

## Week 5: Communication & Conflict Resolution

Jealous Loving Discontent Gentle Good-hearted  
Faithful Resentful Envious Bitter Impulsive Combative  
Patient Kind Unforgiving Selfish Worried Stubborn  
Content Rude Self-controlled Peaceful Argumentative Doubting  
Selfless Anxious Lustful Fearful Impatient Stressed  
Forgiving Upright Happy Temperamental Angry Regretful  
Grateful Humble Upset Compassionate Hateful

## The Flesh

- The source of all marital conflict: the Flesh! The flesh is our desire to live our lives with OURSELVES as the source, independent or apart from God as the source
- Romans 5:7-8: The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.
- Your flesh is like a defense attorney. If you and your spouse are acting in the flesh, your tendency will be to justify, defend, blame, excuse, or otherwise make a case for living in the flesh.
- The Truth: Your Spouse is not the Problem. The real problem is your relationship with Christ because you are not living from Christ as your source.
- Coping: What married couples TRY to do apart from God to produce happiness and fulfillment in their marriage in the midst of unresolved conflict, unmet needs, and ongoing fleshly behavior. Coping is the human substitution for transformation. Instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to transform our behaviors we try to live with them and manage them.
- Manage vs Transform: God does not want you to MANAGE your fleshly behaviors, He wants to TRANSFORM you to live from Christ-like behaviors.
- Flesh vs. Christ: If we are SETTING our minds on CHRIST, then we will NOT be focused on our fleshly behaviors.
- Seek the Spirit's POWER to overcome the Flesh. But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will NOT carry out the desire of the flesh. Galatians 5:16
- Till our sins become bitter, Christ will never be sweet

### **Fruit of the Spirit/Spirit-led life**

Love

Joy

Peace

Patience

Kindness

Goodness

Faithfulness

Gentleness/Meekness

Self-control

### **Thorns of the Flesh/Satan-led life**

Envy, Hate, Jealousy, Unforgiveness

Discontent, Bitterness, Resentment

Anxiety, Fear, Worry, Discord, Regret

Impatience, Selfishness

Thoughtlessness, Rudeness, Harshness

Lust, Debauchery, Sexual Immorality

Disloyal, Dishonest, Untrustworthy

Prideful, Combative, Argumentative,  
Stubborn

Impulsive, Temperamental, Rage, Anger

In which column are you living out your daily life? Whoever directs our thinking will direct our actions and behavior.

## Bible Verses on the Tongue

1. **Proverbs 13:3** "Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin."
2. **Ephesians 4:29** "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear."
3. **Proverbs 18:19** "A brother who has been insulted is harder to win back than a walled city, and arguments separate people like the barred gates of a palace."
4. **Proverbs 10:20** "The words of a good person are like pure silver, but an evil person's thoughts are worth very little."
5. **Proverbs 26:20** "Without wood, a fire will go out, and without gossip, quarreling will stop."
6. **Proverbs 11:17** "Your own soul is nourished when you are kind, but you destroy yourself when you are cruel."
7. **1 Peter 3:9** "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."
8. **Proverbs 16:24** "Kind words are like honey – sweet to the soul and healthy for the body."
9. **Matthew 15:18** "But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person."
10. **Matthew 12:36** "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak."
11. **Matthew 12:37** "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."
12. **Colossians 3:8** "But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth."
13. **James 1:26** "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless."

14. **Proverbs 29:20** "Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him."

15. **Colossians 4:6** "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."

16. **Hebrews 10:24-25** "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

17. **Proverbs 12:18-19** "The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."

18. **Proverbs 15:1-2** "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise adorns knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly."

19. **James 1:19** "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."

20. **James 3:6** "The tongue is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell."

21. **Psalms 19:14** "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."

## RULES FOR HAVING A HEALTHY ARGUMENT

- 1) Griper asks for permission to have an argument.
- 2) Gripee has the right to put off the argument for up to 24 hours as long as he/she tells the griper when he/she is available to hear the gripe.
- 3) The Griper states his/her gripe as one distinct gripe. It is a two-part statement: I don't like it when you (state your gripe), it makes me feel like \_\_\_\_\_.
- 4) The Gripee states the gripe back to show the Griper that he/she understands the gripe.
- 5) The Griper states a recommended solution.
- 6) Enter into a period of negotiation to add or subtract from the recommended solution until you come to a solution you are both happy about.
- 7) You have just solved the issue and kept it off the unresolved anger pile.

## NOTES

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# Table Discussion Questions: Communication & Conflict Resolution

## Communication

1. What does “speaking the truth in love” mean to you? Why is it difficult to do it especially in marriage?

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2. Is it wrong to be angry?

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3. What is unwholesome talk?

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**Conflict Resolution**

1. What is the importance of viewing marriage as “Team Us”?

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2. What happens in marriage when conflict remains unresolved?

