

Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee and just as hard to sleep after.

Anne Morrow Lindberg

Couple Time – 60 minutes

As you talk to each other remember the dos and don'ts of listening:

| Don't | Do |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interrupt.• Be distracted.• Criticise or blame – instead say how you feel.• Give unwanted advice.• Change the subject or tell your own story. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen actively – give your full attention.• Be sensitive to one another as you share your thoughts and feelings ... this is important.• Speak the truth in love.• Try to understand – from time to time check your understanding by 'feeding back' to your partner what you think he/she has said.• Be ready to apologise for any attitudes or behaviour that has caused your partner to feel marginalised or misunderstood. |

If you didn't have time to complete the Couple Time preparation boxes during your group meeting then take a few minutes to fill them in now before you talk to your partner.

A How are we communicating?

Take turns reading out and expanding on your written answers to all three questions on page 23.

Identify a personal action point for you as an individual (a specific way to follow through with an action from any insights you gained from the discussion in the group and/or with your partner). These are intended to be helpful prompts for change if needed.

Personal action point:

Note: Be gentle with each other as you talk about deeper levels of communication. Make a point of affirming your love and acceptance for your partner at whatever level they try to express themselves. Encourage them with your gratitude when moving to a deeper level than you would normally communicate.

B Communicating at deeper levels

Each explain why you placed the initials where you did on page 25, and remember to highlight the things you are doing well.

Identify a personal action point to enable you to communicate at a deeper level, if appropriate.

Personal action point:

Look at Together Notes: Poor Listening/Good Listening (www.togetherinmarriage.com) for more on communication.

C Growing in our trust and openness

Talk about how you can grow in trust and openness in your relationship. Both share your answers to the first question on page 26 before moving on to the second question. Identify an action point if needed.

Personal action point:

Note: If you struggle with past experiences and how these affect your ability to trust your partner, you may consider talking to a trusted friend or counsellor.

At the next group meeting you will be asked to describe one way you are starting to communicate differently with your partner as a result of the session. Agree on one thing you would be prepared to share with the group from your Couple Time and write it down:

Before the next group meeting please complete the Introductory Reading for Session 2: **Finding unity through God's purpose and plan for marriage** (pages 31–33). God designed marriage and He has an exciting purpose and plan for it. Understanding God's plan for our marriages will enable us to find a commitment to a shared vision.

For further reading:

A Child No More, Mary Pytches (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991)

Dying to Change, Mary Pytches (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1996)

For remarried couples

(optional additional questions)

For couples where either one – or both partners – have previously been married or in a long-term relationship.⁷

- i. Do you face any special challenges in establishing trust and openness with each other in the light of the previous relationship of either one – or both – partners? How do they affect you?
- ii. Agree on one thing you could do to support your partner as you face any challenges together.

Identify a personal action point, if needed.

Personal action point:

NOTES

1. Genesis 1:26–27.
2. Adapted from *Understanding: Communication I*, FamilyLife USA 'Weekend To Remember' conference manual, revised 1/04. Used with permission.
3. Genesis 2:24.
4. 2 Corinthians 6:11–13.
5. Based on table 'Why am I afraid to tell you who I am' by John Powell, FamilyLife USA 'Weekend to Remember' conference manual, revised 1/04. Used with permission.
6. Genesis 2:25.
7. Adapted from Question 3, Session 3, 'Making Your Remarriage Last', Group Publishing, Copyright © 2001 Jim Keller. Used with permission.