

The Tie That Binds

Building a Strong Marriage

Jeffrey Pedersen

Baal Hamon Publishers

Akure London New York

CONTENTS

Preface	ix
1. The Tie That binds.....	1
2. Communication.....	13
3. Male & Female.....	23
4. Love.....	31
5. The Vow.....	39
6. Dreams and Goals.....	51
7. Finances.....	61
8. Conflict.....	71
9. Temptation.....	83
10. Children.....	95
11. Storms.....	111
12. Imaging.....	123
Bibliography.....	135

PREFACE

The Tie That Binds is a book on marriage. This book will give couples the tools that will build and strengthen their marriages for a lifetime. Couples want a nice wedding ceremony, but what is most important is having a strong marriage that will endure the tests of time. God is the designer and builder of marriage, and wants each couple to experience the blessed joy that his presence brings.

When a couple gets married, I hear people say, “You got hitched.” We don’t use hitches to unite a couple in marriage. There is a bond that does bind the hearts of couples together, and that is the love of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' love is the tie that binds.

The chapters of this book will help couples work on their marriages. Each chapter will focus on an important marriage topic that will help couples avoid pitfalls that can weaken and destroy their marriage, while developing the skills to nurture a healthy marriage. At the end of each chapter are study questions that will help foster discussion on each topic.

This book can be used by couples who are preparing for marriage, couples who are looking to strengthen their marriage, small group settings, marriage retreats, and marriage care programs at your church.

I rejoice with couples on their wedding day, but my prayer is that each couple will be there for each other at the end when death finally parts them. May God bless your marriage as you read and study this book.

Jeffrey P. Pedersen

COMMUNICATION

In marriage, good communication begins with prayer. Prayer is our communication with God. It is the time spent in prayer that allows God to mold and make us into his people. God's inspiration will influence how we interact with our spouse. Prayer inspires us to be Christ-like in nature. Our time spent with God in prayer will make us loving, patient, kind, compassionate, and looking to the needs of our spouse. The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, "Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." In marriage, as it is in life, it is important to

The Tie That Binds

be joyful in spirit, to have a thankful attitude, and to pray for God's continuing guidance. When a couple prays, they are open to the Holy Spirit's work to bond them, and mold them in a Christian character for their lives. Prayer may not change outward circumstances, but it will always change you. This gives us a Christ-like love and wisdom to face the many circumstances of life that challenge us as couples. As we spend time communicating with God, this will put us in the right frame of mind to communicate with our spouse in the most optimal way.

A tool that will give strength to a married couple is communication. Communication is a miraculous thing; the thoughts of one person's mind can be transferred into the mind of another person. A person who does this well will be a strength to those around him. Think of a person who is in a high position in a company. This person's subordinates may do the work of the company better than he can, but the reason why he is in the high position has to do with his ability to communicate effectively with others. This person understands the whole picture of what the company is all about, and communicates to every person the important role that each one has. When the person in this position is doing a good job of communicating, the whole system functions well. When this person is not an effective communicator, it doesn't take long for the system to break down and there are a lot

of disgruntled employees.

Communication is important in marriage. When a couple communicates well, they understand each other, they are able to affirm each other, and have a great ability to work through various situations. Good communication prevents a lot of problems in marriage, and when problems come, they are able to work through them before a deeper division is created.

One way that we communicate is nonverbally. What is your spouse communicating with you nonverbally? I once had a dog, and even though it couldn't speak beyond a bark, it was a great communicator through nonverbal communication. I knew when the dog was happy, sad, guilty, in need of something, and it was always able to communicate affection. When we communicate nonverbally, what are we communicating through our eyes, facial expressions, gestures, and posture?

When we ask our spouse, "How are you doing?" and he or she responds by saying, "Just fine", even though the nonverbal communication is telling us otherwise; it is good to say in a loving way, "If you need to talk about it, I will be in the other room."

Our nonverbal communication conveys whether we are sad, angry, guilty, happy, excited, or interested. It is important that our posture, facial expressions, and gestures show an intent interest in our spouse.

The Tie That Binds

The Apostle James writes in James 1:19, “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.” God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason. We are to listen at least twice as much as we speak. A good communicator listens well. This is why people are willing to pay professional counselors, because they are trained listeners. A spouse may say, “I like going to the counselor, because he takes the time to listen, and understands me, while my spouse does not.”

