

3 Secrets to Quickly Resolve Any Marriage Conflict

(STUDY GUIDE)

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I. Our Marriage Story

- A. Our first 7 years: Conflict and emotional pain
- B. 3 key revelations I received after 7 years:
 - 1. My wife is not my enemy.
 - 2. The enemy uses blindness to level 2 communication to destroy relationship.
 - 3. We were inadvertently draining each other's emotional fuel tanks on level 2.

II. Secret #1: Your Wife/Husband Is Not Your Enemy

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:10–12, NKJV)

- A. You *do* have an enemy, but your actual enemy is not your spouse!
 - 1. History movie: Arms dealer started the American Revolutionary War.
 - 2. “The arms dealer lives at your house!”
 - 3. “You fight your spouse instead of recognizing the true enemy.”
 - 4. The Lie: I was doing everything I could to love and bless Jan, and in her sight, I was still a failure. I therefore concluded that the problem was hers and she would never change.
- B. In every conflict, there are always two distinct parties:
 - 1. One person feels DEVALUED.
 - 2. The second person feels FALSELY ACCUSED.
 - 3. The devalued one has a little prosecuting attorney inside.
 - 4. The falsely accused one has a little defense attorney inside.

C. Solution:

1. Fire the lawyer inside you.
2. Join together to fight your true enemy, the Arms Dealer!

III. Secret #2: There Are Two Levels of Communication and You Are Completely Blind to Level 2! (Level 1: Topical = Issues vs. Level 2: Relational = Identity)

A. **Level 1: Topical Communication.** Topical issues we will discuss:

1. Where will we live? What cars will we drive? How will we use our money? How do we discipline our children?
2. When dealing with children: Grades, money, friends, time, dress, and appearance.

B. **Level 2: Relational Communication.** These are messages we send to one another in the realm of identity regarding value.

1. **Positive example:** "You are very valuable. Your opinions count, your feelings are important, and you are worth spending time with and listening to."
2. **Negative example:** "You are worthless. You mean nothing to me. You are a failure as a husband/wife. You're not what I want, not what I need. Your opinions don't count, your feelings are ridiculous, and your life doesn't matter to me."

C. 7% of communication is verbal (topical).

D. 38% of communication is in the voice intonation (relational).

E. 55% of communication is in the body language (relational).

F. 93% of a communicated message is non-verbal (relational).

G. When the relational problem is solved, the topical issue goes away.

H. My story: Josh and the hamburger

I. Example: **Wife calls husband at work with the question,** "Were you thinking about me this morning?" As a husband, how do you answer?

1. There is no correct answer.
2. God told me to use the Jewish strategy: Stop explaining and start asking questions.
3. Two questions and one action that are guaranteed to resolve the conflict quickly.

IV. Secret #3: In Your Level 2 Blindness, Without Realizing It, You Are Daily Draining Your Spouse's Emotional Fuel Tank Dry

- A. In the human fuel tank, **human fuel is VALUE**: Everyone needs and wants to feel valuable (value tank).
- B. Husbands and wives perceive value totally differently.
- C. Like different vehicles, people use different fuels. Example: Diesel vs. Gasoline.
- D. Fuels people use (Ephesians 5:33):
 - 1. A wife perceives value through love.
 - 2. A husband perceives value through respect.
 - 3. Children, subordinates, and followers perceive value through love.
 - 4. Parents, bosses, pastors, and leaders perceive value through respect.
- E. Your assignment in marriage is to fill the value tank of your spouse.
- F. Your assignment in marriage is NOT:
 - 1. To change your husband into the man of God he should be.
 - 2. To explain your case to your wife, defend yourself, and convince her that you really love her and really are a good husband.
- G. Fire the little lawyer inside you. Fill the tank of your wife/husband.

V. Meaning of Love and Respect on a Practical Basis

- A. What love means to most wives:
 - 1. You make me feel "high priority" in your sight.
 - 2. You understand and care about my feelings.
 - 3. You take responsibility when you hurt me and apologize.
- B. Respect means three things to most husbands:
 - 1. Acceptance: You make me feel accepted (pleasing in your sight).
 - 2. Admiration: You tell me good things about my work and the roles I have (husband, boss, father, et cetera).
 - 3. Appreciation: You thank me for my work and my efforts to please and help you.
- C. What is failure to love?
 - 1. Low priority, withdrawal, or lack of communication.
 - 2. No acknowledgement of feelings.
 - 3. Defending and justifying with no acknowledgement of wrongdoing or apology.

