

# 30 DAYS OF ENRICHING YOUR MARRIAGE

A stylized illustration of a man and a woman walking hand-in-hand on a path through a forest. The woman is on the left, wearing a yellow dress, and the man is on the right, wearing a white shirt and dark pants. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The background features large trees and a path leading into the distance.

A Devotional Journey Through the 10 Key Dimensions of a Strong Marriage

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# Introduction

A Devotional Journey Through 10 Core Areas of Marital Health

Marriage is a covenant—sacred, practical, and meant to mature across a lifetime (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4–6). This 30-day devotional is designed to help you strengthen that covenant by walking—slowly and intentionally—through ten proven dimensions of a healthy marriage:

1. Communication • 2) Conflict Resolution • 3) Partner Style & Habits • 4) Financial Management • 5) Leisure Activities • 6) Sexuality & Affection • 7) Family & Friends • 8) Relationship Roles • 9) Children & Parenting • 10) Spiritual Beliefs.

The aim is simple: small, daily practices that deepen love, clarity, and unity. "Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14).

# Why These Ten Areas?

## **Biblical wisdom**

Scripture speaks to speech, peace-making, stewardship, affection, community, and discipleship in the home (Ephesians 4–5; Colossians 3; Proverbs).

## **Pastoral practice**

Decades of Christian marriage counseling show that couples who talk regularly, repair quickly, steward money together, and pray together experience greater stability.

## **Research alignment**

These ten dimensions mirror widely used Christian assessment frameworks for couples (e.g., PREPARE/ENRICH), which highlight strengths and growth areas to guide practical change.

"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain." (Psalm 127:1)

"Two are better than one... a threefold cord is not quickly broken." (Ecclesiastes 4:9–12)

# How to Use This Guide (15–30 Minutes a Day)

## **Begin with Prayer (John 15:5)**

"Lord Jesus, be present. Teach us to love as You love."

## **Read the Scripture Aloud (Psalm 119:105)**

God's Word sets the tone and direction.

## **Share & Listen (James 1:19)**

One speaks, one listens; then switch. Aim to understand, not to win.

## **Do the Action Step (James 1:22)**

Each day has a concrete practice. Keep it simple and doable.

## **Close with Thanks (Philippians 4:6)**

Name one grace you noticed in your spouse today.

## **Journal Briefly**

Record insights, prayers, and any "agreements" you make.

# Ground Rules for Safe, Fruitful Conversations

## **Honor First (Romans 12:10)**

No sarcasm, shaming, or score-keeping.

## **Truth in Love (Ephesians 4:15, 29–32)**

Be honest and kind at the same time.

## **Own Your Part (Matthew 7:3–5)**

Confess before you correct; use "I" statements.

## **Repair Quickly (Colossians 3:13)**

"I was wrong. Will you forgive me?"

## **Protect Time (Mark 6:31)**

Schedule your daily window; guard it.

# A Traditional, Time-Tested Vision



## **Covenant over contract**

We love and serve because we promised, and because Christ first loved us (Malachi 2:14–16; Ephesians 5:25).

## **Roles as responsibility, not rivalry**

Mutual honor, humble leadership, willing support (Ephesians 5:21–33; 1 Peter 3:1–7).

## **Household discipleship**

Passing faith, wisdom, and virtue to the next generation (Deuteronomy 6:6–7; Joshua 24:15).

# When Topics Feel Tender

If you touch a sore place—betrayal, trauma, deep resentment—slow down:



## Pray for wisdom

Seek God's guidance (James 1:5).



## Pause the exercise

Set a time to return when emotions have settled.



## Seek counsel

Reach out to a trusted pastor or Christian counsellor (Proverbs 11:14).

# Weekly Rhythm to Sustain the Journey

## Daily

Devotional + one small action.

## End of Week

A 30–45-minute check-in—celebrate wins, name one growth area, pray together (Hebrews 10:24–25).



# Questions to Prime Your Hearts Today



## Legacy

What kind of marriage do we want to hand to our children and community? (Psalm 78:4)



## Starting Point

Where is God inviting us to begin—communication, finances, affection, or prayer?



## Commitment

What one small habit will we practice every day for the next 30 days?

