



>> communication post-getaway projects

workbook

COMMUNICATION POST-GETAWAY PROJECTS

FamilyLife Publishing®

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FAMILYLIFE®

weekend to
remember®

communication post-getaway projects

post-getaway projects

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it's about connection
getaway projects

In the weeks following a Weekend to Remember® getaway, it's important for you and your spouse to continue talking about your relationship. A lot of information is packed into a Weekend to Remember, and the application projects you completed during the getaway barely scratched the surface in helping you apply God's blueprints to your relationship.

These follow-up projects on communication skills are designed to help you grow deeper in your relationship. Consider completing one of these projects every week or two. You might even want to make a date with your spouse to have dinner together and use these questions to spark your conversation.

For projects on a variety of topics to strengthen your marriage visit FamilyLife.com/WTR.

project

1

can we talk?

our communication toolbox

individual section

Setting: Find a place to be alone, but near your spouse, to complete this section.

Instructions: Answer these questions, and then meet with your spouse to complete the interaction section.

1. The things my spouse does best as a communicator include the following (check the circles):

- Listening
- Expressing his or her feelings
- Choosing the right words
- Remaining calm
- Resolving disagreements
- Choosing the right time to talk
- Encouraging me
- Giving focused attention
- Pointing us back to God
- Seeing the big picture
- Quickly granting forgiveness
- Other _____

2. Things I need to improve upon as a communicator include the following (check the circles):

- Listening
- Expressing my feelings
- Choosing the right words
- Remaining calm
- Resolving disagreements
- Choosing the right time to talk
- Encouraging my spouse
- Giving focused attention
- Pointing us back to God
- Seeing the big picture
- Quickly granting forgiveness
- Other _____

3. In the general session, you learned about being a good listener. Take some time to evaluate yourself in this area. For the following questions, check the response that is most true of you.

As your spouse talks to you, do you find it difficult to keep your mind from wandering to other things?

- Yes No Sometimes

When your spouse talks, do you go beyond the facts being discussed and try to sense how he or she is feeling about the matter?

- Yes No Sometimes

Do certain words or phrases your spouse says prejudice you so that you cannot objectively listen to what is being said?

- Yes No Sometimes

When you are puzzled or annoyed by what your spouse says, do you try to get the questions straightened out as soon as possible?

- Yes No Sometimes

If you feel it would take too much time and effort to understand something, do you go out of your way to avoid hearing about it?

Yes No Sometimes

When your spouse talks to you, do you try to make him or her think you are paying attention when you are not?

Yes No Sometimes

When you are listening to the other person, are you easily distracted by outside sights and sounds (such as the TV, someone walking by, music, etc.)?

Yes No Sometimes

interaction section

Setting: Get together with your spouse and complete this section. Make sure you can talk freely.

Objective: To share your feelings and commitment with each other.

Instructions: Read each question and spend time sharing.

1. Share your answers from Making It Personal on page 25 in your getaway manual.

2. Discuss with your spouse your answers from the questions in the individual section.

3. Answer this question if you've been married before:

How would you compare your communication skills now to your skills during your previous marriage? What improvements have you seen? In what areas do you still need to improve?

Congratulations!
you finished your
first project.

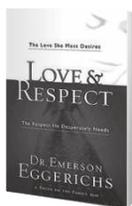
4. Discuss your hopes for this weekend.**5. If you are comfortable, pray together that God would use this weekend to strengthen your marriage.**

resources to the rescue

**The Five Love Languages** by Gary Chapman

Do you know how to speak your spouse's love language? If not, he or she may not know you're expressing love at all. Discover your spouse's love language, and learn how to effectively express love and truly feel loved in return.

 also available in audio

**Love and Respect** by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs

Are you stuck in the "crazy cycle"? Do you want to feel close and valued? You can experience marriage the way God intended. *Love and Respect* reveals why spouses react negatively to each other, and how they can learn to meet each other's needs quickly, easily, and biblically.

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project

2

building oneness by
expressing love

This application project has two sections: the **individual section** and the **interaction section**. Be sure to leave adequate time to interact as a couple on the interaction section.

individual section**Part One**

1. Since you just finished listening to a message about God's plan for oneness in marriage as described in the Book of Genesis, let's start by reviewing those principles.

The first responsibility in marriage is to "leave"—to establish independence from our parents. How well do you think you and your spouse have "left" your parents?