- D. What is failure to respect?
1. Rejection, criticism, accusation and lack of acceptance.
 2. No words of affirmation or admiration.
 3. No words of gratitude or acknowledgement of effort or appreciation.

VI. Resolving Relational Conflict in Marriage

- A. Don't answer rhetorical or topical questions directly; **answer the question with two questions about feelings and one action.**
- B. What questions do you ask? **Ask questions that impart value by conveying love or respect.**
1. A wife perceives value through understanding and acknowledgement of feelings and being made to feel of high priority, acknowledgement of the offense. Therefore, when you are in conflict, your wife wants to know:
 - a. Do you know and **understand** what you just did to me and how much it hurts?
 - b. Do you **care** that you took my value and hurt me?
 - c. Will you **take responsibility** for what you did and **apologize**? Or will you explain, defend, justify, say you didn't do it, or say that it isn't important?
 2. The husband perceives value through acceptance, admiration and appreciation. Therefore, your husband wants to know:
 - a. Do you **understand** that you rejected me and that your criticism deeply wounds me? Will you now **accept** me as I am?
 - b. Do you **admire** me, and will you express your admiration?
 - c. Do you **appreciate** all I do for you? Do you understand and appreciate all of my hard work that I do primarily to benefit you and your interests?
 3. Two questions and one action that resolve the conflict almost immediately:
 - a. Question 1, Husband: "By the tone of your voice, I sense that I've hurt you. Is that true?"
 - b. Question 1, Wife: "I sense that I've made you feel like you're not acceptable in my sight, and I don't appreciate your efforts. Is that true?"
 - c. Question 2: "Could you please share with me how I made you feel?"
 - d. Action: REPENT. "At the time, I didn't realize that I made you feel _____, but now I can see that is exactly what I did. I'm so sorry. Will you please forgive me?"

VII. Destroying the Top Five Lies Many Couples Believe

- A. **“We are too broken to have the type of relationship you are talking about. There is too much water under the bridge. It can’t happen for us.”**
1. TRUTH: Nothing is beyond the love and power of God. No one is disqualified, and no person or couple is beyond God’s grace.
 2. *“With God all things are possible”* (Matthew 9:29).
 3. The Gadarene demoniac (Mark 5:15–20).
- B. **“We’ve tried ‘everything.’ This course won’t work because we’ve already tried lots of marriage courses, conferences, books, counseling. This is just one more course with a bunch of new (or old) principles that also won’t work for us.”**
1. Exchanging one list for another doesn’t work.
 2. TRUTH: The problem is, it’s not a new principle, it’s your inability to do what you know. The exercises in this course are designed to let God change both of you!
 3. Issues of the heart (Proverbs 4:23).
 4. Just follow the course. It is designed to identify and remove self-sabotage lies in your hearts.
- C. **“My husband will never change, so we can never have the joyful, fulfilling marriage I had dreamed of.”**
1. He doesn’t love or care—low priority, justifies, explains and defends.
 2. TRUTH: Let God change you and him.
 3. No man likes to be around a woman who is criticizing and trying to change him, so don’t.
 4. Just do the course and the exercises. It will change your husband and you will get back the man of your dreams.
- D. **“No matter what I do or how hard I try, I am a constant disappointment and failure to my wife. Because I will never measure up to her expectations of me, I’ll always have to live with her rejection and I’ll never have the joyful, fulfilling marriage I had dreamed of.”**

1. False accusation; she's not grateful and won't forgive. "I gave up trying to please her long ago."
2. "I'm not what she wants or needs."
3. "I'm always the bad guy."
4. TRUTH: There is a missing piece. Do the course and the work, and God will restore the beautiful, grateful, supportive, fun-to-be-with woman you thought you married.

E. **"I am responsible to fix my marriage (myself or my partner). I just need to repent, pray, meditate on the Word, be kind, et cetera, and all will be well in my marriage."**

1. False burden of responsibility (Matthew 11:28).
2. TRUTH: Heart issues are at stake that only God can change. God will do it.
3. "Changing Bob is not your job." Also, you can't change yourself. Only God can.
4. Go through the course and let God change you and your spouse and your yoke will be easy and burden light.