

Part 1 - He Said / She Said

TODAY IS DAY THREE OF THE LOVE DARE!

Let's do a brief review of the principles we have been learning ...

Don't follow your heart, LEAD your heart.

Contracts say, "I take you for ME."

Covenants say, "I give MYSELF to you."

LOVE IS BUILT ON TWO PILLARS:

PATIENCE: is how love REACTS to minimize the negative
avoids problems
is preventative

James 1:19 *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:*

KINDNESS: is how love ACTS to maximize the positive
creates blessing
is proactive

Ephesians 4:32 *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

THE OPPOSITE OF LOVE IS SELFISHNESS:

- We hate selfishness in others, but we justify it in ourselves.
- Selfishness lets us set low standards for ourselves, while holding high expectations for our spouse
- A good deed done for a wrong motive is ultimately still selfish!
- You either make decisions out of love for others or love for yourself.
- True love always looks for ways to say YES.
- No one will be quicker to recognize this change than your spouse!

Philippians 2:3 *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*

There is no unisex brain. Girls arrive already wired as girls, and boys arrive already wired as boys. Their brains are different by the time they're born.

~ Dr. Louann Brizendine
USCF Medical School

VIDEO CLIP: "HE SAID / SHE SAID"

It was in God's plan to make us different from each other from the moment He imagined us. The original plan was to use these differences as a starting point for building intimate, fulfilling relationships.

Unfortunately, due to sin, what started out as an advantage has turned out to be a universal source of frustration! Despite the frustration, the vast majority of us have an undeniable desire to have great relationships with the opposite sex, especially in marriage. That is why so many of our decisions are affected by how the opposite sex will respond.

Not wanting to lose a sale, after his customer had finished examining the large selection of riding mowers in a lawn equipment store, the sales manager quickly pointed out their sixty day no-interest payment program. "Sounds great," said the man, "but I have to talk this over with my wife or there will be sixty days, no interest at home."

It is possible to make too much out of the differences between men and women, but it is also possible to make the opposite mistake. If we want our marriage relationship to enrich rather than exhaust us, it helps to have an understanding of the uniqueness that each gender possesses.

Scientific research confirms just how different the sexes are:

- Male brains are about ten percent larger than female brains, but certain brain areas in women contain more nerve cells.
- Women use both sides of their brain to perform tasks like reading a list of words to see if they rhyme; men keep it as simple as possible by using only one side of their brain. Yet both sexes perform equally.
- Women generally have better recall of text than men, while men generally perform better on tests that require them to mentally rotate an image.

Here are some other interesting statistics:

- Men are generally safer drivers than women, yet men are more likely to speed.
- When men perform well, they attribute their success to their own skill or intelligence; when they don't perform well, they tend to blame their failure on a factor beyond their control.
- When women perform well, they attribute it to luck or something else beyond their control; when they don't perform well, they attribute it to their own lack of ability or intelligence.
- Men are willing to take greater financial risk than women. Women make safer choices than men when it comes to things like seat belt use and preventative medical care.
- Within relationships, women tend to resolve the day-to-day issues while men settle the life-changing disputes.
- Women ask more questions, and more than three-fourths of interruptions in conversations are made by men.

MEN ARE LIKE WAFFLES:

- Men process life in **boxes**, like a waffle, which is a collection of boxes separated by walls. The boxes are all separate from each other and make convenient holding places.
- That is typically how a man processes life, with his thinking divided up into boxes that have room for one issue and one issue only. And the typical man lives in only one box at a time!
- When he is working, he's working! When he's tinkering, he's tinkering! That is why he looks as though he is in a trance and can ignore everything else going on around him. Social scientists call this "compartmentalizing."
- As a result, men are **problem solvers** by nature. They enter a box, size up the "problem" and formulate a solution – and they try to get there as quickly and efficiently as possible. They are not interested as much in the journey as in the **destination**.
- A man spends most of his time in the boxes he can **succeed** in, seeking out the boxes that work and ignoring the boxes that **confuse** him or make him feel like a **failure**.
- Men also take a "**success**" approach to communication. If they believe that can reach a desirable outcome, they will be highly motivated to converse. If, on the other hand, the conversation seems pointless or hard to understand, he loses his motivation to talk and clams up.
- Their "success" drive is why men find it so easy to develop hobbies that consume their time. If a man finds something he is good at, it makes him feel good about himself and his life.
- Because men tend to be good with mechanical activities, they get emotionally attached to building, fixing and chasing things. Even computers can become intimate friends, because they make predictable moves and give **predictable** feedback!
- The bottom line? Men feel best about themselves when they are solving problems. And they will ignore to death anything that causes them to feel deficient.

WOMEN ARE LIKE SPAGHETTI:

- Women process life more like a plate of spaghetti – lots of individual noodles that all touch one another. If you attempt to follow one noodle around the plate, you intersect a lot of other noodles, and you might even switch to another noodle seamlessly without noticing it.
- That is typically how a woman processes life. Every thought and issue is **connected** to every other thought and issue in some way. Life is much more of a "**process**" for women than for men; they enjoy the **journey** as much as the destination (maybe even more).
- That is why women are typically better at **multitasking** than men. Because all her thoughts, emotions and convictions are connected, she is able to process more information and track more activities.

