious or impulsive speech and put on gracious, thoughtful speech. Malicious or impulsive speech incudes rage and anger (explosive agitation), clamor (loud protests), and slander (damaging another’s reputation or sharing my spouse’s sin with others). When I let my self be controlled by what my spouse says or does, I can give myself over to anger or hurt. Actions, when they are modeled after the character of Jesus Christ and are controlled by the Holy Spirit, solve problems and increase unity. Gracious, thoughtful speech is characterized by kindness and compassion. It is my goal to be forgiving, and to offer a gracious pardon in order to promote reconciliation and oneness. I choose to act like Jesus, being kind, compassionate, forgiving and sacrificing my needs in obedience to my Heavenly Father. I can be a peacemaker and bring peace and wisdom into the communication in my marriage.

**#5: Listen Attentively to Understand**

*Proverbs 18:2, 13, 15:*

*(v.2) A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.*

*(v.13) If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.*

*(V.15) An intelligent heart acquires knowledge and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.*

*I Peter 4:8 Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.*

I will do my best to block out all distractions when listening to my spouse and try to maintain good eye contact. I will guard against thinking about other things or my next response. I won’t pass judgment on his or her motives. I will ask clarifying question to find out what my spouse needs from me in the moment. My spouse may not want me to offer solutions, but only to listen. One of the most loving things that I can do for my spouse is to attentively listen with empathy.