Communication & Conflict

A Lasting Promise, 2nd edition By Scott Stanley, Daniel Trathen, Savanna McCain, Milt Bryan

A Lasting Promise provides a strong combination of biblical principles and practical exercises on how to improve communication and conflict resolution skills. While we selected what we believe to be the most relevant chapters to discuss as a group, we do recommend couples read this entire book and keep it as a resource.

Primary Takeaways:

- God’s purpose for marriage is oneness, and destructive communication and conflict resolution patterns can destroy oneness.
- The goal of communication is to seek to understand.
- Selfishness is the primary contributor to poor communication.
- We often exhibit destructive communication patterns: Withdrawal, Escalation, Negative Interpretation, and Invalidation.
- Poor communication skills and practices can harm all other aspects of the marital relationship including finances, parenting, and both emotional and physical intimacy.

Reading Schedule:

- Session 1 – Chapter 1 & Chapter 2
- Session 2 – Chapter 3 & Chapter 4
- Session 3 – Chapter 5 & Chapter 8
- Session 4 – Chapter 9 & Chapter 10
- Session 5 – Chapter 11 & Chapter 13
- Session 6 – Chapter 14 & Chapter 16

Prior To Each Group Meeting:

1. Complete the assigned reading.
2. Go over the homework questions with your spouse and be prepared to share what you learned.
3. Review the discussion questions and be prepared to discuss your answers during the group meeting
Session 1 | Chapter One & Chapter Two

Key Points: Chapter 1 | Naked & Unashamed

“So they are no longer two, but one.”
Matthew 19:6

• Most marriages start off with great promise, but because of sin, barriers, and selfishness, promise leads to futility and a lack of oneness.
• We are not meant to be alone, rather for close relationships with God, in marriage, and with others (Genesis 2:18).
• Oneness is the picture God has given us for marriage (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:3-6), but it is not easy to describe or understand oneness.
• What we do know about oneness:
  o Oneness is not developed by one person’s identity disappearing into the other, but there are three distinct identities in marriage: Me, You, and Us.
  o Oneness is a rich and wonderful mystery – (Ephesians 5:31-32)
  o Oneness is permanent (Matthew 19:6)
  o Another idea of oneness is being naked and unashamed – (Genesis 2:25). This doesn’t just mean physically but also emotionally and spiritually.
• Barriers prevent us from fully maintaining oneness in marriage.
  o The “no trespassing tree” & “the fear of rejection” – we cover up our thoughts, feelings, opinions, and seek to protect ourselves rather than boldly giving ourselves to one another
  o Sin & selfishness – (James 4:1-3) – selfishness holds us back from oneness
  o Not knowing what better to do – lack of knowledge and skills – knowing what to do and how to do it are two different things (i.e. listening, forgiveness, conflict)
• In order to get past the barriers of fear and shame brought on by sin and again move towards oneness, we must grow spiritually.
• Having a thriving relationship with the Lord is the starting point of a great marriage, but not the whole story. We must learn how to put our love into action.
Key Points: Chapter 2 | Communication Danger Signs

“Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”
Proverbs 12:18

• There are negative communication patterns that can cement barriers into our marriage. They must be learned so that we can better avoid them.
• The presence of certain negative patterns can destroy a relationship. Therefore, if you can eliminate these patterns, the positives can blossom & grow.
• When confronted by risk factors to your marriage, focus on those that can be changed
• Negative communication patterns can be corrosive in our marriage