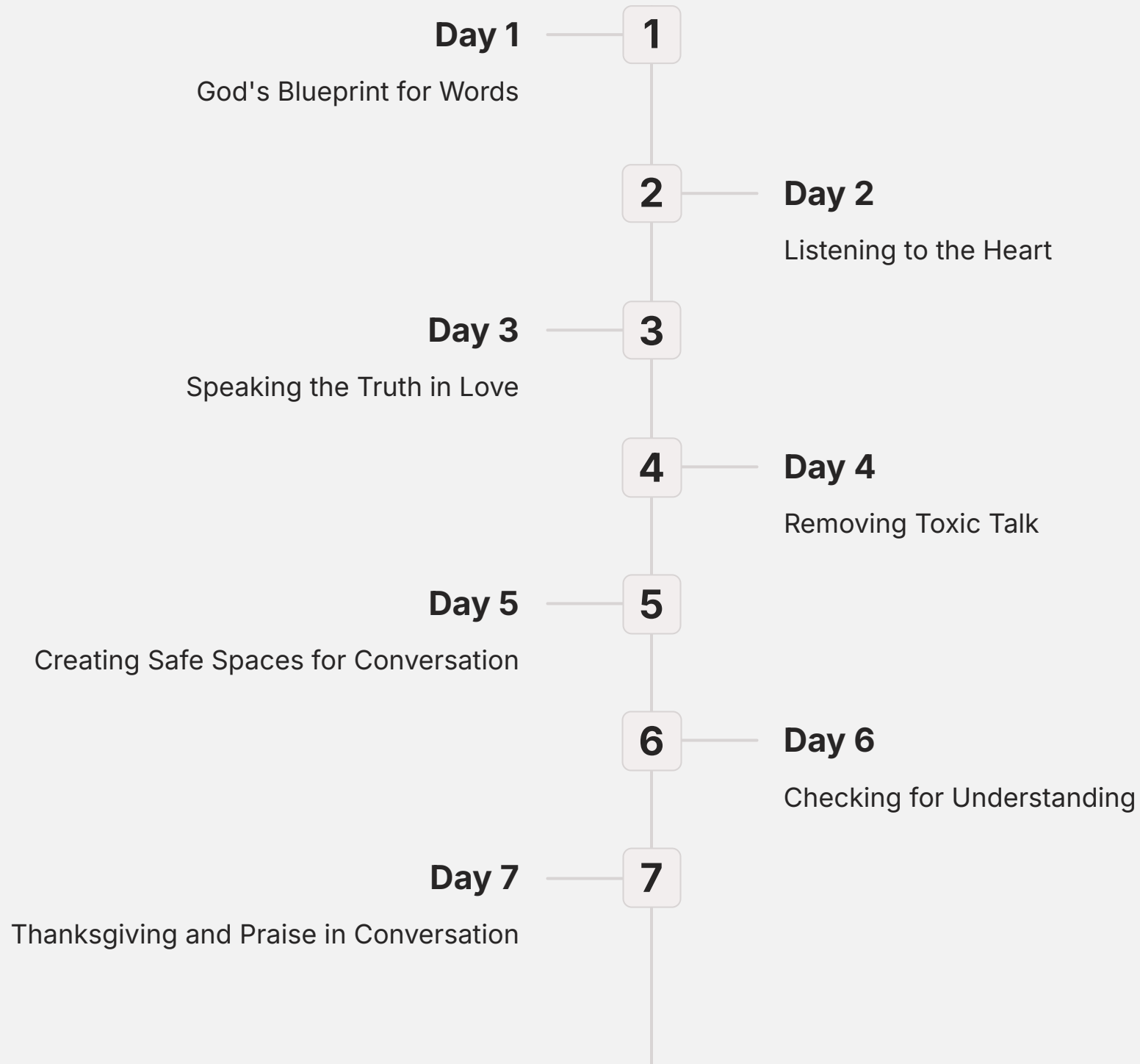


# A Simple Opening Prayer

"Father, we offer You our marriage. Lord Jesus, teach us sacrificial love and gentle truth. Holy Spirit, form in us patience, kindness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). Build our home in Your wisdom (Proverbs 24:3–4) and make our light shine before others (Matthew 5:16). Amen."

# Week 1 – Communication

Goal: Speak truth in love and listen to understand (Ephesians 4:15; James 1:19).



# Day 1 – God's Blueprint for Words

Core Text: Proverbs 18:21 — "Death and life are in the power of the tongue."

## Devotional Reflection

God entrusted us with speech to create trust, bless, and build. Scripture consistently ties spiritual maturity to how we use words.

"Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6).

"Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up" (Ephesians 4:29).

"Rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing" (Proverbs 12:18).

In marriage, words become the climate of the heart: tone and timing can either open the door to intimacy or shut it. God's blueprint is simple and demanding—truth with grace, clarity with kindness, conviction with humility (John 1:14; Ephesians 4:15).