2. The second responsibility in marriage is to "cleave"—to establish commitment to one another. It's important to receive each other as God's provision for your needs.

What are some ways you need your spouse? In what ways has this changed since you were first married?

- 3.** The final responsibility is to “be one flesh”—to establish physical and emotional intimacy with each other—for a lifetime.

Why is becoming one flesh important in achieving oneness in marriage?

Answer the next two questions if you have previously been married:

- 4.** There are many factors that can disrupt a couple’s unity and communication in a remarriage relationship: former spouses, children from previous marriages, finances, schedules, in-laws from previous marriages, etc. In what ways have these factors (or others) brought stress into your marriage?

- 5.** The relationships from your previous marriage can make it difficult to establish your present marriage relationship as your top priority. What are some steps you can take to strengthen your commitment to each other?

Part Two

As couples go through the years together in a committed, lifelong relationship, they build up a storehouse of memories. These memories—of experiences and struggles and victories you’ve shared together—help create a strong bond of oneness between you and your spouse.

1. As you interact and communicate with your spouse, it’s good to occasionally recall these memories. Spend some time writing down some of your favorite memories by answering the following questions:
 - What are your favorite memories from your courtship?
 - What have been some of your favorite getaways together—vacations, weekends away, etc.?
 - What have been some of your favorite dates?
 - What have been some of the most significant milestones of your marriage?
 - If you have children, what are your favorite experiences of your years as a parent? What have been the most memorable moments with your children?
 - What are some difficult times that you’ve experienced, and what has God taught you through them?

- What do you remember most about the places you've lived—both the locations (cities) and the actual apartments or houses?
2. Now turn these memories (perhaps your favorite five from your answers) into a letter to your spouse—stating your commitment to continue building memories like these for a lifetime. Use the Love Letter stationery in the front pocket of the getaway manual for your letter.

interaction section

1. Spend time sharing your answers to the questions in part one of the individual section.
2. Share your letters with each other. If you have time, share any memories from your individual time that you didn't put in the letter.
3. Close your time together in prayer, thanking God for the memories you share as a couple and asking Him to give you many more over the years.

Congratulations!
you finished your
second project.

resources to the rescue



FamilyLife Marriage Bible

Couples will flourish together with devotions for husbands and wives, as well as romance tips, quotes, and notes. Articles and insights by Dennis and Barbara Rainey examine many of the issues facing husbands and wives.



Crazy Love by Francis Chan

The God of the universe is crazy about you! His love is the most powerful thing in the world, and He wants to give it to you, so you can live for Him. Let the love you have received from God impact your life like never before.

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project

3

the love triangle

individual section

Complete this section individually.

1. To improve your communication in marriage, it's important to strengthen the three types of intimacy you can experience in marriage. These types of intimacy form the three sides of the Love Triangle.

The first side is emotional and relational intimacy.

- What types of things do you enjoy doing together as a couple?
- What are some times when you've felt especially close to your spouse?
- If you could spend more time doing something with your spouse, what would that be?
- What is something you and your spouse can do to help each other remain emotionally strong and stable?

- 2.** The second side of the Love Triangle in a marriage is spiritual intimacy. When a husband and wife both have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ and are living to please Him—and when both are growing in their vertical relationships with God—the horizontal relationship between them tends to come together as well.

 - Read Colossians 3:12–17. How would it affect your marriage relationship if you allow the peace of Christ to rule in your hearts as you relate to each other?

 - What kinds of actions and experiences will help you achieve deeper spiritual intimacy with your spouse?

 - Why is it often difficult to make your spiritual lives together a priority?

- 3.** The final side of the Love Triangle is physical intimacy. Romance and sexual union are so important that God devoted an entire book of the Bible, Song of Solomon, to this subject.

 - Song of Solomon 2:15 tells us, “Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom.” What are some of the “foxes” that can steal romance from your marriage?

- What have you learned during your marriage about the differences between how you and your spouse view sex and romance?

- What are some of the most romantic things your spouse has done for you?

Answer the next two questions if you have previously been married:

One of the primary challenges for remarried couples is to avoid falling into bad habit patterns from the past. As you talk about the different types of intimacy, you would be wise to think about how you related to your previous spouse and to make improvements where necessary.