4 Key Patterns to avoid:
  o Withdrawal & Avoidance: Hide & Seek – an unwillingness to get into or stay with important discussions; withdrawer often gets quiet, looks away, or agrees quickly just to end the conversation.
    ▪ Often one partner pursues dealing with an issue (the one who most often brings issues up for attention), while the other withdraws or avoids hard conversations; often the withdrawer does not feel emotionally safe.
    ▪ Solution – keep in mind the situation will likely get worse if you continue to pull away/avoid; avoidance typically leads to anger, and when anger grows it can wreak havoc in relationships (Ephesians 4:25-27).
  o Escalation – occurs when partners respond back and forth negatively to each other, continually upping the ante so the conversation gets more and more hostile; partners often say hurtful things, but these are generally not reflective of what they feel about each other; can be very subtle – doesn’t have to be raised voices;
    ▪ Solution: One partner backs off to de-escalate cycle, soften your tone, put down your shield, acknowledge your spouse’s point of view (James 1:26, Proverbs 15:1).
  o Negative Interpretation: When believing is seeing – when one partner consistently believes that the motives of the other are more negative than is really the case; create an environment of hopelessness and demoralization.
    ▪ Mind reading – occurs when you assume you know what your partner is thinking or why he or she did something; can include negative judgments and motives about the other person; be on guard for the tendency to view or judge others harshly (Luke 6:41-42)
- **Solution** – reconsider what you think is true about some of your partner’s motives; ask if your thinking is overly negative of your partner; push yourself to look for evidence that is contrary to your negative interpretation; seek to clarify.
  - **Invalidation: Painful Put-downs** – pattern in which one partner subtly or directly puts down the thoughts, feelings, or character of the other;
    - **Solution** – show respect for the other by acknowledging the other’s viewpoint; acceptance of feelings, respect for each other’s character, emphasis on validation;
- The chief reason marriages fall at alarmingly high rates is because conflict is handled poorly, as evidenced by these 4 negative communication patterns.
- Most couples and individuals show each of these 4 patterns to some degree.
- **Solution:** Don’t be a W.E.N.I. (Withdraw, escalate, negative interpretation, invalidate)
Session 2 | Chapter Three & Chapter Four

Key Points: Chapter 3 | Asking God: Praying for Your Marriage

“Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you.”
Luke 11:9

• Think of your marriage as a tree. Prayer for it nourishes it to keep its roots going deeper, its branches growing stronger, and its fruit becoming more abundant. Prayer will anchor your marriage in the everlasting promise of God’s great love.
• When you pray for your partner, you see him or her in a different way. You are reminded that your partner is a child of God, part of His wondrous creation, and that he or she, just like you, is a frail human being.
• Praying for your partner requires you to think about his or her needs, hopes, struggles, and shortcomings, not with a view to be critical but with a sincere desire to see God work in your partner’s life.
• Praying daily for your relationship will help deepen your trust in God and allow Him to lead your marriage to the place He wants it to go.
• It is very easy to focus prayer on asking God to change your mate rather than asking God to change you…pray for blessings for your mate and changes in yourself.
• Here are some short prayers that counter the tendency we can have to pray for the wrong things in our relationships:
  o “Dear Jesus, I ask you to help me to see where I’ve let my wife down and how I can be more fully supportive of her.”
  o “Lord, please make our marriage all you want it to be. Change me and guide me in being part of the change you want to bring to our home.”
  o “Dear God, thank you so much for our family. Help me to appreciate what we have and to tell my spouse more often what I appreciate about them.”
  o “Father God, help us both to be more sensitive, less reactive, and more gentle with each other. Use me to make constructive changes that will bless my mate and our marriage.”
• Being thankful as you pray for your marriage is going to change you. You are probably taking some of the good things in your marriage for granted. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
• Thankfulness is something you can decide to increase in your life, and in doing so, you will likely end up acting more like Jesus in giving to others – including your mate.
• Asking for wisdom is wise, and by doing so, you can become wiser still. (James 1:5)
• Praying for wisdom expresses your willingness to recognize your weaknesses and to rely on Him to lead and enable you.
• When you ask God to help you with temptation, you are acknowledging that the temptation exists, owning up to it with God and with yourself, rather than pretending it’s not there and isn’t affecting anything.
• Praying for one’s partner strengthens commitment, which in turn makes for greater happiness in the relationship.
• The degree to which you hold your mate’s flaws and past actions against him or her is the degree to which your marriage is going to be limited in the future.
• Pray for God to help you have good communication in your marriage.
  o Ask Him to keep it emotionally safe…Ask Him to help you listen carefully and completely to your mate about his or her day-to-day interests and concerns.
  o Pray for the ability to speak the truth in loving ways about the concerns that are on your own heart.

