Introduction: Why do so many of our “dreams” for marriage end in nightmares?

God’s Design for Marriage: “The Blueprint”

Genesis 1 & 2
God’s “Game-plan” for Marriage: “The Process”

For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

Genesis 2:24 (NASB)

1. “For this cause. . .”
   - response to God = obedience

2. “A man shall leave his father and mother. . .”
   - response to parents = independence
   - key = emotional and financial detachment
   - no loss of respect, but shift in loyalty

3. “And shall cleave to his wife. . .”
   - response to our spouse = allegiance, loyalty
   - recognition of my need for my spouse
   - decision making with us in focus
   - key = requires death-blow to self

4. “Shall become one flesh. . .”
   - response to life’s pressures and demands
   - a dynamic process of “inseparable, life-long commitment and fidelity to one another”
   - each must nourish his/her own flesh of which your spouse is now a part
   - involves progressive intimacy of our spirits, our souls (mind, will, emotions) and our bodies
God’s “Desire” for Marriage: “The Reward”

*And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

Genesis 2:25 (NASB)

**On A Scale Of 1 To 5 rate the following:**

(1 = strongly disagree / 5 = strongly agree)

1. Evidence of *Spiritual* Intimacy
   
   _____ My spouse and I often tend to agree in many of the important issues concerning values and beliefs.
   
   _____ We seem to practice honest confession followed by genuine forgiveness when one of us has hurt the other.
   
   _____ As a couple, our spiritual closeness through prayer or sharing Scripture insights is quite good.

2. Evidence of *Emotional* Intimacy

   _____ I remember special times when my spouse and I shared strong emotions, like grief, sadness, joy, or brokenness.
   
   _____ We seem to be good at giving one another undivided attention when listening or talking.
   
   _____ Verbalizing my needs and desires concerning our relationship to my spouse would be normal for me.

3. Evidence of *Physical* Intimacy

   _____ We seem to prioritize frequent times of quality talking and having dates together.

   _____ I’m comfortable communicating my sexual desires and preferences to my spouse.

   _____ I’m very satisfied with my spouse’s sensitivity in meeting my sexual needs.
God’s Purpose for Marriage: “The Impact”

1. **PHYSICAL REPRODUCTIVE and PLEASURE**
   - Genesis 1:26-28
   - Proverbs 5:18-20

2. **RELATIONAL Intimacy**
   - Genesis 2:18, 25

3. **SPIRITUAL Impact**
   - Ephesians 5:22-33

Discussion Questions: For those who are married

1. List the top two to three things that initially attracted you to your mate (before you were married).

2. Describe the most memorable or meaningful “date” or experience you shared with your mate prior to marriage.

3. Share one “personal snapshot” from your honeymoon that you still cherish to this day.

4. **For those with children:** Describe how the birth of your first child together made you feel about your mate, life, and God.

5. Share one thing that your mate has accomplished that made you very proud of him/her.

Discussion Questions: For those who are single

1. List three couple’s marriages that you admire and tell why.

2. What “dynamics” in those relationships best explain the quality of their marriage?

3. List the top three to four things one should look for in the opposite sex to have a lasting marriage in light of today’s message.

4. Discuss the phrase “having a great marriage isn’t so much about finding the right person as it is becoming the right person.”
Introduction: “A problem clearly defined is 50% solved”

Premise #1: We all have legitimate needs/longings.

Premise #2: God originally designed our spouse to be a major tool in His hands to meet those needs/longings.

Premise #3: The “Fall” (sin, Genesis 3) short-circuited man’s relationship with God, his mate, and his world.

Premise #4: What was once the most natural relational response (other-centered, grace-giving) is now the most unnatural of responses, requiring supernatural enablement and hard work to achieve.
Four barriers to intimacy:

◆ Spiritual barriers = Sin, shame, selfishness

  • Differences - Originally designed to compliment and complete one another; have become sources of friction, confusion, and competition.
  
  • Sharing - Has turned to shame.
  
  • Givers - Have become takers and manipulators.
  
  • Builders - Have become blamers.
  
  • Openness - Has given way to hiding.