4. What were your relational strengths in your previous marriage? What were your weaknesses?
5. As you look at your marriage now, what patterns are you repeating? What is one area in which you must improve to build the type of lasting marriage that you desire?

interaction section

1. Share your answers from the individual section with each other.
2. Write down one thing you can do in each of the following areas to improve your Love Triangle.
Emotional and relational intimacy:
Spiritual intimacy:
Physical intimacy:

Congratulations!
you finished your
third project.

3. Spend time in prayer, thanking God for the intimacy you have enjoyed as a couple and praying that He would continue drawing you closer together as you move through life together.

resources to the rescue



Sexual Intimacy in Marriage by William Cutrer and Sandra Glahn

Every couple has those questions they don't know how or whom to ask! This highly-acclaimed, medically- and biblically-accurate book covers all the bases about sex in marriage with a sensitivity and frankness that every couple will appreciate.



Rekindling the Romance by Dennis Rainey and Barbara Rainey

By God's design, romance is supposed to be the flame in the fireplace of marital intimacy. This collection of short, easy-to-digest, biblically-based chapters is packed with practical insight, providing the Christian couple with the keys to unlock their relational and sexual intimacy.

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our oneness challenge

individual section

As you learned at the Weekend to Remember getaway, oneness in marriage involves three essential elements: extravagant love, generous forgiveness, and enthusiastic encouragement.

1. When you show extravagant love to your spouse, you model the love God has shown for you. John 13:34 tells us, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”

What are some ways God has demonstrated His extravagant love for you?

- 2.** What did you learn during the Weekend to Remember getaway about some practical ways you can show extravagant love for your spouse? (And realize that it's not necessary to spend a lot of money to show extravagant love. Instead, focus on your words and actions and on placing your spouse's needs above your own.)

- 3.** What are some ways you'd like your spouse to show love toward you?

- 4.** Ephesians 4:32 instructs us to, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." What do you think it means to forgive your spouse as God has forgiven you?

What are some of the ways God has shown generous forgiveness to you?

- 5.** How well have you shown quick, free, and gracious forgiveness to your spouse?

6. What are some ways you can offer generous forgiveness to your spouse in the next three months?

7. What are some ways your spouse could offer forgiveness to you?

8. The third essential habit for building oneness in your marriage is enthusiastic encouragement. First Thessalonians 5:11 says, “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up.”

What are some encouraging things your spouse has said to you?

9. What can you do over the next three months to encourage your spouse?

interaction section

1. Share your answers from the questions you answered individually.

- 2. We'd like to challenge you to make a commitment to building oneness in your marriage over the next six months (and beyond). From your discussion about extravagant love, generous forgiveness, and enthusiastic encouragement, choose three practical action points in each area—three ways you can apply each of these essential elements of oneness. Transfer them to the Our Oneness Challenge below. Then read through the challenge together and sign it.

our oneness challenge

We are committed to building oneness in our marriage. We commit to loving each other extravagantly, forgiving each other generously, and encouraging each other enthusiastically.

To demonstrate our commitment, and to improve our skills in building oneness, we commit to the following:

Over the next six months we will show **extravagant love** for each other by

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Over the next six months we will show **generous forgiveness** for each other by

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Over the next six months we will demonstrate **enthusiastic encouragement** by

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Signature of husband _____

Signature of wife _____

Date _____

planting positive words

individual section

Discuss the following questions with your spouse:

1. Think about the power of words in your life. Growing up, what were some statements made about you, positive or negative, that you still remember?
2. What is easier for you to recall—positive or negative words? Why?
3. Words can be compared to seeds. Negative words can cause weeds to grow in a person's self-esteem, while positive words bear fruit. Look up the following verses, and discuss what Proverbs has to say about the power of words.
 - Proverbs 11:9
 - Proverbs 12:25

- Proverbs 15:4

 - Proverbs 16:24

 - Proverbs 25:11
- 4.** What is one of the best compliments or words of encouragement that you have received?
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
- 5.** How can you more regularly communicate praise to your mate?
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
- 6.** It is important to praise your spouse specifically. Complete the following statements about your spouse:
- Thank you for . . .

- You made me feel loved when . . .

 - I like being with you because . . .

 - I appreciate you because . . .

 - I admire you for . . .

 - One thing that you are really good at is . . .
- 7.** Agree on any action steps you should take to improve how you encourage and praise each other.
-
-
- 8.** Close by praying together, thanking God for your spouse.

becoming more transparent

individual section

1. How well do you know your spouse? Complete the following statements individually, and then share your answers to see if you are correct.