Who do you appreciate more, someone who constantly speaks without end or someone who listens intently to you? When people listen to us, it communicates an interest, a concern, and a love for us. People who listen value others.

There are five common mistakes that people make when communicating with others. These are listening mistakes that hurt relationships, and hurt marriages.

The first mistake in listening is selfish communication. This is where a person speaks without ever taking into consideration that another person may have something to share also. He sees communication as a one-way street. He has something to say, and everyone else must listen. He communicates to his wife that he is important, and she is not. He is not considerate of her feelings, thoughts, and values on a subject. He is the king on the throne, and she is a subservient who is not allowed to speak. What is

important is not what we have to say, but listening to what matters to her.

The second mistake in listening is remembrance. When we are listening to someone share her story, she will share something that will remind you of a similar situation that happened to you. At this point, it is easy to barge in and start sharing your similar story. This communicates that her story really isn't all that important. You communicate that your story is far more important than hers. Instead of listening, you have one-upped her in importance. She feels devalued when this happens. In listening to other people's conversations, things that they say will bring to memory many of your own similar experiences. It is important to listen to her experiences.

A third mistake in listening is jumping to hasty conclusions. Listening takes patience to hear a person through. When someone is halfway through sharing his story, it is easy to jump to a conclusion about the rest of the story. I will play a game with people, where I will start sharing a story and at a certain point in the story; I will stop and ask each one to take a few minutes to make up the rest of the story. Each person will use his/her creativity and each one will finish the story differently. When we jump to a hasty conclusion when listening to someone else's story, we will always come to a hasty false conclusion. We need to listen to the whole story, not

The Tie That Binds

a percentage of it.

A fourth mistake in listening is when someone is sharing with us, only to have someone else appear in the room that seemingly is more important. At once, we make eye contact with that person, and communicate something to them. Sometimes we will leave the person who is sharing with us, and go to the person who is “more important.” When we leave a person in mid-conversation, and start visiting someone more important, it devalues the person. They will be hurt by such actions. It is important to keep good eye contact and listen intently to the other person.

The fifth mistake in listening is divided attention. This is when a man is listening to his wife, but also watching the television. At best he is only half-listening. Half-listening is not good enough. He will not understand what his wife was communicating with him. It is important to turn off the television or put down the newspaper, and give your spouse undivided attention.

It is important to take the time to listen to your spouse; you will value your spouse in doing so. What is she saying to you? Make sure you give good eye contact. It is important to inject the proper responses, making sure that you practically understand what she is saying. We can call these responses, “check points”. This is important, because what one person speaks and what another person

hears, can be two different things. A check point may be, “If I understand you correctly, this is what you have said.” When someone is sharing their story, it is like a path that has a beginning and an end. If you were hiking on a path through the forest, there will be check markers along the way, letting you know that you are on the right course. As a person is sharing their thoughts and stories, think of it as being a path where the conversation has a beginning and end. Be patient to hear the whole story, but offer comments to ensure that you understand her thoughts throughout her sharing.

We must remember that if our spouse is sharing with us, it must be important to her. If it is important to our spouse, then it should be important to us. Take it as a privilege that your spouse loves and thinks so highly of you that she wants to share these things with you.

Once we have taken the time to listen and understand what our spouse has said, we now have the right to speak. Let us remember that the thing that our spouse has valued is that we listened. Listening communicates love and importance. Your spouse may not even want you to say anything; the main thing is that you listened. Your listening will speak much louder than your words.

The words you speak will convey a lot too. As you respond, notice your tone of voice. Your tone of voice should communicate love, concern, empathy, warmth, and

The Tie That Binds

wisdom. When you speak, you are responding to what has been shared. Our words feed back into the context of our spouse's sharing. By doing this, we convey that we love our spouse and affirm her.

If we have not listened effectively, we will share a response that is irrelevant to what has just been said. This creates hurt. Our responses can be unloving and condescending when we haven't taken the time to listen properly.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:1, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal." It is so important that we communicate in love. When we listen and speak in love, this will build up our marriages.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Name someone who is a good communicator?
2. How have good communicators been a strength to you?
3. How does prayer influence your character? Your wisdom? And your attitude toward other people?
4. Give some examples of your nonverbal communication with your spouse?
5. What divides your attention when you communicate with your spouse?
6. It is important to speak in love. When are times when your speech has been hurtful?