- Most marital hurt does not come from major betrayals but from daily micro-cuts—sarcasm, dismissive replies, unchecked frustration. The gospel invites a different way: repent quickly, speak gently, bless consistently (James 3:9–10; 1 Peter 3:8–9).



## Chrisan

Attentioness, support,  
therapeutic and support

## Key Idea for Today

# Choose life-giving words.

Before speaking, ask: Will this sentence plant hope or harvest hurt?

### Conversation Starters

Take turns answering, the listener paraphrases what they heard.

1. One sentence my heart needs to hear more often from you is \_\_\_\_\_. Why?
2. A phrase I use that might feel sharp or dismissive to you is \_\_\_\_\_. What would be better?
3. When do I tend to speak life? When do I speak carelessly?

# Practice Tool: T.H.I.N.K. Filter

Before a sensitive sentence, pause and test it:

1

## True

Is it accurate and honest?  
(Ephesians 4:25)

2

## Helpful

Does it serve a constructive  
purpose? (Ephesians 4:29)

3

## Inspiring/Edifying

Does it build up rather than tear  
down? (Proverbs 12:25)

4

## Necessary

Does it need to be said right now? (Proverbs 10:19)

5

## Kind

Is it delivered with gentleness? (Proverbs 15:1)

Try one "T.H.I.N.K." pause today before a potentially touchy topic.

# Action for Today

## Affirmation Exchange

Each spouse shares one thing the other said recently that encouraged them. Be specific about the words and the effect they had.

## Upgrade One Phrase

Replace one habitual phrase that stings (e.g., "You never...") with a life-giving alternative ("When X happens, I feel Y. Could we try Z?").

## Short Role-Play (3 minutes)

Pick a common friction point (e.g., arriving late, spending, chores).

- Version A: Say it the old way (critical/accusatory).
- Version B: Say it the new way (gentle, specific, solution-focused).

Notice how your body and heart feel in Version B.

# Journal Prompt & Scripture to Memorize

## Journal Prompt (each spouse)

- Where have my words lately brought life? Where have they brought hurt?
- One sentence I will practice this week to bless my spouse is: "\_\_\_\_\_."

## Scripture to Memorize Together

"Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up... that it may give grace to those who hear." (Ephesians 4:29)

## Declaration (speak aloud together)

"By God's grace, our tongues will be instruments of blessing. We choose truth with kindness, correction with humility, and daily words that build trust and hope."

# Counsellor's Note & Prayer

## Counsellor's Note

- **Timing matters:** Discuss hard things when both are resourced (not hungry, exhausted, rushed).
- **Tone matters:** Lower volume, slower pace = safer conversation.
- **Repair matters:** If you miss it today, apologize quickly (Colossians 3:13). A quick repair prevents long resentment.

## Suggested Prayer

"Lord, You spoke creation by Your Word and healed by Your voice. Tame our tongues and align our hearts. Make our speech gracious, honest, and gentle. Teach us to bless and build, to repent quickly, and to speak life into our home. In Jesus' name, Amen."

(Supporting verses: James 3:2–10; Colossians 4:6; Ephesians 4:29)

## Optional Stretch Challenge

**24-Hour Encouragement Fast:** For the next day, avoid criticism; speak only what builds up. If a correction is needed, frame it with affirmation and a clear, kind request.

# Day 2 – Listening to the Heart

Core Text: James 1:19 — "Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger."

## Devotional Reflection

Biblical listening is an act of love. It is not passive silence while we form our reply; it is the humble work of entering another's world. Christ listened to the hurting before He spoke healing (Mark 10:51; Luke 24:17–19). Wisdom urges us to slow down, soften our hearts, and make room for understanding (Proverbs 18:13; 20:5). In marriage, listening becomes a ministry: we receive our spouse's thoughts without judgment, we reflect their feelings with gentleness, and only then do we offer counsel. "A gentle tongue is a tree of life" because it grows from a listening heart (Proverbs 15:1–4).

**i Key Insight:** Listening restores dignity. When your spouse feels heard, defensiveness drops and trust rises (Ephesians 4:2).

## Today's Aim

Seek to understand before you seek to be understood (cf. Philippians 2:4).



# The H.E.A.R.T. Posture

Use this simple posture while your spouse speaks:

## **H – Hold your tongue**

Pause responses; breathe slowly (Proverbs 10:19).

## **E – Eye & body presence**

Turn toward, soften face, nod occasionally (1 Peter 3:8).

## **A – Ask to learn**

"Can you help me understand...?" (Proverbs 20:5).

## **R – Reflect & validate**

"What I'm hearing is... That sounds...." (Romans 12:15).