Key Points: Chapter 4 | We Found Your Keys

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”
Romans 12:18

• Three Key Principles:
  o Decide don’t slide
    ▪ Strive to thoughtfully decide about the things that matter.
    ▪ Sliding through is fine in non-crucial situations, but when something important is at stake, make a decision.
    ▪ Where it matters, don’t slide – decide to take control of your issues rather than letting them control you.
  o Do your part
    ▪ You are headed for trouble if you focus on your partner as the source of your problems.
    ▪ Think about what you contribute to your marriage rather than what you get out of it or what your partner does.
    ▪ What’s my part?
      • Do things that please your partner
      • Let negative or annoying comments bounce off of you
      • Bring concerns up without making digs that trigger defensiveness
• Take good care of yourself physically
• Manage your own stress levels
• Be the best you can be as a person – strongly connected to God

  o Make it safe to connect
    ▪ The deepest desire of the heart: to be loved and accepted for who you are, warts and all.
    ▪ Make it safe in how you talk to one another and the emotional tone you cultivate when you are together.
    ▪ The way couples handle conflict is strongly related to how they will do in the future.
    ▪ Success in marriage is about how couples handle the differences they have, and not just the nature of the differences they have.

• 2 Ground Rules:
  o When conflict begins to escalate, we will call a Time Out and either try talking again, using the Speaker-Listener Technique, or agree to talk later at a specified time about the issue, using the Speaker-Listener Technique
    ▪ An agreed-upon way to stop arguments that are not productive
    ▪ You take a stand against destructive behaviors and decide to do something constructive instead
    ▪ Time Out is not avoidance – agree to continue either now or in the near future
  o We will make time for the blessings of marriage – fun, friendship, physical connection, and spiritual connection. We will agree to protect these times from conflict and the need to deal with issues.
    ▪ Critical to set aside time for the God-given blessings of marriage – you can’t focus on issues all the time and have a great marriage

• When only one of you is pursuing a new strategy
  o Very often one partner responds positively to positive changes made by the other
  o Just because you are reading something together doesn’t mean both of you will be impressed by the same ideas in the same ways.
  o Focus on doing your part and not on what you wish your partner would do.
Session 3 | Chapter Five & Chapter Eight

Key Points: Chapter 5 | Talking Without Fighting

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

• Two keys to communication and handling conflict well: Make it **Clear** and Make it **Safe**.
• **Making it Clear: The Problem of Filters**
  o Sometimes what we intend to share with our spouse is very different from what he or she hears, and we all experience frustration of being misunderstood.
  o Three filters that cause couples to struggle in communication in marriage are:
    ▪ **Inattention** – This is when neither person is able to give the other their full attention. (Example: Kids, TV, bad phone connection, feeling tired, etc.); both internal (boredom) and external (background, environment) in nature.
    ▪ **Emotional States** – What mood a person is in can affect how they receive communication (i.e. anger, sadness, worry).
    ▪ **Beliefs and Expectations** – This filter is based on what people expect from the other person. People often see and hear what they expect to see and hear from their spouse. Our expectations can influence the behavior of others; caution of mind reading (see chapter 2)
• Some of our biggest arguments come from what we think we heard in the past; 2 keys to protecting our relationship from fruitless arguments from the past:
  o Accept the fact your memory isn’t perfect – Humility 101
  o Don’t keep arguing about what was actually said in the past – no way to know for certain
• **Making it Safe: The Value of Structure**
  o You must be able to fearlessly express your beliefs, concerns, and preferences authentically.
  o Negative communication patterns make it unsafe to express your heart
  o The **Speaker-Listener Technique** adds structure to your communication, making it safe to communicate
• **Speaker-Listener Technique**
  o **Rules for Both of You:**
    - The Speaker has the floor – use an object to demonstrate who has the floor
    - Share the floor – you switch roles back and forth
    - No problem-solving – focus on having good discussion, not fixing problems
  o **Rules for the speaker:**
    - Speak for yourself – don’t mind read; talk about your thoughts, feelings; use “I” statements
    - Speak in small chunks – keep short, especially when learning the technique
    - Stop and let the Listener paraphrase – your goal is to help the Listener hear and understand your point of view
  o **Rules for the listener:**
    - Paraphrase what you hear to make sure you understood what was said
    - Don’t rebut. Focus on the speaker’s message – you may not offer your opinion or thoughts; you can express any disagreement when you have the floor
      - Be sincere in your effort to show you are listening carefully and respectfully
  o Stay on the topic & don’t try to solve the problem prematurely
  o Key is in making it safe and in showing respect for your partner’s thoughts, feelings, and opinions
• **Advantages of the Speaker-Listener Technique**
  o Counteracts the destructive habits/patterns described in chapter two
  o Even though it is ‘artificial’, it helps couples keep a tight rein on their tongue
Key Points: Chapter 8 | Handling Events, Understanding Issues

"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."
Romans 15:7

- The four major issues most couples say cause problems are money, sex, communication, and children; other issues include in-laws, recreation, alcohol & drugs, religion, careers, and housework; These are all called issues.

