

## HANDOUT MODULE FOUR

### Enriching your marriage – improving communication

Genuine communication is to understand and to be understood. It is as much about listening as talking. Someone has described the process of a relationship in which genuine communication has died as 'creeping separateness'.

#### **Making time**

Like with most good things, you have a decision to make. You will never simply find the time for genuine communication. The urgent always will take priority unless you agree a regular time for genuine communication each week. Try and make that time relaxed and enjoyable.

#### **What is good communication?**

- Sharing exactly how you feel on things that matter to both of you
- Listening to what your partner says
- Acknowledging their opinions and feelings even if different than your own

#### **Developing listening skills**

- Letting your partner share an issue by paying attention (including most importantly with your eyes) and without interruption
- Allowing no distractions except in an emergency. Yes, switch your phone off!
- Keeping an open mind to what they are saying
- Clarifying anything you do not understand by asking questions. Do not offer an opinion
- Ask what they would like to be done about the situation

#### **Praying together**

As a Christian married couple, you should also be communicating together with God.

- **Be realistic.** For many an extended prayer time each day is unrealistic. Unless you are prayer warriors, it is better to start with even just 3 minutes a day than be ambitious and then end up not praying together at all after a few months
- **Realise that this is not a performance.** You are communicating together with God. Do not worry if you stumble in prayer or feel your prayers are simple. Jesus says come to me like little children.

• **Decide what time each day you will pray together.** Before or after breakfast or before going to sleep works for many. Do not feel guilty if you miss one day. It is Satan who condemns

• **Review and adapt.** If praying together is becoming a burden or boring, it is not time to give up but review and adapt. For example you may decide to shift the time or decide you should use a daily readings booklet. Here are two guidelines:

1. **Ensure your prayers are vertical.** You are communicating with God. It is not an opportunity for the two of you to use these times to get at each other.

2. **Start with thankfulness.** That gets the focus right. (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18)

Consider thanking God for your food before meals if this is something you do not do. Family devotions should also be part of Christian family life.