



The courage to speak must be matched by the wisdom to listen.

Lesson 9

Caring Enough to Communicate

It could happen to you!

Cindy and Lyle were returning from a picture-perfect honeymoon. Great fun, great sex, great memories, no conflicts. Theirs was a marriage made in heaven! And then it happened. They were unloading their baggage in the “unloading only” zone of a very busy airport for their flight home. Lyle hurriedly emptied the trunk as Cindy sat in the driver’s seat of the rental car. They had planned a quick check-in at the curb, and then they would return the car together. Lyle reached for the tickets in the side pocket of the carry-on, where he was sure he had put them the night before. They weren’t there! The porter had loaded his bags onto the dolly and was waiting.

Lyle: Cindy, what did you do with the tickets?

Cindy: You had them last. I saw you put them in the pocket of your carry-on!

Lyle: They aren’t there. You must have taken them! You’re always forgetting what you do with things.

Cindy: That’s stupid to accuse me, when it’s your fault! You must have put them in another suitcase.

The airport patrol was urging traffic to move forward. Cindy felt pressured to move the car and began yelling at Lyle to hurry. Frustrated, Lyle jerked a suitcase off the

dolly and began rummaging through the contents.

Cindy: Stop it! Just because you’re mad, you don’t have to mess up everything. I packed carefully so things wouldn’t be wrinkled.

Lyle: Don’t tell me what to do! You’re just sitting there criticizing me. At least I’m doing something to find the tickets.

Cindy: Well, if you had just put them in my purse, like I told you to, this wouldn’t be happening.

Lyle: You’re always telling me what to do, like you don’t trust me or something!

Cindy: Lyle, people are watching. Just find the tickets.

Lyle: What do you think I’m trying to do?

Cindy: (Sighing and rolling her eyes heavenward) Why don’t you check the carry-on again?

Lyle did and found the tickets in the opposite side from where he had looked first. He checked in, then got back into the car. Cindy, feeling hurt, didn’t speak. And Lyle, feeling guilty and embarrassed, didn’t either. They boarded the plane acting like strangers—rather than honeymooners!

It was just a little argument. But Lyle and Cindy broke eight of the cardinal rules for fair fighting in marriage, and if they continue this destructive pattern in the years to

come, their marriage could be doomed for failure—or at the very least it will be poisoned by misunderstandings! What did they do wrong?

- 1. The issue became more important than their relationship.** They said hurtful things to each other in an attempt to solve the problem. If they really wanted to communicate acceptance of each other and not rejection, one of them would have said something like, “It really doesn’t matter who had the tickets last. We’ll find them somewhere. And someday we’ll look back and laugh over this ridiculous situation!”
- 2. Blame.** In a healthy argument, there is no room for blame. Blame is a weapon that wounds, causing the other to become more defensive and search for more powerful weapons to fire back. Blame escalates disagreements, never solves them! Love takes personal responsibility. Lyle should have said something like, “I remember putting the tickets in the carry-on. Did you happen to see them after that?” rather than immediately blaming Cindy.
- 3. Digging up past faults to justify a current perception.** Lyle said, “You’re always forgetting what you do with things,” and, “You’re always telling me what to do.” Such accusations hit below the belt. We all make mistakes, but love forgives and chooses to forget. One way to make sure the past doesn’t get dragged into present conflicts is to make a compact with

each other not to use statements with absolutes, like “always” or “never.”

- 4. Negative labels hurt.** Calling each other names, or inferring the other is stupid, dumb, crazy, or some other negative term, isn’t something lovers do. Love is patient and kind. Don’t try to excuse your rash, hurtful statements by quoting James, “No man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:8). What we forget is that James said a few verses later, “This should not be” (verse 10).
- 5. Acting out emotions.** You can’t control the negative emotions that hit you, but you can control what you do with them. You can react to them like Lyle did when he acted out his anger by impulsively pawing through the suitcase, or you can take a deep breath and respond in a rational way. “Those tickets are someplace. I’ll just have to search through the suitcase.” Love doesn’t react; it responds in such a way that further negative emotions such as guilt and embarrassment are avoided.
- 6. Demanding or bossing the other person.** It’s one thing to make a suggestion to a person but quite another to boss him or her around with words such as, Quit it! Stop! Shut up! These are authority-laden words that make the receiver feel inferior and should never be used between equals such as married partners.
- 7. Yelling, or raising one’s voice.** Yelling is another authority-laden way to put down a spouse. It’s a control

mechanism, as is crying or pouting. The negative show of emotion can be threatening to others, causing either a fight or flight response. If the spouse is strong-willed, the typical response will be to yell back, saying things both will later regret. If the flight response is chosen, the yelling manipulates the other to apologize prematurely. Nothing is solved; the one being yelled at merely buries the resentment and bitterness.