- However, what most couples argue about are the small, day-to-day happenings of life called events.

- Hidden issues are deeper and more elusive and often drive our most frustrating and destructive arguments.

Summary:

- The main goal is to control where, when, and how you will deal with the events and hidden issues in your relationship.

- 5 common hidden issues in married couples:
  - Control & power – comes into play when decisions come up, even small ones; a power struggle can come out of anything; control issues are least likely to damage the relationship when there’s a sense of team, reflecting love & humility; power struggles result from sin & selfishness (James 4:1)
  - Needing & caring – the extent to which you feel loved and cared for by your partner; issue arises when emotional needs aren’t met; key is to be able to talk about deeper issues in a safe way
  - Recognition – the extent to which your activities and accomplishments are appreciated by your spouse, and you valued for who you are and what you do. One of the best ways to serve your spouse is to recognize his/her contributions to your marriage
  - Commitment – the long-term security of the relationship; when your commitment feels secure, it brings deep safety to your relationship; God plans for permanence in oneness in our marriages (Matthew 19:3-6)
  - Acceptance – people are motivated to find acceptance and avoid rejection in relationships; a fundamental fear of rejection drives many other hidden issues; no matter what’s going on in our marriage, we are called to accept our spouse with a richness that frees them to feel safe in the relationship
• 4 Ways to tell when hidden issues may be affecting your interaction:
  o *Wheel Spinning* – talking about a problem over and over but getting nowhere
  o *Trivial triggers* – minor things blow up out of proportion
  o *Avoidance* – one or both of you avoid certain topics or levels of intimacy
  o *Score keeping* – documenting who did what without talking about issues;
• The most important thing you can do is simply to talk about these hidden issues, perhaps at a time set apart for this purpose
• Deal with issues in terms of problem discussion, not problem solution; first and foremost hear and understand one another
• If we deeply believe the Father’s love for us, we will have fewer hidden issues with Him and with others (*1 John 4:18*)
Key Points: Chapter 9 | Unraveling the Mysteries of Expectations

“Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.”
Proverbs 13:12

• To a large degree, we are disappointed or satisfied in life based on how well what is happening matches what we expect.
• Expectations that don’t match fuel conflict
• Expectations build up over a lifetime of experiences. Most expectations are based in the past but still operate in the present. The three primary sources for our expectations are family of origin, previous relationships, and the culture we live in.
• There are a variety of cultural factors that can influence your expectations: books, television, movies and so forth.
• Expectations can lead either to massive disappointment and frustration or to deeper connection.
• Four keys to handling expectations well: be aware of what you expect, be reasonable in what you expect, be clear about what you expect, and be willing to listen to the Lord.
• When they continue to be unmet, they can shift from disappointed expectations to angry demands.
• One of the most destructive and unreasonable expectations you can have is that your partner will meet all your unmet needs and heal all your wounds from life...a mate cannot satisfy the deepest longing of your soul that only God can touch. The fact is, our partners make lousy substitutes for God.
• Unless you make your expectations clear, you’ll have trouble working as a team.
• You need to be aware of your expectations, willing to evaluate them, and willing to share them with your partner.
"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."
Proverbs 4:23

• The benefits of technology come with costs, and one of the greatest is distraction that cuts into marriage and family life.
• Although it’s tempting to respond instantly to others, you usually don’t have to.
• Set boundaries so you can have time to nourish togetherness.
• To make it safe for couples to connect, you also have to make it possible to connect. Find ways to unplug so that you can be together and keep your channels open for your marriage.
• Two categories of temptation: temptations about real relationships and temptations about unreal relationships. By real relationships we mean marriage-damaging relationships with real people. By unreal relationships, we are referring to fantasy relationships in the burgeoning world of pornography.
• Great questions: Is there any threat to our marriage in all this? If not now, would there be in the future?
• It takes some real skill for a couple to come to a solid agreement that works for both partners when it comes to online boundaries.
• Harmless contact can morph into something that threatens all you have invested in your marriage.
• Pornography can become addictive because the experience is associated with the release of powerful chemicals in the brain.
• Because pornography is associated with powerful chemical and sexual release, people who use it regularly are retraining their brain in terms of what they find exciting and what they believe is OK. (Romans 12:2)
• Great question: When was the last time you messaged your mate with some small, thoughtful comment?
• Unplug sometimes…Pay more attention to your mate than to your media…Talk together about how you use social media and whether either of you has concerns about what is shared…If you think you might be tempted by something you are doing with technology, you are already over – or just about to go over – the line. Be honest with yourself.
• Use technology to strengthen your connection. Try some things you think might be fun. Stay creative while technology is creating new opportunities
Session 5 | Chapter Eleven & Chapter Thirteen