My spouse's favorite color is . . .

My spouse's favorite TV show is . . .

My spouse's favorite movie is . . .

My spouse's favorite book is . . .

My spouse's favorite flavor of ice cream is . . .

My spouse's favorite store is . . .

My spouse's favorite room in the house is . . .

My spouse's favorite time of the day is . . .

My spouse's favorite season of the year is . . .

My spouse's favorite vacation spot is . . .

The longer you are married, the better you will know each other. But knowing a lot about your spouse is often different from truly knowing your spouse—on the inside. That type of knowledge requires transparency.

Being transparent—real—with our spouse is one of the key ingredients in a healthy marriage. While being transparent is risky, the rewards are great. Transparency leads to deeper levels of trust and intimacy in a relationship.

interaction section

Discuss the remaining questions with your spouse:

1. Most people marry with the hope of being transparent, of openly sharing their thoughts and feelings with each other. Why do couples feel the need for transparency in marriage? In what ways is this hope of transparency damaged in many relationships?
2. The first step toward transparency in your communication is being open with God. Read Psalm 139:23–24, which shows how King David was open with God. Do you find this type of transparency with God difficult or easy? Why?
3. The second step is creating an atmosphere of love, commitment, and forgiveness in your home. Read Colossians 3:12–14. In what ways do you find creating this type of atmosphere to be difficult? Easy?
4. Why do you think couples often find it difficult to admit faults to each other or to ask each other for forgiveness?

Has this been difficult in your marriage? Why?

5. The next step toward transparency is affirming your spouse when he or she practices transparency. Read Proverbs 15:4. Why is it important to acknowledge and praise your spouse's efforts to be honest and transparent with you?
6. The final step is praying with one another regularly. Read Colossians 4:2. In what ways can open and honest prayer together promote transparency and intimacy?
7. How would you rate the degree of transparency in your communication with each other?
8. In what ways has the love and understanding provided by your spouse helped you be more transparent? Think of some specific instances.
9. Talk together about your mutual need for understanding in the areas where transparency may be stifled. Confess to each other where there has been a wrong response.
10. What are some specific steps you need to take as a couple to encourage transparency in your marriage?
11. Pray together for sensitivity and loving understanding in future times of communication.

praying together

When you can increase your spiritual intimacy, you will communicate with each other on a deeper level than ever before. Praying together is one of the most important ways to improve your spiritual intimacy and, as we learned in the past project, your transparency.

individual section

Answer the following questions with your spouse:

1. What do you think keeps people from praying more than they do?
2. Why do you think many Christian couples spend little time together in prayer?
3. What does God's Word say about how prayer can help you grow in your relationship with God?
 - 2 Chronicles 7:14
 - Matthew 6:6
 - Philippians 4:6-7
 - James 1:5
 - James 5:16
4. If you've ever experienced one of the truths of the previous verses, tell about that experience. How have you received God's

wisdom or peace, or how have you experienced God's presence through prayer?

Because prayer is talking with God, it's a wonderful way to develop your relationship with Him. But many people know little about what to do as they pray. The Psalms are among the best known and loved writings of all literature. Many Psalms are actually prayers, and from them we can learn about basic components of prayer.

- 5.** The first component of prayer is praise. Throughout the Psalms, David and other psalmists express their adoration of God. Read Psalm 96:1–10. What does it mean to praise God? If a person were to consistently spend significant time praising God, how would that affect the way that person looks at problems he or she faces?

- 6.** What is something you can praise God for right now?

- 7.** The second component of prayer is confession. Psalm 51 is one of the greatest examples of confession in the Bible, in which David confesses his sins of committing adultery with Bathsheba and sending her husband off to be killed in battle. Read verses 1–13. What was David seeking in this confession? What was the attitude behind his confession?

- 8.** Read 1 John 1:9. What does God promise to do when we confess sin? Why is confession important in our relationship with God?

- 9.** The final component of prayer is supplication. Psalm 34 is often read and quoted to encourage us to bring our needs and desires to God in prayer. Read verses 4–18. What effect can prayer have in a person’s life? Share your thoughts with your spouse.

- 10.** Read Matthew 18:19–20. How do these verses relate to praying together as a couple? How would your marriage benefit if you were to pray together more consistently?

- 11.** Identify two or three things that make praying together difficult for you. What steps can you take to resolve one of these difficulties?