8. Punishing each other with the silent treatment. Conflicts are problems to be solved—as soon as possible. Silence, unless it is called for “time-out” to allow tempers to cool and rational thinking to return, seldom promotes reconciliation. Instead, the longer the silence and alienation is allowed to continue, the more anger smolders beneath the surface, the greater the likelihood that conflict will erupt again, and the more difficult it will be to reconcile.

But before you judge this couple too harshly, Lyle and Cindy had made one promise to each other on their honeymoon that came in quite handy a couple of hours later as they were reclining in seats 14 A and B watching the sun begin to set. What was the promise that saved their honeymoon from being ruined by this petty conflict? It's found in Ephesians 4:26: “Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.” Note that it doesn't say, “Don't go to bed angry.” For most, sundown comes a number of hours before bedtime, giving the couple

plenty of time to reconcile and enjoy some positive time together before bed. This is very important for wives. It's great for a married couple to have sex after a conflict as a way of sealing the forgiveness process, but a husband needs to realize it takes time for a wife to be wooed and ready for lovemaking, especially if any hurtful things have been said to her in the heat of an argument.

Marriage is a blending process.

Many couples are shocked when they have their first argument. The more similarities a couple has, the more they are alike in personality, interests, and values, the more respect they have for each other, and the more easy-going, the fewer conflicts they are likely to have. But if they are living to the fullest, enjoying the full spectrum of emotions that God created humans to experience, they will have conflicts.

Marriage can be compared with making music. Each partner brings his or her own voice to the relationship. Sometimes the melody is sweetest when the partners sing in unison. At other times it's best when the individual voices blend melody and harmony. Sometimes music also has dissonance when it appears the notes are in conflict. But in a good marriage—or great music—the dissonance moves toward resolution and completeness. Marriage is the process of singing life's song together. It doesn't mean giving up your unique individuality and becoming lost in the identity of the other. It means submitting to each other to have a couple identity—to be truly married and not just married singles. The blending process

that makes this possible is called communication. The question for married husbands and wives to consider is, Do you care enough to communicate, even though it may at times be painful?

Tossing Words Between Husbands and Wives

Communication is like a ball game. One throws a message to the other, hoping it will be caught. The closer the players, the clearer the message, and the straighter the toss, the more likely it will be caught. The tone of voice and the nonverbal messages sent by body language and gestures sometimes garble the words. But when it comes to communicating in marriage, tossing words back and forth is more complicated than one would normally expect between two persons of the same sex.

The problem is that men and women are not just in two different communication leagues, when they toss the ball (the message) they're not even playing the same game. It's as if one is playing soccer and the other football, and somehow they've got to make sense of it all.

Here are some typical problems in gender communication:

1. Winning vs. relating. The only way to win in a marital conflict is for the couple to win. That means that both husband and wife have to give a little to reach a winning compromise. Men aren't brought up this way. They are brought up to win (period)! They create relationships through physical contact and competition, and they value inde-

pendence. Women are more interested in conformity and compromise in order to have a feeling of connectedness. In their rule book, conflict and competitiveness threaten relationships. Men are more likely to exhibit dominance in their conversations by frequently interrupting, talking more, talking simultaneously, and pausing less often. That's why it is so difficult for some women to talk with their husbands. She gets angry and frustrated when he dominates the conversation. While she is dying to communicate her feelings, he is analyzing her and telling her what to do, thinking he is fixing things. Sometimes the only way women can communicate their feelings or get their messages across is to write them down for their husbands to read. Men generally resist this method—that is, until they experience the exhilarating feeling of true intimacy that is possible with heart and soul bonding.

2. Direct-informational vs. indirect-relational. Typically, men use approximately 25,000 words a day—most before they get home in the evening. They use short sentences with a high proportion of nouns and verbs, few qualifiers like *perhaps* or *maybe*, and few tag questions like, *isn't it?* They say what they mean, give direct commands, and lecture better than they listen. When men get together, they talk about facts like football scores or the stock-market activity, rather than about family and relationships.

