**Marriage Enrichment Session Seven**

**Relationship Development**

**Communication (2)**

**Introduction**

A. Marriage enrichment has a *destination* without a *termination*

B. Recall the *Love-Bank Concept* (W. Harley, Jr)

 1. Actions and reactions are ***emotional*** deposits or withdrawals

 2. N**ourishing our unique emotional needs** is key to a joyful and

 romantic relationship

 a. what were the love-busters or love-fuelers?

C. Communication is vital for the *functioning* of marriage

 1. Communication is *meaningful connection* on the deepest level - **Cliché conversation**: “How was your day?” “I like your outfit.”

 - **Reporting facts about day/others**: no personal information

 - **Ideas/judgments:** share personal ideas, visions, decisions

 - **Feelings and emotions:** share feelings @ facts, ideas,

 - C**omplete emotional/personal communication:** risky because

 it makes you vulnerable and risks rejection.

 2. Communication includes *good conflict resolution skills*

 3. Communication has to do with your choices and consequences

**I. The Three Stages of Marriage**

 **A. The honeymoon-stage**

 1. Most of us *entered* marriage life in the ***giving-mode***

*I will do whatever I can do to make her/him happy and*

 *avoid anything that makes him/her unhappy, even if it*

 *makes me unhappy*

 2. We then consciously *chose* to ignore our ***take-mode***

*I do whatever I do to make myself happy even if that means making him/her unhappy*

 3. Along with that came the ***hope-mode***

*I hope that he/she will also meet my needs and fill my emotional tanks*

 4. Honeymoon: When both spouses are in ‘giving-mode’

a. Romantic love flourishes in a relationship where both give

b. Reason: *because ‘caring love is the fuel for romantic love’*

 **B. The Conflict Stage**

 1. Marital conflict is *unavoidable* and not necessarily bad

 a. all are sinners and all need *(daily) conversion*

 b. conversion is always the fruit of *confrontation – conflict*

c. a young marriage with no-conflict could mean two things

2. If good, a conflict should lead to a *negotiated resolution and*

 *growth*

3. What happens when *no apologies or mending takes place?*

a. either one person ‘buries her/himself’ to keep peace

b. or the relationship moves *to conflict stage*

 4. What is the conflict stage?

 a. when the give-mode is more/more switched off and the

 take- mode is in full-swing

b. communication now is filled with *negative emotions*

 c. the mode now becomes *fight for your right*

 **C. The withdrawal stage**

 1. If the conflict stage isn’t settled, it moves to *withdrawal stage*

 a. instead of *fight* we go into *flight*

 b. this stage is well described as the *emotional divorce*

**II. The roots of marital conflict**

 A. The contrast business meetings and marriage meetings

 1. Why often *successful* at business/work meetings while a

 dismal failure in home conflicts?

 B. What is the main reason for the marital conflicts?

1. The marriage relationshipinvolves our deepest ***emotional*** *personhood that* hungers for nourishment and

 reacts negatively when not given

 2. What is the real problem in these *marital conflicts?*

 a. we let *emotions* control us in resolving problems!

 C. An additional reason: *the mercenary attitude at work vs. home*

1. Misbehavior at work may cost you your job

2. However, misbehavior at home will cost you your marriage

D. Self-reflection about your conflicts with your spouse: *check your*

 *e-motion-control*

**III. The fruits of untreated marital conflict**

A. Dividing issues remain unclear or even undefined

 B. Conflict drives us more and more apart

 C. Affects family life – children

 D. Spiritual growth and closeness with God are impeded or broken

 E. Ends with divorce, either actually or emotionally/physically

**IV. The Recipe to avoid marital conflict dousing marriage-love**

A. Commitment to *the Policy of Joint Agreement (Willard Harley, Jr)*

1. In good marriage *our spouse’s interest* ***AND*** *our own*

 *interest* is to be considered simultaneously

 a. the one should not suffer for the benefit of the other!

2. In the *Policy of Joint Agreement* the mind or intelligence

 resolve your conflicts instead of your emotions

 3. The *Policy of Joint Agreement* has one rule

 ***Never do anything without an enthusiastic agreement between you and your spouse!***

4. Committing to this policy, forces you always *to consider*

 *his/her needs or feelings as well as your own!*

5. Committing to this policy, obliges you to *negotiate*

6. Committing to this policy, prevents ***reluctant agreement***

 **Golden rule:** *If a decision is not in the interest of both of you, it is not in the best interest of your relationship*

7. Benefits of living by this *Policy of Joint Agreement*

 a. it keeps you sensitive about the other’s feelings for it forces you *always to ask “How do you feel about what I*

 *would like to do?”*

 b. it will prevent you from *doing* ***unintentionally***

 ***thoughtless*** *things that will hurt your relationship*

c. it will make you work like a team instead of two people

d. it will force you to *change your plan – to negotiate or find alternatives that* ***feed or honor your emotional needs!***

 8. If you not *operated with Policy of Joint Agreement*, then end

 this day with committing to each other

 ***From today I will never do anything without an***

 ***enthusiastic agreement between you and me!***

Next session:

 1. Additional ground rules on avoiding marital conflict

 2. Giving and handling criticism within marriage life

**Home Construction Exercises**

1. We all know that true love really consists in *giving* whereas selfish love consists of *taking*. Identify in yourself some examples in which you display(ed) selfish love. Share them with your spouse.

2. Discuss how *selfish love* impacted your marriage relationship.

3. Think of instances in which your spouse showed you *unconditional love*

 *(giving)* and make it a point to thank her for them (again).

4. Think back of an instance in which you showed unconditional love

(make sure it really was *unconditional!)*. When such love isn’t reciprocated by your spouse’s care, how did that make you feel? Do you think that it is fair that the one *gives more* than the other who *takes more?*

5. Recall a major conflict you have had lately. How did the *giving love*

and the *selfish love* contribute to that conflict? Looking back at it now,

 how should you have resolved it.

6. Discuss the *Policy of Joint Agreement* by the following questions.

 a. To date, has this been your pattern of deciding?

 b. Why would this be a difficult thing to commit to?

 c. What are the advantages of always asking first, “How does this make you feel or how do you feel about what I would like to do?”

 d. Have either of you ever avoided asking each other about what

you were planning because you knew you were going to do it anyway?

 e. Recall some decisions you made independently and consider how

it would have been better for your marriage (and yourself) if you had been forced to stick to the Policy of Joint Agreement?