- 12.** Now it’s time to practice what you’ve been learning. Turn to your spouse, and talk about one need in your life right now—it could be something you’d like to see God accomplish at work, in your children, in your marriage, or in any other part of your life. Take turns praying simple one- or two-sentence prayers. Spend a few minutes praising God, confessing sins as you need to, and telling God about your needs and the needs of others.

five communication tools that saved my marriage

by Rob Flood

Early in our marriage, these simple principles changed our hearts and transformed our relationship.

We were blissfully in love and thrilled to be on our honeymoon. Then came day five—we had our first argument that put us on a slippery slope moving swiftly toward desperation. Within the first nine months of our marriage, Gina and I were both convinced that we not only married the wrong person, but also were condemned to a loveless marriage.

One very tangible side effect of our difficulties was poor communication. I would ask, “What’s for dinner?” She would hear, “I can’t believe you haven’t prepared dinner again tonight?”

She would say, “What time are you coming home?” I would hear, “You better get here and help me, because you’re never here.”

We could not express anything we wanted to. We resorted to hurting each other with our words. We did not build each other up . . . we tore each other down and caused deep emotional pain. Quite honestly, we had endured so much

hurt that we could not see any hope for ever communicating well. Our despair was overwhelming.

In counseling, we began learning about intentional communication. I remember thinking, *That is the stupidest thing I've ever heard. This stuff is so simple . . . I can't believe I'm paying this guy for this.*

But, once I got off of my high horse, I realized something very simple yet profound: If communication was really that simple, everyone would be doing it and all of our communication would glorify God and reflect His image (1 Peter 4:11; Ephesians 4:29). Glorifying God did not represent my communication, and it may not represent yours either. In fact, many of us struggle to communicate well even with those we love the most: our siblings, our parents, our children, our spouse.

The road I took to learn about communication was a tough one. Here are some of the tools that helped transform my marriage and change my heart.

1. The Principle of First Response: The course of a conflict is not determined by the person who initiates, but by the person who responds.

You may feel it's okay to strike at someone verbally because, "He is picking a fight with me." You may be correct, but that person does not have the power to decide whether a fight actually occurs. That power rests with the responder. As Proverbs 15:1 (NASB) says, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

Jesus has a well-worn track record with the principle of first response. Recall the times that the scribes and the Pharisees came to question Him. They were the initiators in nearly all of their communication. Their intention was to defraud Jesus and corner Him. In how many cases were they successful? None. They failed, because the power to decide the direction of each conflict rested with Jesus, the responder (Luke 20:19–26).

The implications of following Jesus' example were huge. My wife's sin did not give me free license to sin in return. And conversely, my sin did not give Gina free license either. By following the principle of first response, we were being called to take a poorly spoken comment and redirect it.

2. The Principle of Physical Touch: It is difficult to sin against someone while you are tenderly touching them.

A difficult time to apply this principle is after an argument has begun. However, a perfect time is when you know you are about to sit down and have a discussion about something that might lead to tension.

You know what those topics are in your marriage. Maybe it's a conversation about a specific child. Maybe it's your in-laws or your finances. For us, as you might imagine, it was when we sat down to talk about our communication. Those were tough conversations.

During these times, we would sit down and pray together . . . and touch. Usually we were at opposite ends of the couch with Gina's legs stretched out across mine while I held them. (You may prefer holding hands or sitting close enough that you naturally touch.)

As we talked, we would inevitably notice something. When our conversation began to drift toward conflict, we stopped touching. We found what I'm certain you'll find: It is very difficult to fight with someone you are tenderly touching. So, we had a choice at that point: to stop fighting so we could keep touching or to stop touching so we could keep fighting.

This type of tender touching has served us in two ways. First, it is a deterrent from arguing. Second, when we do drift into an argument, our physical separation is a visual and physical cue that our conversation is no longer glorifying God. We notice it, correct it, and get back on the right track.

3. The Principle of Proper Timing: The success of a conversation can be maximized if the timing of the conversation is carefully chosen.

The Book of Proverbs tells us, "A man finds joy in giving an apt reply—and how good is a timely word!" (15:23 NIV).

Typically, the first opportunity Gina and I have to talk about the day is at dinner. We often take time then to catch up from the day. With four young children, our dinner table is an active and busy one. Consequently, we cannot practically have an extended and meaningful conversation.

So, if something has occurred that I must discuss with Gina, I will wait until

the children are asleep. To bring it up during dinner is to invite frustration and ineffectiveness.