Women, on the other hand, may use twice as many words—perhaps more than 50,000 words a day—most of which wives save to share with their husbands at the end of the day—when husbands have already used up most of their daily supply! Women are more indirect, making proposals rather than demands. They are more likely to say, “You are going to pick up the laundry, aren’t you?” rather than, “Don’t forget the laundry.” Women talk to establish a relationship and intimacy. When they talk together, it’s about people, children, and family; and they enjoy giving interesting but irrelevant details. This, to most men, is a waste of time.

3. Expressing feelings vs. processing information. Men swap stories and jokes to access their feelings and are much more likely to act out emotions rather than talk them out. Women need to share their feelings verbally. That’s what makes them feel close, understood, and loved. Most women feel alienated or left out of their husband’s lives when their husbands don’t do the same.

Men focus on the literal verbal message, rather than getting hung up on the nonverbal stuff. Questions are to be answered, rather than used as a way to start a conversation. That’s why you get the stereotype husband sitting across the breakfast table from his wife, with his nose in the paper while at the same time answering her involved questions with a mere “Yes” or “No.”

For a man Yes means Yes, while women nod their heads and say “Yes” or “Uh-huh” as a way of letting you know they are listening—not because they are agreeing with you.

4. Keeping involved vs. escaping. The amazing fact is that even though men seem relatively uninvolved in relationships and shared feelings, marital battles may affect them more acutely. They get upset physiologically and stay upset longer. They squirm more when a discussion turns ugly. Less blood gets pumped into their extremities. Their heart rate and blood pressure go up—as their bodies get an adrenaline rush preparing for fight or flight. To escape the awful feelings caused by an attack from their wives, too often men turn themselves off, go silent, and walk out.

All this is very confusing to the new husband and wife trying hard to play the same communication game as their spouse. Especially confusing to a wife is that during courting days, the man she married did take time to communicate, looked into her eyes, and listened to her feelings. What she didn’t know was that this was courting behavior—not natural behavior. He was on a hunt to find the right person and was interested in learning everything possible about her. But once the hunt is over, most men resort back to using words to communicate facts, tell people what to do, and solve problems, rather than sharing their private thoughts and feelings.

The good news is, most couples who stay together eventually learn that good marital

communication is characterized by openness, relaxation, expressiveness, friendliness, and attentiveness. It's the only way for them to experience true intimacy. The bad news is, many don't learn this lesson soon enough to save their marriages!

Ten Rules for Avoiding Intimacy

Communication is the key to intimacy. It's the only way to achieve a sense of unity and oneness. If you want to avoid intimacy, here's what you should do:

1. Act as if nothing ever bothers

you. Don't share your feelings—especially not your negative ones like anger. Keep the lid on. Never lose control.

2. In a conflict, retreat. Pout. Give the other person the silent treatment. Don't explode; just make sure you get even.

3. Always keep busy. Make sure your spouse knows that productivity is far more important to you than relationships.

4. Look out for number 1. Make sure you're first. Fight to win.

5. Schedule your time and stick to it. Limit lovemaking, conversation, or play to their allotted slots. Live by the motto "Time is money."

6. Always stand up for yourself. Don't back down or be made to feel weak by negotiating and compromising.

7. When something goes wrong, blame others. Try to make others feel guilty and responsible for your dissatisfactions, failures, or unhappiness.

8. When you find something you

don't like in your spouse, try to change it. Assume you know best what is good for the other, and assume you understand your spouse better than he or she understands himself or herself.

9. Don't tell your spouse what you want and need. Tell yourself, If she or he really loves me, she or he would know how to please me without asking.

10. Insist on doing things the way your parents did.

What does it take to be a good communicator?

1. Maintain a safe climate. Both partners must feel secure enough to say what's on their minds and not feel threatened or worried about critical and judgmental statements being thrown back at them. One way to make this happen is to live by the golden rule and resolve to never say anything that you wouldn't want said to you.

2. Be a good listener. Turn off the TV, put down the paper, and get rid of other distractions, take time, look the other person in the eye, and listen without interrupting. Ask for clarification. Say, "Is this what I hear you saying?"

3. Practice self-disclosure. Be willing to confront and share thoughts about various issues, past pain, and present feelings. Relational issues can't be solved until they are brought to the bargaining table.

4. Discuss touchy subjects. While

some topics may provoke anxiety or apprehension, in a caring, loving relationship, no subject should be off limits for discussion. Don't dismiss the other person's point of view as unimportant. When presenting your side, be specific. Don't generalize or exaggerate. Express your feelings about the subject and the reasons for your point of view. Then give the other person ample time to do the same. It's all right to agree to disagree! Just because you're married, you don't have to feel the same about everything.

