

**Prep for Marriage – Me to We**  
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**Lesson 3 - Saving Your Marriage before It Starts – Drs. Les & Leslie Parrot**  
**Learning to Communicate Well**  
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***The #1 problem reported by couples as affecting their marriage is a “breakdown in communication.”***

- How do you rate your communication with your fiancé or mate, on a scale of 1 to 10?
- Are you able to share your innermost feelings in a way that you feel heard?

Time and again, marriage therapists see faulty communication pull down a marriage with a strong start. Both partners struggle to convey what they want or need in a relationship, not realizing they are speaking a language the other does not comprehend. Over the disappointment, the partners erect defenses against each other, becoming guarded. They stop confiding in each other, wall off parts of themselves, and withdraw emotionally from the relationship. They can't talk without blaming, so they stop listening. This may lead to living together in an emotional divorce.

- 97% of couples who rate their communication with their partner as excellent are happily married.
- 56% of those who rate their communication as poor rate themselves as unhappily married.

The best time to build communication skills is when things are going well. Establish good habits early on in marriage.

*“Verbal communication – words – makes up only a small part of how we communicate. It has been estimated that 60-90% of our communication is non-verbal. And that 60-90% is made up of things like body language, gestures, facial expression and tone of voice. It’s the how of what we say, and it is powerful.”*

***~Play your way to better communication, Dr. Corey Allan***

## *The Power to V.O.W.*

V.O.W – V\_\_\_\_\_ O\_\_\_\_\_ W\_\_\_\_\_. A true VOW requires action.

### **VOW**

- What does VOW look like when communicated towards you?
- What does VOW versus OW look like when you are communicating with your mate?
- What has VOW versus OW looked like in your family or cultural background?
- In a Blended & Blessed family structure how can you validate your new extended family?

*How much do you feel that your communication style is cultural?*

Different people have different rules of communication. Example- “In my family; talking loudly above each other or interrupting is considered (fill in the blank

### *The “Silent” Killer*

Part of great communication begins with discovery. The more you know the more you grow as a couple. Finding perspective of your loved one’s true nature through pleasant and often difficult discussions is the first breakthrough in communication. Often, couples rely on the initial first attraction or preconceived notions of what they believe marriage to be. Most fail to communicate their needs to one another due to assumptions that the other mate already knows what he or she really wants and needs. This begins a vicious cycle before the marriage even starts; halting discovery, growth and development without ever saying a word.

*Hosea 4:6 “My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge...”*

### *Learning How Not to Communicate*

- If your needs are not being met, or if you get hurt, do not cast blame and attack.

- Stop the toxic cycle of hurt and venom. Who will be like Jesus?

***Rom 2:1 - Therefore you have no excuse, O man, whoever you are, when you judge another; for in passing judgment upon him you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things.***

***Eph 4:32 - Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.***

***Col 3:8 - But now put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth.***

***1 Cor 13:7 - Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.***

Learn to speak about your needs in a reasoned, clear, direct and objective way, as if you were a professional speaking about yourself.

- If you experience a hurt or disappointment, resolve never to clam up.
- Non-talking is a form of communication. What does it mean to you as a couple not to talk?

Laurens Van der Post's novel *The Face Behind the Fire*:

“Slowly she is poisoning Albert . . . The poison . . . is found in no chemist's book . . . It is a poison brewed from all the words, the delicate, tender, burning trivialities and petty endearments she never used – but would have spoken if she truly loved him.”

***2 Cor 4:2-3***

***2 We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.***

The fear of pain is the source of poor communication. The fear of loss of self-esteem, of loss of personal power, the fear of being hurt again or perhaps causing hurt.

***Four styles of miscommunication:***

1. Placating – The placater is a “yes” man or woman, eager to please. “Whatever you want.” Peace at any price. Price paid is feelings of worthlessness.
2. Blaming – The blamer is a fault-finder who criticizes relentlessly and speaks in generalizations: “You always blah-blah-blah.” Inside, blamers anticipate they will never receive what they want. They believe the best defense is a good offense. Not big enough to make themselves vulnerable.
3. Computing – Altogether analytical and super-reasonable. Never admits mistakes nor displays emotion.
4. Distracting – The distractor erects smoke screens, focusing on irrelevancies, avoiding eye contact and direct answers. Changing the subject, etc.

### ***The Bedrock of Successful Communication***

Though communication skills are important, good communication is built first on who you are, and later on what you do. Work on who you are as a person.

To enjoy rich communication, four qualities must be present: **humility, warmth, genuineness, and empathy.**

**Humility** is recognizing that “We all make many mistakes.” (James 3:2). Because you identify a mistake does not mean that you are better than your spouse.

Your partner comes to you with a cluster of unacceptable qualities, some known, many yet to be discovered. **Warmth** is loving in spite of. The key to warmth is acceptance, not conversion.

#### ***Rom 5:8***

***But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners  
Christ died for us.***

**Genuineness** is being real, being authentic, not having anything hidden. Being genuine, we are not so much focused on “What should I be? What

should my partner be? What should I be feeling?” But rather “What am I feeling?” Convey Openness.

*1 Cor 11:19 – “In order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized”.*

*Heb 4:13 - Before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.*

**Empathy** is seeing the world from your partner’s perspective. Empathy is a great gift, a wonderful way of communicating love. It derives from an intense desire to really feel, to really understand the other’s perspective. Involves active listening from the heart and derives from agape love. Empathy says, “If I were you, I would act as you do; I understand why you feel the way you feel.”

Are you able to put yourself into your partner’s mind and heart? Regarding a circumstance how is his or her perception different from mine?

### ***Rules for Successful Communication***

1. Make “I” statements, not “You” statements  
Volleying “you” accusations are not at all productive.  
Don’t say: “You are so careless. How could you forget we were going out tonight?”  
Say: “I feel hurt and a little scared when you forget things we plan together.”
2. Practice reflective listening.  
Typical interaction:  
Wife: “Look at this! I got this dress cleaned, and I just discovered they didn’t get the stain out. I can’t believe it. What I going to do now? I was going to wear this dress tonight!”  
Husband: “Oh honey, nobody will even notice. But you could wear your yellow dress instead. It looks great.”  
Is the wife really looking for a solution?  
Instead: “Wow, that’s really frustrating. I’d be furious too.” Or, “I can’t imagine how disappointed you are.”

If your partner starts hurling “you” statements at you, **affirm their frustration.** This may feel awkward or patronizing at first, but if you really want to understand their feelings from love, it’s genuine. You may have to ask, “Please tell me more about it. Help me understand.”

“It is impossible to overemphasize the immense needs we have to be really listened to, to be taken seriously, to be understood. No one can develop a full life without feeling understood by at least one person.”  
-- Paul Tournier

3. Understand and accept the differences between men and women.  
More next week, but generally women use conversation to form and solidify connections with other people; men are most concerned with analyzing, dealing with facts. Women share feelings; men solve problems.

Wife: You won’t believe the amount of work my boss is giving me!  
Listen to this . . .

Husband: (Interrupting) I keep telling you to make an appointment and talk with him about it!

4. Apologize when necessary  
Not “if I did something to hurt you . . .”  
Instead: “Please forgive me that I . . .”

Acknowledge your responsibility. Own your failure.

5. Communicate through touch  
***“Greet one another with a holy kiss.”***

***-- Romans 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14***

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