- As a result, most women are in pursuit of connecting life together. They do solve problems, but from a much different perspective than men. For a woman to quickly solve a problem when the issues are "disconnected" from each other is an act of denial! So, women consistently seek to **talk** things through and **link** issues together. The links come to her naturally, so this process is effortless to her. She feels that if she can just connect all the issues together, the answer will bubble to the surface.
- This often creates significant stress for couples, because while she is making all the connections, he is frantically jumping from box to box trying to keep up! Her tidal wave of information is literally swallowing him up; when she is done, she will feel better and he will feel **overwhelmed**.
- One of the characteristics that create major havoc in a marriage is that most men have boxes in their waffle that have no words. There are thoughts in these boxes that are pleasant memories of past experiences, but these thoughts do not turn into words. A man is happy in these wordless boxes, but he cannot communicate these experiences to others.
- There are also boxes in the average man's waffle that contain no words and no thoughts – they are empty, and he "parks" in them to relieve stress and relax. (And his wife always picks this time to ask, "What are you thinking?")
- A woman cannot imagine a moment without **words** in her mind, so if her husband answers "nothing" she thinks he is hiding something. But this is just the way he is!

Men and women think differently, learn differently, process emotions differently, and make decisions differently. Yet they complement one another so beautifully that a healthy relationship makes both partners more complete. We are different by God's design!

Romans 15:7 (NIV) *Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.*

WE HAVE DIFFERENT STYLES OF COMMUNICATION:

MEN THINK AND SPEAK IN "HEADLINES."

WOMEN THINK AND SPEAK "BETWEEN THE LINES."

Men and women have very different approaches to communication. When a man starts a conversation, it is generally because he perceives there a **problem** needing to be addressed. If there is no perceived problem, he feels no particular need to talk! The box he is currently in is at ease, and the lack of distress makes him assume that everything is all right with the relationship.

His wife, on the other hand, has a constant desire to talk with her husband. She wants to **connect** him to everything in her life and assumes he wants to connect her to everything in his life. When she begins a conversation, he assumes she is bringing up a problem that needs to be resolved; but really, she is starting the conversation because it simply seems natural to talk about whatever is on her mind!

While she is in conversation mode, he turns on the “fix-it” mechanism and the conflict begins. She gets her feelings hurt because he is trying to figure her out rather than just visit with her. Meanwhile, he gets impatient because there seems to be no point. What started out as a hopeful moment for drawing closer together becomes another nagging defeat.

THEREFORE, THE MOST IMPORTANT COMMUNICATION SKILL A COUPLE CAN DEVELOP IS TO LEARN TO TAKE TURNS!

Whoever begins the conversation should be the one to **set the pace** for it. Men, ASSUME that when your wife begins a conversation with you, she needs to CONNECT the issues of her life together – nothing more! View the conversation as a journey, not a destination!

Many men refuse to do this because they are afraid that if they give their wives permission to talk until they are done, the end will never come! This isn't true, but most men don't know this because they have never helped their wives finish a conversation.

A woman can experience an incredibly wide range of emotions in just one conversation. She is aware of all the issues in her life (at the same time!) and before she looks for solutions, she interacts emotionally with each issue. Just because you cannot keep up with her doesn't mean your way is better! If you are willing to meet this need of hers, you will be married to a much happier woman. Men get impatient with this process because they cannot understand it. Think of it this way: What if everything in your life ended prematurely? (meals, sporting events, projects, sexual encounters) Would you feel frustrated? That's the way your wife feels when she is not able to finish conversations with you!

Ladies, when it is your husband's turn to talk, you need to practice staying in the box he wants to open. When he brings up an issue for discussion, he actually intends to talk about that issue! He wants the conversation to stay on track! He wants to fix the problem!

But a problem quickly develops because a woman can immediately recognize all the issues that are related to the one he brought up. She can see every box that is touching the box he has opened, and feels the need to open all those boxes because she feels they are “relevant,” and if she doesn't open them, she feels the loose ends won't be addressed.

Men are not the only impatient listeners! Women generally feel that men are unfeeling simply because they don't process life the same way. The fact is that wives seldom let their husbands stay in the same box long enough to discover their feelings about it!

If a wife will just stay focused on one topic and resist the urge to open up all those other boxes, she will buy her husband the emotional time he needs to work through the layers of his box and open up a well of emotions. Ladies, you are drilling for oil, not interrogating a prisoner!

When a husband starts a conversation, there is only one problem to be solved. When his wife opens the second, third and fourth box he can quickly get overwhelmed. Every man has his own limit of how many problems he can deal with at once, and then he will reach for one of two shut-off valves: he will clam up or he will get angry.

Most couples spend their time trying to CHANGE one another instead of TAKING TURNS. Taking turns may be hard work, but not taking turns is agonizing. We MUST become good listeners!

Listening is NOT an attempt to fix your partner (don't ask “why do you feel this way?” – they don't know anyway!) **OUR EMOTIONS HAVE NEVER HAD THE ABILITY TO THINK!**

Listening is a skill that can be learned, just like driving or typing. No two people listen exactly the same way. Your ability to listen is really only determined by how much value you place on it and how much you are willing to work on it.

Ephesians 4:29 (NLT) *Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.*

On a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) ...

- how frequently do you use words that “build up” your spouse? _____
- how well and how often do you feel you listen to your spouse? _____

THE LOVE DARE CHALLENGE:

WOMEN: Focus on one way in which your spouse feels **RESPECTED**.
MEN: Focus on one way in which your spouse feels **CHERISHED**.

Now, commit to implementing it this week in a practical way!

TOMORROW IN THE LOVE DARE: “LOVE IS THOUGHTFUL”