5. Presume the best about the other.

No character assassinations—and don't jump to conclusions. Instead, presume the other innocent, unless proven guilty. Get the facts from the source, not from hearsay. Over a lifetime, this rule will save thousands of critical words from ever being spoken.

6. Count to 10—or more—before responding.

Let James 1:19 be your guide. "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry." It's difficult to be highly emotional and think clearly at the same time. Call "time-out," cool down, and set a time to talk when you both have the emotional energy and time to work things out. Not everything has to be handled immediately. It's surprising how different issues look after a good night's sleep.

7. Discuss one issue at a time. Stay on the topic. Don't store up problems and then dump them all on your spouse at

once. When you have a confrontation, stick to the topic. If another issue is brought up, write it down and arrange for a time when it can be solved, but don't try to solve everything at once.

8. Keep it private. When you don't agree, keep it between the two of you. It's unfair to pull in reinforcements. When a third party is brought into an argument, it's called triangling—and someone always ends up getting hurt. Family members are lousy counselors! When the two of you can't solve the problem, get professional help.

9. If wrong, swallow your pride and admit it. Don't be afraid to say, "I did it! I'm so sorry I hurt you. Please forgive me." Someone has to break the stalemate between two strong wills and start the reconciliation process. Be willing to take the first step.

10. Make Psalm 19:14 your daily prayer.

"May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer."

11. Ask God to be your mediator. One couple who was struggling with many unresolved issues made a compact with each other that whenever they faced a troublesome conflict, they would sit down facing each other, hold each other's hands, and pray for God to mediate. They called these prayers white-knuckle prayers, since they sometimes gripped each other so hard their knuckles turned white!

As presented in Lesson 7, it is help-

ful to think of a couple's relationship with God as a triangle. Put God at the top and the husband and wife at the other two points. Remember, the closer the couple comes to God, the closer they get to each other. Prayer changes things. It reduces anger and increases rational thinking and the desire to help

each other rather than hurt each other.

12. Celebrate every victory. After the dust has settled and all is forgiven, couples should embrace and recognize the victory they have just experienced. "We did it! We were completely at odds with each other, and the atmosphere was tense. But we've solved it. And

Steps to Reconciliation

When we stand before God, we are 100 percent responsible for our behaviors. Reconciliation is not a matter of "who's to blame." It is a matter of making our heart right with God, since any offense to one of His created children is an offense to Him.

1. MAKE THE FIRST MOVE

- Be as specific as possible when describing YOUR part of the offense.
- Ask questions to see if your perspective of the offense matches the other person's.
- Don't make excuses.
- Allow the offended person to share his or her pain with you. Listen without defending. Example: "Because your heart is dear to me, I want to be sure I know exactly what I did to offend you because I don't want to do it again."

2. EMPATHIZE

- Identify with the offended person at the feeling level.
- This takes place at the heart level and is putting yourself in his or her shoes.
- This is where spiritual healing takes place.
- Use "feeling" words to describe how you understand the other person's hurt. Example: "I can see how you felt belittled, ignored, and demeaned by me. . . ."

3. REBUILD

- Build trust again by putting in safeguards and fail-safes to reassure the other person that the same offense will not be repeated.
- Suggest "trigger" words he or she can use to warn you in advance.
- Put reminder notes where only you will see them.

4. ASK FORGIVENESS

- Ask directly for forgiveness. This frees you from unnecessary guilt and remorse.
- This frees the offended party from bitterness that poisons the spirit.

5. PRAY

- Praying before God heals and seals the relationship before God.

we've learned a lot more about each other. That's reason to celebrate!" Behavior that is rewarded is repeated. Couples should reward themselves for reconciliation!

Rules for Communicating Feelings

Here are three important rules about communicating feelings that husbands and wives should agree on.

Rule 1: Feelings may not be good or bad; they just may be! Some feelings are immediate responses to experiences. Such feelings are real and must be appropriately processed.

Rule 2: Each person owns his or her own feelings. In other words, you choose whether or not to let something somebody else does bother you. When you report a negative feeling, it should not be interpreted as criticism. When someone says, "I feel angry when you're not on time," it could be taken to mean, "It's all your fault. If you were on time, I wouldn't be angry." This can cause the other person to become defensive, and an argument usually results.

