

Conversation Starters

- How would you rate your communication with your spouse?

Discuss

There were 3 main purposes of communication within a marriage highlighted:

1. Resolve Conflict

Conflict can escalate if either person in an argument goes in with the intention of trying to “win” instead of trying to understand. Or the conflict will get left unresolved if you stuff things down and fail to express how you are really feeling. There are two main ways that you can have healthy conflict resolution:

- 1) Use statements that don’t put the other person on the defensive. Instead of leading with “You always...”, try starting with “I feel...” or “I know you didn’t mean this, but this is what I heard...”
- 2) No matter how angry anyone gets, always treat each other with respect.

- In what other ways can you communicate without putting your spouse on the defensive?
- What are some strategies you use to make sure you approach conflict with respect?

2. Build Friendships

It’s important that your relationship with your spouse is growing and stronger than any other relationship you have (except for your relationship with Christ). When you communicate, don’t just talk about work and daily to-do lists; be sure to talk about (and plan!) things that are fun and share dreams and goals with each other. This takes intentionality – setting aside time for it. It also needs protecting – even from children, who need to see from you that your marriage is a priority.

- Identify some opportunities you have or can create to make sure you and your spouse are having meaningful communication.
- How can you protect this time?

3. Make the Other Person Feel Loved

Saying “I love you” is always a good thing. But it’s also important to take the time to learn and communicate love in your spouse’s love language – the way that they feel and receive love the most. In his book, *The 5 Love Languages*, Gary Chapman identifies five primary emotional love languages:

1. Acts of Service
2. Quality Time
3. Gifts
4. Physical Touch
5. Words of Affirmation

- What is your love language?
- Do you tend to express love for your spouse in your own love language?
- Have you noticed how your spouse responds to each of the different love languages?

Next Steps

Resolve to approach any conflict with your spouse with love and respect.

- Imagine a third party witnessing one of your arguments; would they see mutual respect?
- Is Christ still honored in my arguments with my spouse?

Set some time aside this week to have regular, meaningful communication with your spouse. Use the Conversation Starters below if you need help getting started.

1. Take four minutes to tell your spouse about your life story in as much detail as possible.
2. Name ten things that you and your spouse have in common. Name three things that are different about you.
3. If you could wake up tomorrow having gained any one quality or ability, what would it be?
4. Is there something that you've dreamed of doing for a long time? Why haven't you done it?
5. What would constitute a "perfect" day for you?
6. What strengths in your life bring you the greatest satisfaction?
7. What are five essential values that we want our children to embrace above all?
8. What is the most adventurous thing that you have ever done?
9. Has there been a time in the past year or two when God seemed especially real or close to you? If so, explain.
10. What would you most like people to remember you for after you die?

If you don't know your spouse's love language, find out what it is. Then, practice communicating it.

Pray

Father, the way that you have designed and wired us up is incredible. Thank you for your Word and the wisdom that you share with us. Help us to use our words with our spouse wisely, and express them to each other in a way that brings honor to you.