

Before class: Read chapter 4 in **“Things I Wish I’d Known Before We Got Married”** by Gary Chapman and finish assignments from the previous week.

COMMUNICATION

Speaker Notes

Small Group Discussion

- What practical ideas presented today would you like to implement in your communication as a couple?
- What areas of communication do you think might present challenges for you in marriage?
- What should be done if one partner does not want to communicate (especially feelings)? Can one person count on the other person changing in this regard after marriage?
- In order to be transparent, one must also be vulnerable. When was the last time you were truly vulnerable with your partner? How did you feel during that discussion? Did the experience move you closer to or further from emotional intimacy? Explain your answers.

Couple Devotional

Communication can be the most challenging aspect for couples *after* their wedding day. How well you deal with things in your marriage hinges on how you communicate. One of the best ways to navigate communication in any relationship is by using Biblical principles. The apostle Paul shares key points for effective communication in Ephesians 4.

Read Together Ephesians 4:25-29

Answer questions separately, and then discuss together.

- List key biblical truths you identified from this passage. (Example: put off falsehood)
- Which of these truths do you struggle with the most?

The Bible doesn't say we won't feel angry – what we need to work on is how we respond to that feeling of anger. Our behavior in response to anger is what will cause us to sin.

- How do you normally respond when you are angry?
- What might you do the next time you are angry to not sin?
- What will you do to put the phrase “do not let the sun go down while you are still angry” into action in your life?
- If applicable, list a time when you spoke harshly and it harmed a relationship.
- Identify what you wish you had done differently. If comfortable, share the experience with your partner.

Reports indicate that it takes between 5 and 10 positive comments to offset every one negative comment.

- What encouraging thing have you shared with your partner recently?
- What negative thing have you shared recently with your partner? (If you can't remember, ask them—likely, they remember.)
- Work on sharing five encouraging points to offset that one negative.

Pray Together – Share with your partner one area you would like to work on in communicating as a couple (e.g. be a better listener).

As you hold hands, each of you pray the following out loud (one at a time).

Dear God,

I ask you to help me _____ (*fill in the blank with what you shared from above*). Through this class, please help us both learn more about one another and how we can communicate better. Please show us your plan for our relationship and guide us as we take this class together.

In Jesus name, Amen.

Couple Exercise

Discuss together the following questions.

- List at least two areas of conflict in marriage you hope to avoid.
- How comfortable are you sharing your feelings, fears, opinions, inadequacies, and criticisms with your partner? How do you hamper your sharing?
- Do you ever conceal your true feelings from your partner? Why or why not? How, specifically, does honesty (or lack of it) affect marriage?
- How can you offer constructive criticism that will eliminate defensive feelings/words?
- How do you handle a disagreement that may prolong conflict, and even lead to arguments?
- In what areas are you not completely honest with each other and how can this be modified?
- Are you honest and open with each other about sex? Are you both free to discuss what may not be to your liking?

- In what areas do you think you may not understand your future spouse or communicate with each other?
- The Bible, especially the Old Testament, sometimes shows God being angry and upset with His people (see Isaiah 30:30). Scripture also recounts stories of biblical characters who expressed anger—even Jesus did (see Matthew 21:12-13.). Usually, hurt feelings are at the root of anger. When is anger justified and how can it be expressed in a healthy way? How can you create an atmosphere in your relationship that allows you and your partner to safely communicate healthy anger?
- The most common and destructive way of handling anger is by freely venting it. Do you or your partner tend to "blow up" when angry? If so, how will that affect your marriage? Is it better to hold your anger in or to vent it? Explain.

For Previously Marrieds

- Do you have communication with your former spouse? In what way? Is it a workable relationship? Is your former spouse remarried?
- Have you observed any similarities of conflict with your present partner/fiancé and those that existed with your former spouse? How could good communication skills help you avoid negative responses with your future spouse?
- Have you met your partner's former spouse? Are you able to communicate with him/her? Have you observed relationships they have with the children? What do you perceive as some of the conflicts?

Reminder: Read assigned chapter(s) for next lesson.