Anger is what is known as a "secondary" emotion. What needs to be acknowledged is the "primary" or true emotion underlying the anger. This feeling can more easily be discussed and problems solved. The common primary feelings are hurt, loneliness, sadness, fear, and guilt.

How much better if both agree to be responsible for their own reactions. No one makes you angry. You choose to allow a certain situation to make you angry. When you own your own feelings, you can discuss

these feelings without the fear that you will hurt the other person's ego or cause him or her to become defensive. Talking about primary emotions, rather than your anger, helps to defuse the anger. So don't resent it when your spouse mentions a negative feeling. Instead, encourage him or her to talk about it. If he or she feels reluctant, try to put in words what you think your spouse may be feeling, "It embarrasses you when I make you late for an appointment." Knowing that you understand makes the other feel safer in venting more. Then when the emotion has been vented and defused, you can add, "How should we solve the problem?" Research has shown that expressing angry feelings only escalates the problem rather than solving it. So it is important to explore the primary emotion(s) underlying the anger.

Rule 3: Use "I feel" statements to clarify your own feelings, and "you feel" statements to clarify the other person's feelings. An "I feel" statement is an appropriate way to bring up an issue that needs to be discussed and resolved. Say, "I feel frustrated when I'm trying to tell you something and you're interrupting." A "you feel" statement encourages the other person to share feelings. "I can tell you feel upset by what I just said."

The only way to solve problems is to talk about them. Buried negative feelings are a barrier to intimacy—both intimacy with your spouse and with God.

King David knew how to defuse his feelings. He made some terrible mistakes. You can't get much worse than having an affair

The Languages of Love¹

People say, "I love you," in many ways. Have you ever considered what it is that makes you feel most loved? Rank order the following items to determine what is your primary love language:

- Words of encouragement
- Acts of service
- Gifts
- Spending meaningful time together
- Touch and physical closeness

Now here's where things can get interesting. You not only feel loved, but you give love in your primary love language. Let's say you really feel loved when you get gifts, so when you want to show love, your tendency will be to give a gift. The receiver, however, may understand another love language better, and wishes that the two of you could just spend a little more time together, hold hands, offer an encouraging word, or do something to help.

Can you see how a couple who has two different primary love languages can have a tough time communicating love?

To get some experience in deciphering the primary love languages of those you love, begin asking them what makes them feel loved, and begin practicing that language. See what a difference it might make in your relationship.

with another man's wife, getting her pregnant, and then arranging for her husband to be murdered! Yet God said that David was a man after His own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). How could that be? How could David and

God have such an intimate relationship when David was such a scoundrel? Part of the answer has to do with the way David processed his feelings.

1. He said, "I'm sorry!"
2. He took responsibility for his behavior—and his feelings. He didn't blame God—or Bathsheba. Some men would have argued, "But God, You know You made men to respond sexually to what they see. It was all Bathsheba's fault. She shouldn't have been bathing naked in full view of where I usually walk."
3. He told God how he felt. He didn't hold all his guilt and anger inside and let it smolder and grow out of control. When bad things happened and he felt God was out to get him, he let God know. Read Psalm 38, for example!

If you want intimacy with your spouse, or with God, you must be willing to share your feelings. Start practicing those "I feel" statements!

Understanding the Role of Conflict in a Marriage

Conflict isn't the problem in marriage. No two people are alike. Husbands and wives will have different opinions and ideas. It's how they handle the conflict that either bonds them together or breaks them up. A couple's goal should not be to eliminate all conflict from their relationship. The goal should be to handle conflict in a way that brings better understanding, communication, and shared viewpoints.

Danger signs are continual fights, argu-

ments, debates, and hostile flare-ups over the same issues again and again without solving anything. It is unhealthy if conflicts are followed by prolonged periods of nonverbal communication such as sour looks, physical distance, and cold body language. It's not good when one person always wins, and the other backs down. Beware when verbal messages become abusive and are intended to hurt, demean, or punish, or when one attempts to manipulate, force, bribe, or in some other way control the other.

The bottom line: It's not how much couples disagree that leads to the divorce court; it's not lack of compatibility by itself that dooms a marriage, *but how a couple handles their differences*. If they hack away at problems and the problems keep coming back to haunt them, they're in trouble. Eventually, these negative encounters will deplete whatever reserves they have in each other's love bank accounts. (See Lesson 6.)