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3. If conflict is primarily over “preference,” how does effective conflict resolution draw us closer to God and to our partner?

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**What do you do when husband and wife cannot agree on an effective conflict resolution?**

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# COUPLE AFFIRMATION EXERCISES

## **Exercise #1: Conduct daily or weekly check-ins**

Taking a few minutes each day or week to check in with your partner can help you stay connected and avoid misunderstandings. During these check-ins, ask your partner how their day was, what they are feeling, and if there is anything they need from you. This can also be a time to express appreciation for each other. It can also be productive to schedule time as a couple to do something enjoyable, particularly if you and your partner have busy schedules that make it difficult to spend quality time together. Consider making a home-cooked meal or planning a weekly date night so you can maintain the romance in your relationship.

## **Exercise #2: Deepen your friendship with “icebreakers”**

While romance may be important to a strong marriage, a strong foundation of friendship and emotional intimacy can help you and your partner stay connected even when you face relationship challenges. Icebreakers offer a way for couples to deepen their understanding of one another through thoughtful questions, personal stories, and intimate conversation. These types of conversations can help you understand your partner’s thought processes more effectively and can be a fun and intense bonding exercise. Here are a few examples of questions you might use as icebreakers:

- What is your most treasured memory?
- Would you like to be famous? Why or why not?
- What do you value most in a friend?
- If you could wake up tomorrow with one quality or superpower, what would it be?
- What is your greatest accomplishment?
- Describe the “perfect” day.
- What is your ideal vacation spot?
- What’s your most embarrassing moment?



### **Exercise #3: Manage conflict with “I feel” statements**

When having difficult conversations, there may be moments when you become frustrated by something your partner says or does. However, rather than using accusatory language, consider communicating to your partner about the way their actions affect your feelings by using “I feel” statements.

For example, rather than saying, “You never listen to me,” you might instead say, “I feel unheard when you interrupt me.” By using an “I feel” statement, you are taking ownership of your feelings and expressing them in a way that is less likely to put your partner on the defensive. This can help you and your partner approach conflict in a more constructive way and find common ground.

### **Exercise #4: Practice mirroring**

Mirroring involves “reflecting back” or repeating what your partner is saying to ensure you understand their perspective. This communication tool can be especially helpful during difficult conversations or conflicts. To practice mirroring, one partner speaks while the other listens and then repeats what they believe they heard. The reflecting partner uses their own words to summarize what was said and check for understanding. The speaking partner can then confirm or clarify any misunderstandings.

This process can help ensure both you and your partner feel heard and understood, which can reduce the likelihood of miscommunication. Mirroring exercises can also help you develop greater awareness of how your own words and actions may affect your partner.

### **Exercise #5: Try using active listening**

Active listening involves paying attention to what your partner is saying and responding in a way that shows you understand and value their perspective. To practice active listening, make a conscious effort to focus on your partner when they are speaking. Avoid interrupting or talking over them and try to refrain from formulating your response while they are still speaking.

Instead, listen attentively and ask questions to clarify their point of view. Once they’re finished speaking, summarize what they said to ensure you understand their perspective. This can help you and your partner avoid misunderstandings and approach conversations more constructively.

### **Exercise #6: Prioritize positive language and interaction**

Over time, it can be common for couples to find that their conversations gravitate toward the problems they are experiencing, either in their relationship or in their day-to-day lives. This may lead to negative communication patterns. Marriage counselors often task their clients with finding ways to prioritize positive language and interactions.

This typically involves saying “thank you” or “I love you” more often. It may also mean telling a funny story about something that happened to you, or even sending an affectionate text message when you are apart. These small gestures of love and affection can help you and your partner remember your love for one another.

### **Exercise #7: Initiate physical affection**

Physical affection can be an essential aspect of intimacy in marriage, and may even correlate to relationship satisfaction. However, it can be easy to overlook physical affection when life gets busy or stressful. Marriage counselors will often recommend that their clients make a conscious effort to initiate physical affection and show one another love through physical touch.

This can include hugs, kisses, holding hands, cuddling, sexual intimacy, or any other physical touch that makes you and your partner feel close and connected. Take time each day to show physical affection, whether it's a quick hug before work or a longer cuddle session before bed.

### **Exercise #8: Discover your love languages together**

One common and effective marriage counseling exercise that involves discussing and implementing love languages into your and your partner’s daily life. The love languages are a set of five categories that describe how people express and receive love. They include:

- Words of Affirmation
- Acts of Service
- Receiving Gifts
- Quality Time
- Physical Touch

To discover your love language together, you want to take an online quiz, discuss your preferences, or speak to a couple’s therapist with your partner. Then, give each other examples of how you would like to receive love. Learning each other’s love languages can be a fun and interesting activity that helps you to learn more about each other and deepen your emotional connection.