Digging Deeper

Additional assignments are offered on the next few pages.

Digging Deeper

Answer questions separately and discuss together.

Your Partner as a Listener

Circle the number that corresponds to your response.

	Not at All	Some	Always
1. He/she understands the way I feel.	1	2	3
2. He/she values me as an individual or unique person.	1	2	3
3. He/she feels deeply my most painful feelings.	1	2	3
4. He/she can understand my weaknesses.	1	2	3
5. He/she tries to understand my point of view.	1	2	3
6. He/she has an appreciation for my value as a human being.	1	2	3
7. One of his/her feelings for me might be described as a love for mankind.	1	2	3
8. He/she demands my appreciation.	3	2	1
9. Being rejected by him/her changes my feelings for him/her.	3	2	1
10. His/her feeling for me has a quality of forgiveness.	1	2	3
11. His/her feeling for me has a quality of patience.	1	2	3
12. He/she can tell what I'm feeling even when I don't talk about it.	1	2	3
13. His/her feeling for me has a quality of compassion or sympathy.	1	2	3
14. He/she has a deep feeling of concern for my welfare as a human being.	1	2	3
15. He/she feels I have great worth and dignity.	1	2	3
TOTALS			

SCORING: Add up your responses. The highest possible score is 45; the lowest score is 15.

37-45 Your mate really does listen.

29-36 You feel your mate doesn't always listen.

21-28 You feel your mate seldom listens.

15-20 The active-listening skill needs a lot of work.

DISCUSS:

Share how you scored each other. What surprising things did you learn?

If you scored your partner between 15 – 36, ask how you can help encourage/help them improve their listening skills. If you scored your partner between 37 – 45, compliment them on being a good listener and share two examples of how they have listened to you well.

Digging Deeper

Meeting at the Fence (Meet in the Middle or Meet Later)

Compromise is becoming a lost art. We have to work through conflict to get to compromise. Here are some steps to help you.

AT THE FIRST SIGN OF CONFLICT . . . One of you says, “**Meet me at the fence.**” Rather than allow anger, defensiveness, parental tones, and frustration into your conversation, you stay in a peaceful environment knowing you agree to disagree until a designated time. This cools down the initial POW-WOW stage and allows the future agreement to take place while avoiding the defenses of name-calling, accusations, unrestrained anger, etc.

1. Agree to **MEET** at a specified time within 24 hours.
2. When you meet, begin with a word of prayer asking God to grant you the unity of His Spirit to enable you to agree and walk in oneness in this area.
3. Each person has the responsibility to come to the “fence” with three possible solutions to resolve the disagreement. Each person has the opportunity to **SHARE** his or her solution while the other person listens intently.
4. After both have stated their three options, it is time for **COMPROMISE**.
5. Ask, “Which one of the solutions is a win/win for both of us?”
6. Come to a mutual **AGREEMENT** that will benefit both of you.
7. **THANK** the Lord, and invite Him to help you in this agreed upon solution.

Tech Etiquette

1. Think and pray before you text, IM, tweet, or click the "send" button. James 1:19 instructs us to be quick to listen, **slow to speak**, slow to anger.
2. Avoid "Facebook fights" and over-sharing with friends and family. In Matthew 18:15 Jesus says, "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over."
3. Determine tech- etiquette guidelines for your family.
 - Under normal circumstances, how long should it take to respond to your future spouse's text, e-mail or voice mail?
 - What topics are off-limits for sharing on social networking sites?
 - Are there people with whom you and your future spouse should not "friend" on Facebook (e.g., ex-spouses, boy/girlfriends)?
 - Are there people/businesses you and your spouse should not "follow" on Twitter?
 - Should you and your spouse have access to read each other's e-mails? Facebooks? Will you share your passwords/accounts, or keep them separate?
 - Is it okay to check e-mails or text when you are on a date?
Resist shortcuts and invest in "face-time" :-) is not a replacement for your smile, LOL doesn't replace hearing your laughter, LYLC isn't the same as hearing your spouse-to-be say, "Love you like crazy!"