

Family Christian Center

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**CLASS NAME: Prep for Marriage – Enter the Marital Garden | Lesson 5: Are You Planting Seeds or Weeds?   
CLASS SESSION: Sunday March 7, 2021 @ 11 a.m. LOCATION: Zoom Conference  
INSTRUCTOR(S): Elders Conell and Rhonda Hollins ~** [**me2weministries@gmail.com**](mailto:me2weministries@gmail.com)

**Are You Planting Seeds or Weeds?**

**Learning to Communicate Well**

**Matthew 12:36 Amplified Bible**

**36**But I tell you, on the day of judgment people will have to give an accounting for **every** careless *or* useless word they speak.

***Proper communication is the bedrock of success within marriage****.* As we have expressed since the beginning of class, healthy communication or unhealthy miscommunication will determine the prosperity or detriment of your relationship. Clear, loving communication is the litmus test for love. If you are a strong communicator it’s important to know that communicative success will carry over into your relationships, your family life, parenting skills and potentially into your career of choice. However, many couples both seasoned and unseasoned often do not realize that there are levels and layered factors to *communicating well.* ***Whether you plant seeds or whether you plant weeds…whatever you plant is what will grow.***

**Ephesians 4:15New International Version**

15Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will **grow** to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

**Lay the Groundwork and Sow the Seeds**

***“When people try to bury you, remind yourself you are a seed.” -Matshona Dhilwayo***

***Before seeds can grow in your “marital communication garden” you must identify what prior poor communication skills from your family’s past has attempted to bury your perspective of what good communication is.*** *The truth is the first examples of communication are often first experienced in childhood. Good, bad, or indifferent you unknowingly may have picked a few good or bad habits from your parents or caregivers communication style. Prior to starting a relationship, most of us have not learned healthy ways to communicate or how to resolve conflict. Some of the worst communication traits we project into adulthood is* ***learned family behavior****. Whether it is the long-held family secrets that everyone knows about and stays hush about, shameful hidden acts or avoidance that has been recycled for generations, many new relationships have learned poor communication from those who are supposed to communicate with us the most.* *Absentee biological parents, functioning dysfunctional grandparents and extended family either do not talk about their problems or become explosive when you do!* ***Ask yourselves, looking back on your childhood experiences of communication does your family’s past groundwork really create an environment for healthy communication for you and your current relationship?***

**Characteristics of a “Weed” Mindset**

**Proverbs 18:2 Amplified Bible**  
A [closed-minded] fool does not delight in understanding,  
But only in revealing his personal opinions [**unwittingly displaying his self-indulgence and his stupidity**].

*No matter what your family background is, we all have a choice in deciding what characteristics we choose to carry into our adult relationships.* ***It is up to everyone to decide if they want to plant seeds or weeds from their family’s past into their future marital gardens****. However, there are some individuals within relationships that refuse to change or enhance their communication style, often saying to their mates,*

***“That’s how I was raised”****,* ***“It is what it is”*** *or* ***“This is who I am”*** *in a take it or leave it stance, rather than turning those poor communication experiences into growth opportunities. One or both significant others then begin to choose to stunt their own* ***Emotional Intelligence*** *as well as their own communicative abilities, while inflicting the very same blows to their mates they themselves have been scarred by. Ask yourselves,* ***“Why get into a relationship if you have no intention in growing past where you currently are?”*** *Cultivating a* ***weed mindset*** *is rooted in selfishness, an unwillingness to* ***actively*** *change and plain old stubbornness. If you are unwilling to change than you have* ***“weed”*** *mindset (double-minded) and should not pursue a relationship with anyone, let alone get married until God deems you fit to partake in the joys of a relationship.*

* [**Pride**](https://marriagesharing.com/lack-of-communication-in-marriage/#Pride)**– causes the most lack of communication in a relationship.**
* [**Lies**](https://marriagesharing.com/lack-of-communication-in-marriage/#Lies)**– destroys the ability to build trust in communication.**
* [**Selfishness**](https://marriagesharing.com/lack-of-communication-in-marriage/#Selfishness)**– gets one to focus primarily on one’s own point of views.**
* [**Silence**](https://marriagesharing.com/lack-of-communication-in-marriage/#Silence)**– leads to false assumptions and unresolved problems.**
* [**Neglect**](https://marriagesharing.com/lack-of-communication-in-marriage/#Neglect)**– tells your spouse that you don’t care.**
* [**Disrespect**](https://marriagesharing.com/lack-of-communication-in-marriage/#Disrespect)**– tells your spouse I don’t value you.**
* [**Ignorance**](https://marriagesharing.com/lack-of-communication-in-marriage/#Ignorance)**– not knowing how to solve communication problems is a problem.**
* [**Lack of romance/sex**](https://marriagesharing.com/lack-of-communication-in-marriage/#Lack-of-romance)**– intimate expressions of love in marriage are important.**
* [**Complacency-**](https://marriagesharing.com/lack-of-communication-in-marriage/#Complacency)**you got lazy.**
* [**Lack of submission to God**](https://marriagesharing.com/lack-of-communication-in-marriage/#Lack-of-submission-to-God)**– something higher than ourselves needs to perfect us.**