The Answer = GRACE

Resource: The Bible; Genesis 3

◆ Psychological barriers = Personality differences

  • Introvert vs. Extrovert

  • Assertive vs. Easy Going

  • Factual vs. Abstract

  • Systematic vs. Spontaneous

The Answer = UNDERSTANDING

Resource: The Intimacy Factor by David and Jan Stoops
◆ Gender barriers = Male / Female differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Males Tend to Be…</th>
<th>Females Tend to Be…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More achievement focused</td>
<td>More relationally focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More theoretical and generalist</td>
<td>More specific and detail oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More information oriented in communication</td>
<td>More emotion oriented in communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More action oriented</td>
<td>More verbal oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More facts oriented</td>
<td>More intuitively oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More goal oriented</td>
<td>More supportive and nurturing oriented</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Above taken from To Understand Each Other by Paul Tournier)

The Answer = APPRECIATION

Resources: His Needs Her Needs by Willard F. Harley, Jr.  
Men Are From Mars, Women are From Venus by John Gray

◆ Historical barriers = “Our Baggage” from the past

- Family Upbringing
- Traumatic Events
- False Beliefs / "Games We Play"
- Rejection and Past Relationships

The Answer = KNOWLEDGE

Resources: The Search for Significance by Robert S. McGee;  
Unstuck: How to Overcome the Pain in Your Past, by Chip Ingram
Summary:

The Result: We knowingly and unknowingly put up “protective walls” that keep us from being deeply touched and loved in ways we are desperate to experience.

- **Women** focus on **RELATIONSHIPS**, struggle with **loneliness**, and fear abandonment.
- A woman’s wrong strategy centers around **CONTROLLING**.
- **Men** focus on **IMPACT**, struggle with **futility**, and fear **failure**.
- A man’s wrong strategy centers around **COMPENSATING**.

God’s solution: Honest, grace-filled, understanding, **communication**, to lovingly “pull down” the walls, risk vulnerability, and restore intimacy.

Discussion Questions (Married & Single):

1. What **new** insight did you gain about **BARRIERS** in your marriage? In your relationships (singles)?

2. How does understanding these barriers adjust your **EXPECTATIONS** in marriage? In your most significant relationships (singles)?

3. What specific step do you discern God would have you take to begin “pulling-down” the walls in your marriage? In your most meaningful relationships (singles)?
Introduction: It all started with “the car.”

   The issue: Communication or Chaos

Understanding the Communication Process:

   • Definition: The Meeting of MEANINGS.
     
     “Communication is the privilege of exchanging vulnerabilities.”
     Norman Wright

     “Communication is the process of sharing yourself verbally and nonverbally in such a way that the other person can both accept and understand what you are saying.”
     Norman Wright

   • The Complete Message
     
     Words Alone = 7% of meaning

     Tone of Voice = 38% of meaning

     Facial Expression
     Gestures - Posture = 55% of meaning

     Total Non-Verbal
• Five Levels of Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>Cliché Conversations</td>
<td>Safe, shallow, polite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Reporting Facts</td>
<td>Refers basically to third person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Idea’s or Judgments</td>
<td>Risk begins here (attachment of self with facts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Feelings and Emotions</td>
<td>Laying self on the line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>Open Communication</td>
<td>Total honesty, “mutual understanding,” vulnerability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Taken from Why Am I Afraid To Tell You Who I Am? by John Powell)

5 Principles that will transform communication in your home:

1. **BE HONEST** - Speak the truth in love.

   \[15\]...but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all {aspects} into Him, who is the head, {even} Christ, \[25\]Finish, then, with lying, and tell your neighbor the truth. For we are not separate units but intimately related to one another in Christ.

   Ephesians 4:15 (NASB), :25 (Phillips)

2. **BE ANGRY** - Deal with anger appropriately.

   \[26\]If you are angry, be sure that it is not out of wounded pride or bad temper \[27\]Never go to bed angry - don’t give the devil that sort of foothold.

   Ephesians 4:26-27 (Phillips)
3. **BE DILIGENT** - Work hard on your relationship.

   If you used to be a thief you must not only give up stealing, but you must learn to make an honest living, so that you may be able to give to those in need.

   Ephesians 4:28 (Phillips)

4. **BE POSITIVE** - Don’t wound with your words.

   Let there be no more foul language, but good words instead - words suitable for the occasion, which God can use to help other people. Never hurt the Holy Spirit. He is, remember, the personal pledge of your eventual full redemption. Let there be no more resentment, no more slander and no more malicious remarks.

   Ephesians 4:29-31 (Phillips)

5. **BE FORGIVING** - Be the first to say, “I’m sorry.”

   Be kind to one another; be understanding. Be as ready to forgive others as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you.

   Ephesians 4:32 (Phillips)

**Practical skills and suggestions to enhance communication in your home:**

- **The conference** - A tool for listening

  Ask Three Questions:  
  1. What are you concerned about?  
  2. What do you wish?  
  3. What are you willing to do?