Key Points: Chapter 11 | Positive Bonding: Keeping Fun and Friendship Alive

“God who gives us richly all things to enjoy.”
1 Timothy 6:17b

• Friendships need to be nurtured in ways that many couples fail to realize until their friendship is all but gone
• Friends are people we relax with, open up to, and count on; provides companionship, productivity in the tasks of life done together, support, warmth, and protection (see Ecclesiastes 4:8-12)
• With friendship the support and care for one another help buffer you both from the trials and tribulations of life
• One of the keys to great friendship in marriage is in learning to share and to listen carefully for what’s within each other’s hearts
• Common barriers to fun & friendship:
  o We don’t have time – friendship takes a back seat to all of the competing interests; couples often fail to take the time to chat as friends; other needs crowd out time
  o We get into conflict, and it spoils our good times – talks turn into conflict
  o We don’t expect friendship to be a part of our marriage – couples were friends to begin with, but not anymore. the difference in being “just married” & JUST MARRIED! (Ecclesiastes 9:9)
  o We only talk about problems – if couples aren’t careful, most of their talks end up being about problems and concerns (i.e. kids, money, house projects), not points of view and points of interest; these problems are all important, but they can’t monopolize all conversations
• Guidelines for connecting through fun & friendship:
  o Set aside the time – set time for specifically talking as friends – make the time!
    ▪ There is much less quality time when there is little quantity time
  o Protect connection time from conflict – set regular time aside to deal with issues as issues, taking Time Out when conflicts are intruding on times you set aside for friendship, and forgiving one another for problems in the past so that the trust that friendship thrives on is nurtured. You are not at the mercy of your issues.
• Begin again to talk as friends – listen like a friend listens
• Like much else discussed in this book, friendship is a skill – you have to work on it
Key Points: Chapter 13 | Got Your Back: Carrying Each Other’s Burdens

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

Galatians 6:2

• Being emotionally supportive goes to the heart of meeting some of the deepest needs and desires people have in marriage.
• Anything that pushes your partner down also gives you the opportunity to lift them up.
• Some couples are busier playing “get you back” than “got your back.”
• Genuine emotional support is love in action that is powerfully protective of your marriage.
• Two pillars of success in relationships are having a safe haven and a secure base. That means having a foundation of emotional safety.
• The Bible would not bother to tell us “be anxious for nothing” (Philippians 4:6&7) if it was easy to stay nonanxious.
• We may expect our mates to process and handle stressors the same way we do.
• You won’t be much help in providing emotional support to your mate if you don’t know what is weighing him or her down and what kind of support would be most helpful.
• Connection that springs from one partner’s sharing something positive that happened to them and their partner’s listening and responding with excitement and interest is a powerful source of connection in relationships.
• Tune in and get excited with and for your partner. Show interest and positive emotion about what your partner is excited about sharing.
• Loving and gentle touch is amazingly powerful it can be one of the most effective agents of healing in human relationships.
• Beware of giving advice when that’s not what your partner needs or asks for.
• To expect your mate to read your mind is not fair, and you are less likely to get what you need. Let yourself be blessed by helping your mate understand what you want in the moment, without expecting them to figure it out on their own.
• The spouse of one who is suffering can either be supportive in ways that make things worse or can be too harsh and impatient about the symptoms.
• Sometimes actions speak louder than anything else in reaching into the hurting soul of another.
• Make it OK to tell each other when either of you need something extra in the burden-lifting department.
• You are more likely to get the type of support you want most if you can make it clear to your partner what that is.

• When a burden goes on and on, it’s all the more important for you to find the best ways to carry it together.

• Research shows that American couples are more “alone” now than at any other time, perhaps, in history. Couples tend to move away from their extended families these days. They are busier than ever and so are less and less likely to be involved in church, community, and neighborhood organizations and activities. This leaves them isolated and less able to receive and give help when it is needed.