**Learn to V.O.W. = V\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ O\_\_\_\_\_ W\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**I Heard it through the Grapevine.**

**Do you hear the words that are coming out of my mouth?!**

**Matthew 11:15 Amplified Bible**

**15**He who has **ears** to **hear**, let him **hear** *and* heed **My words.**

**Active Listening**

**Listening is an Action!**

***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.**

# ***What is active listening?*** *(It’s not about the nail)*

**Active listening requires the listener to fully concentrate, understand respond and then remember what is being said.** You make a conscious effort to hear and understand the complete message being spoken, rather than just ***passively hearing*** the message of the speaker.

# ***Why is listening important?***

*“Listening is the most fundamental component of communication skills. Listening is not something that just happens, listening is an active process in which a conscious decision is made to listen to and understand the messages of the speaker.*

*Active listening is also about patience, listeners should not interrupt with questions or comments. Active listening involves giving the other person time to explore their thoughts and feelings, they should be given adequate time for that.*

***We spend a lot of time listening.***

*Various studies stress the*[*importance of listening*](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/the_importance_of_listening_skills)*as a communication skill. The studies on average say we spend 70-80% of our waking hours in some form of communication. Of that time, we spend about 9 percent writing, 16 percent reading, 30 percent speaking, and 45 percent listening.*

*Studies also confirm that most of us are poor and inefficient listeners. Most of us are not very good at listening, research suggests that we remember less than 50% of what we hear in a conversation.”*

**Listening vs. hearing**

Hearing is an accidental and automatic brain response to sound that requires no effort. We are surrounded by sounds most of the time. For example, we are accustomed to the sounds of cars, construction workers and so on. We hear those sounds and, unless we have a reason to do otherwise, we [learn to ignore them](https://www.livescience.com/3949-brain-tunes-background-noise.html).

**Hearing is:**

* Accidental
* Involuntary
* Effortless

Listening, on the other hand, is purposeful and focused rather than accidental. As a result, it requires motivation and effort. Listening, at its best, is active, focused, concentrated attention for the purpose of understanding the meanings expressed by a speaker.

*Listening means paying attention not only to the story, but how it is told, the use of language and voice, and how the other person uses his or her body.* **In other words, it means being aware of both verbal and non-verbal messages**. Your ability to listen effectively depends on the degree to which you perceive and understand these messages.

**Listening is:**

* Focused
* Voluntary
* Intentional\*

**Active Listening Skills, Examples and Exercises – Author Dom Barnard**

**Non-Verbal Communication**

***What Listening Looks Like***

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 | Author Dr. Corey Allan**

***Non-verbal signs of active listening***

*The people are listening are likely to display at least some of these signs. However, these signs may not be appropriate in all situations and*[*across all cultures*](https://virtualspeech.com/blog/cultural-differences-in-body-language)*.*

* ***Smile****- small smiles can be used to show that the listener is paying attention to what is being said or as a way of agreeing or being happy about the messages being received. Combined with nods of the head, smiles can be powerful in affirming that messages are being listened to and understood.*
* ***Eye Contact****- it is normal and usually encouraging for the listener to look at the speaker. Eye contact can however be intimidating, especially for more shy speakers – gauge how much eye contact is appropriate for any given situation. Combine eye contact with smiles and other non-verbal messages to encourage the speaker.*
* ***Posture****- can tell a lot about the sender and receiver in interpersonal interactions. The attentive listener tends to lean slightly forward or sideways whilst sitting. Other signs of active listening may include a slight slant of the head or resting the head on one hand.*
* ***Distraction****- the active listener will not be distracted and therefore will refrain from fidgeting, looking at a clock or watch, doodling, playing with their hair or picking their fingernails.*