- **Word pictures** - A tool for understanding

- **“Care” lists** - A tool for building

  List seven simple, loving, “caring behaviors” that are non-conflict producing and not expensive that make you feel loved by your spouse.
Men
1. Communicates confidence in me
2. Shows affection
3. __________________ 
4. __________________ 
5. __________________ 
6. __________________ 
7. __________________ 

Women
1. He calls from work
2. Listens intently to me
3. __________________ 
4. __________________ 
5. __________________ 
6. __________________ 
7. __________________ 

Exchange lists with your spouse and determine to do at least two on his/her list daily for one week.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What did you learn about communication that was **new** or **helpful** to you?

2. Which of the **Five Biblical Principles** concerning communication from Ephesians 4 do you **do** well?

3. For which of the **Five Biblical Principles** do you need to ask God for grace and help to communicate in a way that would honor Him?

4. Which of the **skills** shared do you think would help your relationship the most? The Conference, Word Pictures, or the “Care” List

5. What specific step of faith are you going to take to improve the communication in your marriage?
Introduction: Your marriage can change for the better

Review: The Picture, The Problem, The Process
Four keys to intimacy: The Game-plan

1. The fuel of COMMITMENT - “A lifelong choice of unconditional love.”
   - The Mandate: Matthew 19:3-8
   - The Rationale:
   - The How:
   - Our Model: Hebrews 13:5b

2. The oil of COMMUNICATION - “A lifelong skill of learning to understand each other.”
   - The Mandate: Ephesians 4:15-16
   - The Rationale:
   - The How:
   - Our Model: Jeremiah 33:3
3. The tune-up of **CARING** - “An adventure of lifelong friendship, fun, and mutual fulfillment.”

- The Mandate: Genesis 2:18
- The Rationale:
- The How:
- Our Model: Matthew 11:28

4. The navigational system of **COMMISSION** - “A shared vision to impact the lives of others for Christ.”

- The Mandate: Matthew 28:19-20
- The Rationale:
- The How:
- Our Model: Matthew 4:19
Developing a personal game-plan for intimacy:

1. Tell your partner what kind of words and actions let you know that he/she is committed to you (i.e. pray together, set goals, lead financially, lead domestically, express affection, etc.) How will each of you seek to demonstrate your commitment to one another on a weekly basis?

2. When and what will you put into your daily/weekly schedule to facilitate ongoing communication in your marriage? Set actual times and days.

3. Plan a weekly activity to have fun and develop the friendship side of your marriage. Identify the activity, jot down at least two specific things to do together.

4. Identify three to four possible ways you and your mate (and even family) could demonstrate care and concern for others in the name of Christ. Set a time to discuss how to put your service ideas into action.

5. Who or what provides support and refreshment for you personally? Talk about specific ways to arrange your home life so each partner has time and same sex friendships that refresh, support and replenish.

IMPORTANT REMINDER!!!

Personal Time + Supportive Friends + Renewing Activities =
A “Fully Alive” You → Full Battery → to be a GIVER.
**Introduction**: What I learned on the sandlot from the “Barnes Boys”

Conflict is **normal**

Conflict is an **opportunity for growth**

Conflict must be **diffused** or it will **destroy**

Healthy conflict demands **rules** so no one gets hurt
God’s perspective on conflict:

- Conflict is inevitable in a fallen world
  
  "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."
  
  John 16:33 (NIV)

- Conflict flows from our differences and our selfishness

  - Differences in **belief** produce conflict. 
    
    Acts 15:1-35
  
  - Differences in **perspective** produce conflict. 
    
    Acts 15:36-41
  
  - Differences in **style** produce conflict. 
    
    Philippians 4:2-3
  
  - Selfish **desires** produce conflict. 
    
    James 4:1-3

  1What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? 2You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. 3When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.
  
  James 4:1-3 (NIV)

- Conflict is an Opportunity for Growth

  - In Christ, differences compliment vs. compete. 
    
    Philippians 2:1-2
  
  - In Christ, selfishness is transformed to servant-hood. 
    
    Philippians 2:3-4
  
  - In Christ, we can “fight fear” and safely. 
    
    Ephesians 4:25-32
The most common communication styles:

1. Turtles: The goal is to **AVOID**.
   - Can **CLAM UP** and not speak.
   - Can give the **COLD SHOULDER**.
   - Can **WITHDRAW** affection.
   - Can **AVOID** and **REDIRECT**.
   - Can run to **DIVERSIONARY** interests (alcohol, spending, pleasure).
   - **The natural inclination is to WITHDRAW.**

2. Sharks: The goal is to **WIN**.
   - Can try to be **MIND READERS**.
   - Can do **BLAME SHIFTING**.
   - Can keep **SCORE**.
   - Can use logic to **ESCAPE** emotional reality.
   - Can make **THREATS** or cause **HUMILIATION**.
   - **The natural inclination is to ATTACK.**
How to *diffuse* conflict in your marriage:

**D** - **DEFINE** the problem (on your own).  
Proverbs 15:14

**I** - **INITIATE** a time to talk.  
Matthew 5:23-24

**F** - **FOCUS** on the “perceived” problem, not the person.  
Proverbs 18:19

**F** - **FEEL** their pain (as though it were your own).  
Proverbs 17:17

**U** - **UNCOVER** the root symptoms.  
Proverbs 20:5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Root</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>Values, Priorities, Power / Control Issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Communication, Unmet Emotional Needs, Past History / Baggage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Laws</td>
<td>Loyalty, Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children / Work</td>
<td>Roles and/or Goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**S - SET** things right between you.  

1. Own your responsibility.  
2. Confess - “I was wrong. . .”  
3. Ask forgiveness - “Will you forgive me?”  

**E - ESTABLISH** a specific action plan that addresses the issue discussed  
(Write it down)  

- **Husband** - I commit to . . . by . . . (when?)  
- **Wife** - I commit to . . . by . . . (when?)  

**Discussion Questions:**  

1. How did your family handle conflict growing up?  

2. When conflict arises, do you tend to become more a “turtle” or a “shark?”  

3. What specifically did you learn about resolving conflict that was most helpful?  

4. Is there a specific issue in your marriage that needs to be diffused? Are you willing to put into practice the “Diffuse Conflict” game-plan you learned today? When and how will you go about it?
Introduction: Is your marriage a “dance” or a “debate”?

- A “Great Dance” Demands . . .
  - A Choreographer
  - Mutual Submission to His “steps”
  - Clarity of Roles
  - Practice, Practice, and More Practice

- A “Great Dance” Develops . . .
  - An Incredible Team
  - Balance, Timing, Rhythm, and Strength
  - Personal Joy and Joint Fulfillment
  - A Thing of Beauty
God’s design for “The Dance” of marriage:

Ephesians 5:21-33

- Mutual Submission to the Choreographer

  \textit{Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.}

  Ephesians 5:21 (NIV)

- A Word to Women – Follow His Lead

  \textit{Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.}

  Ephesians 5:22-24 (NIV)

- Who is leading the dance?
  - Who handles the money?
  - Who disciplines the children?
  - Who initiates discussion of future plans or problems?
  - Who asks the most questions and who makes the most statements?

- The Command

- The Reason
• What Does this Mean?
  • Marriage is not a 50/50 proposition.
  • There are specific ROLES and FUNCTIONS and lines of authority in marriage.
  • The woman VOLUNTARILY submits out of love for her husband.
  • The woman’s greatest FULFILLMENT and JOY will be achieved and embraced by following God’s design.

• What this Does Not Mean
  • The man calls ALL the shots in the marriage relationship.
  • The woman is a DOORMAT that she can’t voice her approval - that she should ever feel or be treated as an inferior.
  • The woman should submit to her husband’s UNREASONABLE, UNBIBLICAL, or DEVIAN'T demands.

Reference: Passive Men, Wild Women by Dr. Pierre Mornell

A Word to Men: Be Worthy of Following

25Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her26to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,27and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.28In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.29After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church--30for we are members of his body.

Ephesians 5:25-30 (NIV)
• **The Command** - Love your wife as Christ loved the Church.

• **The Purpose** - Help your wife reach her full potential.

• **What Does this Mean?**
  • The husband must love **SACRIFICIALLY**.

  • The husband must love **WITH INTENTION**.

  • The husband must love **SENSITIVELY**.

• **What this Does Not Mean**
  • The husband always **GIVES IN** to the wife.

  • The husband doesn’t have a life **OUTSIDE** of the marriage.

  • The husband **SMOTHERS** the wife or makes her feel totally **DEPENDENT** on him.
A Word to the World: It’s about the dance, not the dancers

31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” 32 This is a profound mystery— but I am talking about Christ and the church.

33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Ephesians 5:31-33 (NIV)

Conclusion - Is your marriage a “dance” or a “debate?”

Discussion Questions:

1. What new insight did you gain concerning the roles of men and women in marriage?

2. How has our culture made it difficult to function according to God’s design?

3. How have abuses in the church made it difficult to function according to God’s design?

4. How could focusing on “your role” vs. evaluating your mate’s role help you both “get in step” with God’s plan for your marriage?

Resources:
For those with unbelieving or unresponsive spouses – CD Series available at Living on the Edge: LIFT! The Awesome Power of Encouragement, Authentic: How to be a Christian without Being Religious, & Love One Another For more research on male/female roles - Book: Male & Female: Enjoying the Difference by Larry Crabb