

# Marriage

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## Introduction.

A. This morning I want to focus on marriage.

B. Tonight I'll focus on the family.

C. What does it take to make a marriage?

1. It takes cultivation in three areas.

1. Commitment, the greatest weakness in contemporary marriage.

a. Couples need to leave their parents and cleave to each other. (Genesis 2:24)

b. couples need to approach marriage understanding there is no escape.

2. Conflict management.

a. The natural tendency is to grow apart because of sin

b. Most people build marriages on the basis of weaknesses, not strengths.

c. Most marriages exist on a superficial level: one researcher found only 6 of 100 marriages to be fulfilling.

3. Communication skills, which we will focus on today.

a. Couples constantly need to improve communication skills.

b. I have a good marriage and my wife and I work on communication skills a lot.

c. Four areas of communication skills to be studied.

i. Components.

ii. Barriers.

iii. Levels.

iv. Principles.

I. Components have four areas of need.

A. Communication is impossible when there is silence.

1. Men are especially susceptible to this.
2. The more expertise a person has the more silent they will become in conflict.
  - a. These develop an omniscient complex.
  - b. Unsolvable problems are threatening.
3. Three factors to consider.
  - a. Words alone communicate about seven per cent.
  - b. Tone of voice communicates 38 per cent.
  - c. Facial expression and body language communicates 55 per cent.

B. Listening is essential.

1. We get no training listening so this is a great problem.
2. We listen faster than people can talk so we sometimes get bored, tuning people out.

C. Understanding is essential.

1. Communication is not only what someone says but what the other person understands.
2. Summarizing what your partner has said is a good practice to implement.

D. Desire to understand is essential.

1. When one or the other loses desire to communicate distance comes in.
2. We all need to maintain desire to understand each other.

II. Barriers have four essentials.

A. Fear of rejection.

1. We need to face disillusionment in coming to realize who we really are and decide to love each other anyway.
2. This takes time.

B. Passivity.

1. This is not submission, which is healthy.
2. Passivity is a stifling of thoughts that leads to hostility.
3. My wife and I have fought over finances.

- a. Getting 34 NSF notices in one month is outrageous.
- b. We had to honestly talk about this, not passively overlook it.

C. Pride.

1. We need to practice what we preach.
2. We are called to forgive each other.

D. Focusing on the right things.

1. I spent years trying to get my wife organized.
2. If we focus on the 10% of what irritates us we can tear apart any marriage.

III. Levels of communication based on John Powel's *Why am I Afraid to Tell you Who I Am?*

A. The level of safe communication.

1. Weather.
2. Other things over which we have no control.

B. Reporting facts.

1. What has been said or done.
2. No personal opinions shared.

C. Ideas and judgments.

1. This reveals who you are.
2. It is threatening because we can be rejected.

D. Feelings or emotion.

1. This reveals what's going on inside.
2. This is also threatening.

E. Open communication.

1. This is complete and truthful.
2. This is not telling everything, but telling the truth in love.

IV. Principles.

A. Accent relationship more than responsibility.

1. Generally people are either task oriented or person oriented.
2. Often opposites marry each other.
3. I am task oriented but my wife is people oriented.
4. We all need people, however, as God created us as social beings.
5. Task oriented people can become workaholics.
6. Many people die young because we don't relax and enjoy life.
7. When was the last time you spent one half hour with no one just to think?
8. I was ready to wipe out in ministry and a friend came to be with me and helped me to realize I don't spend time thinking.
  - a. I began spending every day.
  - b. One day every month.
  - c. One week every year just thinking.
  - d. This is when my ministry took off.
  - e. We have to pull all the pieces of our lives together with God's help.
  - f. Use time effectively.
    - i. We all have the same numbers of hours.
    - ii. Not relating to reality leads to insanity.
    - iii. Balancing work and play and prayer etc.

B. Develop common interests.

1. The greater the common interests the greater chance we have of developing intimacy.
2. If a couple's circle of interests has no intersection with his wife there is a problem.
  - a. A woman went to her husband's office to see what he does each day and learned to relate to his schedule.
  - b. This woman became ill and the husband had to care for the kids and he learned to relate to her schedule.
  - c. Common interests can be supplemented by what direction they are moving.

3. Mutuality is what you have in common.
4. Individuality is what you have as differences.
5. About 50% of marriages will be spent without your children so your spouse needs to be your friend.
6. Make sure you are developing mutuality while preserving individuality.
7. Each person in a marriage must be his or her own person.

C. Avoid triangulation.

1. This is conveying a message to a third person in stead of talking to a spouse.
2. This form of communication gets distorted.
3. We have all experienced this in our businesses or professions.
  - a. A boss may invite you to speak frankly but he may not be honest.
  - b. A wife may ask your opinion about her hair but she is not looking for honesty.
  - c. We need to learn how to communicate in each situation.

D. Take time to get away exclusively for communication.

1. Five years into my marriage we began talking a weekend each year to just be together and to set goals and to talk.
2. I asked a group to write down the most exciting thing going on in your life at present.
3. Then I asked them to write down one thing that is a bit problem.
4. Then I asked them to exchange cards with their mates and most were very surprised.
5. Most couples need to face the problem of not praying together.
6. One employer I know talks with his employees regularly and prays for them, with the result that he has great loyalty on the work place.
7. Another friend has learned to talk with his wife for 15 minutes each morning before his busy day begins.
  - a. He has set this as a priority.
  - b. It's what he wants to do and she recognizes it.
8. Your distinctly Christian marriage is becoming a phenomenon in this culture.