



Marriage Growth-Track

Week 4 - Day 1

Wisdom of Proverbs

By Doug and Cheryll Duffie

A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.
Proverb 18:2

If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.
Proverbs 18:13

The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.
Proverbs 18:17

Don't you just hate it when the Bible convicts you of something so squarely between the eyes that you're certain it was written just for you? There's probably more of us than we'd care to admit who feel the sting of conviction when reading these verses. This is what we see in these verses:

- Fools would rather speak than listen;
- It is important to hear the complete story before responding;
- There are always two sides to every story

The wisdom of Proverbs shoots straight—our personal integrity and our witness as Christ-followers are on the line when we place more emphasis on being heard rather than authentically listening. This is never truer than in discussions between a husband and wife.

Marriage expert Emerson Eggrich makes a profoundly simple statement in his book and video series, "Love & Respect" concerning communication within a marriage. He makes the pitch that what we want more than to be heard is to be understood. Simple in theory, but a bit more challenging in practice. But think about it—wouldn't you rather your spouse truly 'get' what you're meaning rather than simply hear your words? Anyone can hear and repeat back words spoken to them. It takes a concerted effort and genuine interest to fully understand what is truly being said. It's an acquired skill for most of us, but one that gets easier and easier each time it is practiced. And the good news—it doesn't require any superhuman skills, just an honest effort to listen and engage and seek to understand as you would want to be heard.

The next time the discussion starts getting a bit heated, remind yourself of your spouse's intense need to be understood by you over everyone else in the world. Chances are the issue will take care of itself when you listen with the intent to under-

stand.

Discussion Questions:

1. Are you more concerned with making sure your side is heard than hearing what is said?
2. Do you ever find yourself composing your response before your spouse even stops speaking?
3. Do you regularly work to have the last word to justify your opinion even when valid points show otherwise?

Action Step:

When communicating with your spouse this week take time to really listen and understand the issue before responding with the solution.

Prayer:

"Dear Lord, prepare my heart, mind, and tongue to engage in supportive discussions with my spouse. Help me to see and hear and understand what is at the heart of the matter and to extend the same kindness I would want shown to me—even if my spouse doesn't reciprocate. Allow me recognize the intense importance of actively engaged listening as one of the more sacred gifts I can offer my spouse. Amen."