• When giving support it’s important to give the right kind, at the right time in the right way.

• Marriages are strongest when each tries to be a support for the other.

• You can become more skilled in meeting his or her needs...The goal is not perfection. The goal is to have a love that is growing to be more than it already is.
Session 6 | Chapter Fourteen & Chapter Sixteen

Key Points: Chapter 14 | The Power of Commitment

"Love...is not self-seeking...love...always hopes, always perseveres."
1 Corinthians 13:5-7

- The kind and depth of your commitment has a lot to do with your chances of staying together and being happy.
- In Matthew 19:3-6, Matthew writes of the commitment made in marriage that is like a glue that sticks people together in a lifelong relationship of unbroken oneness.
- There are two main kinds of commitment: Constraint & Dedication
  - **Constraint commitment** – refers to forces that keep individuals in relationships whether or not they’re dedicated to one another; commitment feels like a negative force, preventing freedom and happiness
  - **Dedication commitment** – desire of an individual to maintain and improve the quality of the relationship for the joint benefit of both partners; intrinsic desire and behaviors to not only continue in the relationship but to improve it, to sacrifice for it, for the spouse’s benefit, and not just own
  - Together the forces of constraint and dedication produce a deep bond that takes couples through the thick and thin of the relationship
- **The Commitment of Constraint**
  - **Moral** – some constraints are directly related to issues of moral importance – i.e. the immorality of divorce, God’s heart for marriage that it be a permanent union
  - **Meta-commitment** – finish what you start, commitment to commitment
  - **Concern for children or spouse’s welfare** – what’s best for children or spouse is to stay together
  - **Pragmatic constraints** – perceptions of what would be gained or lost if relationship ended
    - *Irretrievable investments* – investments, possessions that could be lost
    - *Social pressure* – pressure put on by 3rd parties to stay together
    - *Termination procedures* – difficulty of the things you’d have to go through to end the relationship;
    - *Quality of alternatives* – poorer alternatives if you leave the relationship
    - *Economic dependence* – can’t afford to live without partner
    - *Unavailability of partners* – perception that no one else can replace spouse
• The Commitment of Personal Dedication
  o Guided by agape love as described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8
  o Desiring the long-term – wanting the relationship to continue into the future – expectation and desire for the relationship to last, real live hope
  o Priority of the relationship – importance you place on your relationship over everything else
  o We-ness – degree to which one views relationship as a team rather than 2 separate individuals; “we” transcends “me,” identity together “us”
  o Satisfaction with sacrifice – degree to which people feel sense of satisfaction in doing things largely or solely for partner’s benefit; give of yourself for partner’s good
  o Alternative monitoring – how much or how little one keeps an eye out for potential, alternative partners
• It’s normal for constraint to grow in marriage – more that holds you together
• Dedication erodes with poor conflict management, which leads to a decrease in satisfaction
• The secret to satisfying commitment is to maintain dedication at high levels

Key Points: Chapter 16 | Spiritual Blessings and Intimacy

“Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.”
Psalm 127:1

• Spiritual intimacy goes to the deepest and most vulnerable parts of your soul
• Each of us can be very spiritual people and still struggle in your marriage
• God has given us a “land” of great spiritual promise in His design for marriage, but few enter in (Numbers 13:28-33)
• What is spiritual intimacy?
  o Sharing your walk – share together about your personal walk with Christ; often couples don’t feel comfortable in sharing their walk because they either fear rejection, feel like its too private, or too difficult to express verbally
  o Connected in giving: serving others together – serving the Lord together, looking beyond yourselves to the world you are called to reach
  o Sharing spiritual insights and thoughts – share thoughts and reactions about different passages of scriptures, through either Bible reading, devotionals, or sermons;
• **Deuteronomy 6:5-7** – don’t separate scripture reading and spiritual intimacy from the rest of life
  
  o Praying together – one of the most authentic opportunities we have, but can be threatening, especially when the marriage environment isn’t safe
    
    ▪ Also share prayer requests with one another – a sharing of needs, desires, requests, concerns, and praises
  
  o Worshipping God together – church service, singing songs together
  
  o Taking Communion together – opportunity to be side by side in powerful remembrance

• Bottom line is to find out what your “cup of tea” is when it comes to spiritual intimacy – God has left us room for the expression of creativity in marriage

• Set aside time for the great things and learn to protect these times from conflict and issues