But if they solve the problems and move on to counter each negative interaction with five positive ones, the couple will make it. Their deposits in each other's love banks must be at least five times as often as their withdrawals. That's why words of praise and appreciation are so important—even during the discussion of a conflict!²

The question is, If five positives to one negative is the ratio that keeps marriages from breaking up, why aim for the lowest possible ratio? Instead, a couple should build a healthy safety margin into their marriage and aim for ten to one, or even twenty positives to one negative. That's the reason one of the healthiest things couples can do

for their marriages is plan fun things to do together—dates—where positive communication happens naturally. It's one of the easiest ways to keep making deposits in each other's love banks.

Levenson and Gottman suggest that marriages that last come in three communication styles: **The validators**, who calmly air their views, try to understand the other's position, and reach a compromise. **The volatile couples** who, although deeply romantic, jump at the chance to launch a rip-roaring argument and try steamrolling their way to victory. **The conflict-avoidant couple**, who may argue, but they don't feel obliged to persuade the other of their views or find a middle ground. They sidestep issues or simply agree to disagree and drop the subject.

If both husband and wife have the same communication styles, coupled with at least five positives to every negative, their marriage has a good chance to succeed. The problem is when there is a mismatch. For example, when a conflict-avoidant person marries a volatile one! But even if couples are mismatched, it doesn't have to lead to divorce. Couples can learn how to communicate with each other—if they care enough to communicate. And their marriage can be strong and healthy if they will just keep making far more regular deposits than withdrawals in each other's love bank accounts. It is a good idea for you now to begin practicing some of these communication principles with your friends, roommate, and family. After all, communication is an art and a skill to be practiced.



Anchor Text

"Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones" (Proverbs 16:24).



Bible Search

1. The nagging wife and the negligent husband

A. Read the following verses and then put the counsel given about a nagging wife into a letter of advice to one of your

friends who is about to become a bride.

(1) Proverbs 11:22.

(2) Proverbs 12:4.

(3) Proverbs 17:1.

(4) Proverbs 18:22.

(5) Proverbs 19:13.

(6) Proverbs 21:9.

(7) Proverbs 30:21, 23.

B. Write out seven proverbs you would create about the negligent husband for a soon-to-be-married groom. The proverbs should reflect the masculine

Reaction

Discussion Questions

1. Cindy and Lyle reconciled because they had promised each other to not let the sun go down on an argument. What promise or promises could they have made to each other that would have helped them avoid this conflict in the beginning?
2. When two married people love each other, why is it so difficult for them to communicate?
3. What behaviors get in the way of intimacy in marriage?

4. Since sharing feelings is so important in marriage, what could a spouse do to help the other feel more comfortable in sharing?
5. Why is conflict good for a marriage?
6. When is conflict destructive to a marriage?
7. What do you think is the most important factor in determining whether couples will stay together or break up over their conflicts?

Personal Response

How open have you been to share your feelings with God? Why not start a journal and express your feelings to God like David did (especially in Psalm 38) and see what difference it makes in your relationship.

perspectives in this lesson.

2. Intimacy with God

Read Psalm 38; then answer the following:

- A. What emotions was David experiencing when he wrote Psalm 38? (Note verse and emotion.)
- B. What verses indicate that David was reaching out to God, realizing that God was his salvation?
- C. List all the phrases that show how rotten David was feeling.

D. What was David's initial emotional state?

E. After David got it all out, what was his emotional state?

F. What does this have to do with intimacy?

Endnotes

1. Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages* (Chicago, Ill.: Northfield Publishing, 1992).
2. Adapted from Robert Levenson and John Gottman's research on conflicts and marriage as reported by Anthony Schmitz, "The Secret to a Good Marriage," *Health*, March/April 1995, 51-55.

Practical Application

1. Analyze your own family's communication.

- A. How open do you feel your family is in sharing feelings? Use a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most open. Give examples that justify your rating.
- B. How would you rate their ability to deal with conflict? Use a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most productive. Give examples that justify your rating.

C. What effective communication rules do you wish your family would practice more often?

Note: If you don't choose to learn different communication skills, you will probably resort to the same ones you observed as a child.

D. Now that you have learned about healthy communication, what could you do while you're single to increase your communication skills?

2. Writing Communication Scripts.

Choose a typical conflict that husbands and wives might argue about. Write a script having the couple do at least ten things they shouldn't do when having an argument. Then rewrite the script having at least one spouse use as many positive communication skills as possible.