***Verbal Signs of active listening***

* ***Positive Reinforcement****- this can be a strong signal of attentiveness, however too much use can be annoying for the speaker. Occasional words and phrases, such as: ‘very good’, ‘yes’ or ‘indeed’ will indicate that you are paying attention.*
* ***Remembering****- try to remembering a few key points, such as the name or the subject the speaker is identifying. It can help to reinforce that what is being said has been understood. Remembering details, ideas and concepts from previous conversations proves that attention was kept and is likely to encourage the speaker to continue.*
* ***Questioning****- the listener can demonstrate that they have been paying attention by*[*asking relevant questions*](http://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/how-amazingly-good-asking-questions.html)*and/or making statements that build or help to clarify what the speaker has said. By asking relevant questions the listener also helps to reinforce that they have an interest in what the speaker has been saying.*
* ***Clarification****- this involves asking questions of the speaker to ensure that the correct message has been received. Clarification usually involves the use of open questions which enables the speaker to expand on certain points, as necessary.*

**Emotional Intelligence**

***What is your EQ?***

Luke 17:1 New King James Version (**Jesus Warns of Offenses)**

**17**Then He said to the disciples, “**It is impossible that no [**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+17%3A1&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-25653a)**]offenses should come**, but woe *to him* through whom they do come!

Understanding the key triggers that are embedded in the heart of offenses is vital to recovering, repairing, and healing your communication patterns. ***Typically, those with poor communication habits lack in emotional intelligence***, experiencing poor communication in childhood and never developing the skill set to vocalize disagreements in a healthy manner.

**Emotional Intelligence**

***What is your EQ?***

Emotional intelligence is the dimension of intelligence responsible for your ability to manage yourself and your relationships. Each day, in your personal and business lives, you are presented with opportunities and challenges that require maneuvering internal as well as external obstacles. Your EQ enables you to maneuver those obstacles successfully and to persevere over the toughest challenges.

*“It is a lifelong journey to improve your emotional intelligence. But, unlike IQ capacity, which remains fixed or static, the capacity to improve one’s EQ (Emotional Quotient) actually increases over time. As people mature, life experiences broaden their capacity for emotional understanding. Increased capacity alone will not improve EQ. It only suggests that people have further capacity for understanding and mastery if they choose to develop it. This can be compared to someone who has the IQ to learn calculus.* ***Unless the individual actually chooses*** *to learn how to do calculus, the capacity to do so will always be present but never developed.* ***The same holds true for EQ-an individual must choose to learn and develop in these areas.”***

***Mastering Emotional Intelligence”* Author |** **Lynn Leadership Group**

**The Impact of Low EQ in relationships**

Because people with low emotional intelligence do not understand the emotions of others, they experience little empathy for other people, co-workers, family, friendships, and romantic relationships. Marriages are often the first casualty of war since those with low EQ’s are ill-equipped to handle their own emotional baggage and often reject, what they consider to be an overload of emotions from their partner. Using terms such as **“you’re too emotional”** or to blame others for their lack or inability to carry the emotions for others. **Inevitably, they wall off empathy, compassion and ignore the needs of others due to their shortcomings**. Eventually, frustration erupts, conflict ensues all due to low emotional vocabulary between significant others, depriving spouses of solutions only provided within healthy communication.

# **The Digs!**

***Dirty Verbal Communication***

**Ephesians 4:29 Amplified Bible**

**29Do not let unwholesome [foul, profane, worthless, vulgar] words ever come out of your mouth**, but only such *speech* as is good for building up others, according to the need *and* the occasion, so that it will be a blessing to those who hear [you speak].

# **The Five Styles of Miscommunication**

1. **Placating** – The placater is a “yes” man or woman, eager to please. “Whatever you want.” Peace at any price. The price paid is feelings of worthlessness.
2. **Blaming** – The blamer is a faultfinder who criticizes relentlessly & speaks in generalizations: “You always blah-blah-blah.” Inside, blamers anticipate they will never receive what they want. Often believing the worst of others and judging based upon their past disappointments. Blamers 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, void of empathy nor displays emotion.
4. **Distracting** – The distractor erects smoke screens, focusing on irrelevancies, avoiding eye contact and direct answers. Changing the subject, etc.

1. **Tone –** It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it! (Proverbs 15:1 “A soft *and* gentle *and* thoughtful answer turns away wrath, But **harsh *and* painful *and* careless words stir up anger**.)

# **The Top 5 Things You NEVER say in a Relationship!**

1. **You are Nothing Like My Ex (child’s mother/ father etc.)**
2. **Attacking your mate’s manhood.**
3. **I could find someone better than you in an instant!**
4. **The word “Divorce” said in Anger.**
5. **You Always…You Never…**

***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.***

**Warmth** - Your partner comes to you with a cluster of unacceptable qualities, some known, many yet to be discovered. Warmth is loving despite. 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”).***

**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? Can you put yourself in your mate’s shoes…Ask yourself, **“how is his or her perception different from mine?”**