

I Do

Turning what **JESUS DID**
into what **I DO** in marriage.

Week 3

Communication challenges

OUTLOOK CHURCH

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Encourage the group to take turns reading and answering questions. It is best to ask the questions as they appear instead of waiting till the end

TOPIC : Communication Challenges

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TIME TO PONDER:

If we had to look for the underlying issue in most relationships, especially marriage, it is communication or lack thereof.

“A problem well stated, is a problem half solved” John Dewey

Once we realise that our actual problem is a communication one we can begin to work on it.

So what makes communication so tough?

At the Global Leadership Summit the topic of Critical Conversations was addressed.

“Critical conversations are conversations with high emotions and high stakes”. Most people are terrified of them and are really bad at them.

Why are we bad at them?

Fear : Of speaking up, of being honest, of vulnerability, of facing issues, of being judged or of the feeling of shame.

Assumptions: We already think we fully understand, we assume we know the full story. We assume we know the problem and solution and have the whole truth. We assume that the other party is to blame.

Excessive emotion: we get angry too quickly, cry too quickly, allow frustration to overwhelm us or we fear an explosive confrontation.

Given up: Tried talking before and it didn't help. It never gets us anywhere so we've thrown in the towel, so to speak.

BIG IDEA: Most marriages could be miraculously solved if we could just learn to communicate.

Question 1: If you had to be honest which of these four reasons, keep you from those critical conversations?

TIME TO REFLECT:

What's the root of our poor communication?

In most marriages the problem is that we desperately want to be listened to but ... don't want to listen to others!

95 times in the Bible the words Listen to me are used.

The real problem is everyone wants to speak but no one wants to listen. We should desire to become great listeners.

James 1:19-20

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

This is the kingdom way. Let our ears be as quick as our tongues. The sin nature is opposite to the way of God. This command is for all of us.

We need to first listen to what God is saying.
If we can't listen to God we won't be able to
listen to others.

What defines a true believer - they listen to
the Father's voice.

John 10:27

*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them,
and they follow me.*

HOW BAD ARE YOU?

10 signs of a bad listener

1. They judge.
2. They minimise feelings.
3. They minimise the issue.
4. They give advice.
5. They don't respond at all.
6. They talk too much.

7. They interrupt.
8. They are distracted.
9. They ask no questions.
10. They show disinterested body language.

Question 2: Rate yourself - worst to best of these signs of a bad listener.

TIME TO DISCUSS:

Listening in marriage. Will make your marriage more godly.

Genesis 30:6

*Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me; he has **listened** to my plea and given me a son." Because of this she named him Dan.*

God listens to even the least of us. When we listen with the ears of God, we will respond with the word of God.

It is important to know that listening gives people a pressure release valve. As humans we are designed to live with a certain amount of pressure. But we tend to live at a higher level of stress than we ought to. We need to find a way to gently release that pressure through conversations. Give your spouse the gift of a listening ear.

One of Dunn's counsels for cultivating good listening is: "put more emphasis on affirmation than on answers"

Bonhoeffer says, "Often a person can be helped merely by having someone who will listen to him seriously."

At times what our neighbour needs most is for someone else to know.

Proverbs 20:5

The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.

To listen is to love. To lead. To heal.

PRACTICAL: How do we become a good listener?

- Realise we need to learn to listen.
- Listen to the heart, not just the words - try to hear their feelings and not just their thoughts.

- Listen with your eyes not just your ears - give them your full attention.
- Listen with questions not solutions - when you speak let it be a question to take them deeper.
- Listen to heal, not give advice.
- Listen to understand not trap.
- Listen to draw them out into safety.
- Listening is a solution.
- Listening is respectful.
- Listening is offering a safety valve to someone.

Question 3: “I struggle most with listening because”

ACTION STEP

Remember “A problem well stated, is a problem half solved” John Dewey

So what's the problem?

Most marriages struggle because of poor communication skills rooted in poor listening skills.

James 1:19

19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry

God's will for your life is to become a better listener, not just in marriage but in life. Not just to your spouse but to God and your friends.

Lastly remember: You only listen to God as well as you listen to others. So let's repent and become great listeners!

**Question 4: How good are you at listening?
Pick two things that you want to work on
this week with your listening skills.**

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