Let's look at a couple of scenarios where we're more likely to fail.

Gina is a very intentional homemaker and often has wonderful ideas on how to better serve our family. Let's say she is contemplating a new approach to family dining. She's been thinking through this for weeks, and she's now ready to get my input. This is a very good thing—but probably not at 1:30 on a Sunday afternoon when I'm watching a football game.

I'm also prone to fall into the poor timing trap. For example, Gina and I could be downstairs enjoying normal conversation. We head upstairs at 11:30 p.m., and Gina is ready for bed. As the lights go out, I ask, "What do you think God is doing with the children?" This is a question Gina would love for me to ask . . . about three hours earlier. When 11:30 comes, she's ready for bed—not an extensive discussion.

There are times when a conversation is critical to have at that very moment. In those cases, of course, the football game goes off and we talk. Or, the lights go back on, and we're up until 2 a.m. However, those should be the exceptions rather than the rule. The majority of the time, we should be more strategic in the timing of our conversations.

4. The Principle of Mirroring: Understanding can be enhanced if we measure it often throughout a conversation.

The Scriptures inform us that, if we are to understand and become wise, we must be sure to incline our ears. Proverbs 22:17 states, "Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge."

Have you ever meant one thing by what you said but the person you were talking to heard something else? It can make for very frustrating communication. If you're not sure if your spouse is getting what you're talking about, check to see if you hear this phrase a lot: "What do you mean by that?"

Mirroring can help you test whether you are hearing your spouse properly. Once your spouse makes a point, repeat it to him or her. Say something like this: "So, what I hear you saying is . . ." or, "Are you saying . . . ?" Then, in your own words, tell your spouse what you understand to have been said. Then, the most important

part of mirroring comes. You must allow your spouse to either affirm or correct what you've said.

As we learned this principle, I often didn't like Gina's negative or inaccurate summaries of my statements. So, I defended them and failed to allow her the freedom to speak honestly. In time, I learned that her summaries were quite accurate; my reactions were because I didn't like how they exposed me.

The point of mirroring is not to be right, not to defend yourself, but to know that you are hearing accurately. If you seek to understand rather than to make yourself understood, then you are primed for success with the principle of mirroring.

5. The Principle of Prayer: Success in communication is more likely when we invite God to be an active participant and guide.

This principle is not complicated, but it requires our close attention. We've become so accustomed to hearing about prayer that its importance often passes us by.

No matter what principle you might be using at the time or what subject you might be talking about, no scenario is beyond prayer. I have tended to overestimate my own ability to communicate well and righteously. That was evidenced in our first year of marriage.

We will eventually and inevitably sin in our communication with each other. When it begins to drift away from God's intended purpose for it, we have a choice: Will we be puffed up with pride, or will we have the humility to stop right where we are and ask God to help redeem our conversation?

I wish someone would have shared with me what late 19th and early 20th century evangelist R. A. Torrey said on prayer:

"The reason why many fail in battle is because they wait until the hour of battle. The reason why others succeed is because they have gained their victory on their knees long before the battle came . . . Anticipate your battles; fight them on your knees before temptation comes, and you will always have victory."

One of the greatest difficulties that couples face with this principle is awkwardness. They are not used to praying together. So, as they begin to like each other less in the midst of unconstructive communication, the thought of praying together is not very appealing.

We learned an easy fix to this . . . start praying together. Begin with 30 seconds of prayer as you go to bed each night. Pray regularly as a family prior to eating. Pick one night a week to pray for your children, your pastor, and your marriage. Among the enormous benefits that you'll see in your family, the regularity of prayer will make praying in the midst of communication breakdown more probable.

The transformation never ends.

As a result of God's grace intersecting with these principles, communication is now among the greatest strengths of our marriage. It's not that we don't still mess up—we do. Thankfully, God continues to work on me. He'll continue to work on you, too.

At one time, I was convinced that I married the wrong woman. She was convinced she married the wrong man. Now, we cannot imagine knowing, loving, or enjoying anyone more than we do each other.

Your relationship with your spouse may differ from ours, but this much is true: Your spouse should be the single most important person you have in your life. Like it or not, communication is the tool that God has given us to knit our hearts and our minds together. Success is possible if we're willing to apply some intentional principles. We've all been called to God-honoring communication. Step forward in humility and faith and watch Him transform you.