## **T – Thank & summarize**

"Thank you for trusting me. If I got it right, you're saying...?"

# Skills to Practice



## Mirroring

Repeat key words or phrases to show you're tracking (e.g., "overwhelmed by the schedule").



## Labeling feelings

"It sounds frustrating / discouraging / lonely" (Psalm 62:8).



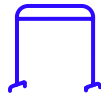
## Open questions

"When did this start? What would help right now?"



## Two-beat pause

Count "one...two" before replying—reduces reactivity (Proverbs 14:29).



## No-fix rule (for now)

Understanding comes first; solutions later (Proverbs 18:2).

# 10-Minute Listening Exercise

Set a timer for 10 minutes.

## **Speaker**

Share one current stress or hope. Stay with your feelings and needs.

## **Listener**

Use H.E.A.R.T.; do not interrupt or problem-solve.

## **Reflect**

Offer a 20–30 second summary and one feeling you heard.

## **Confirm**

"Did I get that right?" If not, repair and try again.

## **Switch roles**

Repeat for another 10 minutes.

Ground Rules: No phones; sit close; gentle tone; confidentiality honored.

# Conversation Starters & Role-Play

## Conversation Starters

- "When do you feel most heard by me?"
- "What gets in the way of me hearing your heart?"
- "What would 'feeling understood' sound like to you this week?"

## Short Role-Play (3 minutes)

Choose a common friction point (e.g., chores).

- **Old way:** Listener interrupts, defends, offers quick fixes.
- **New way:** Listener mirrors, names feeling, asks one clarifying question, summarizes.

Notice the shift in emotional safety.

# Journal Prompts & Memory Verse

## Journal Prompts (each spouse)

- Where did I interrupt today? Why?
- A feeling my spouse shared that I understand better now is \_\_\_\_\_.
- One sentence I will use this week to show understanding is: "What matters most to you in this?"

## Memory Verse

"Whoever gives an answer before he listens—it is folly and shame to him." (Proverbs 18:13)

## Declaration (say together)

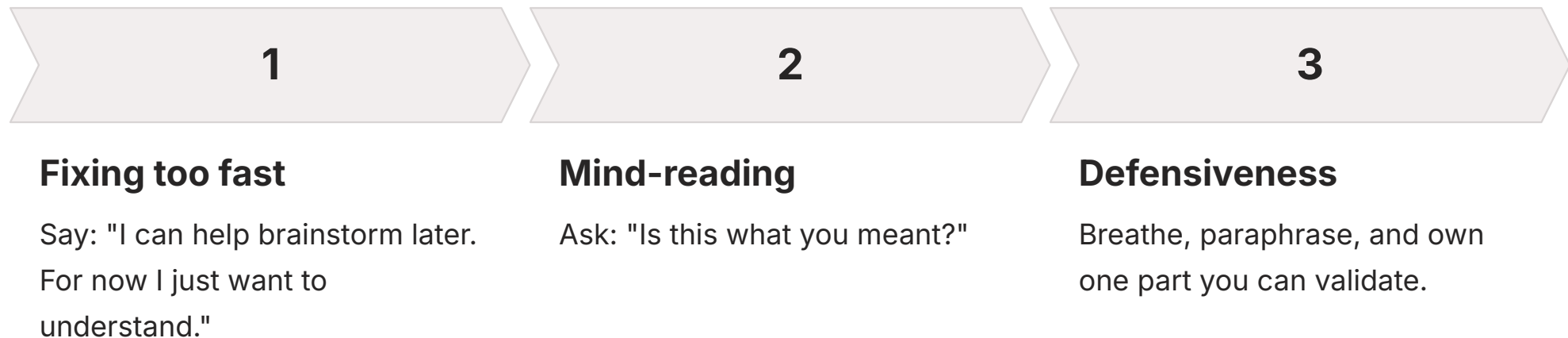
"By God's grace, we will be quick to hear and slow to speak. We will honor each other's hearts, listen without defense, and seek understanding before advice."

# Counsellor's Note & Prayer

## Counsellor's Note

- **Timing:** Choose conversations when both are resourced (not hungry, rushed, or exhausted).
- **Body Speaks:** Even when silent, your posture communicates welcome or withdrawal.
- **Repair Quickly:** If you interrupt, name it and reset: "I jumped in; please continue."

## Common Blockers & Repairs:



## Prayer

"Father, teach us to listen as You listen. Lord Jesus, You welcomed the weary and heard their cries—make us gentle and present. Holy Spirit, quiet our hurry, tame our defenses, and help us hear the heart behind the words. Amen."

Supporting Scriptures: James 1:19; Proverbs 18:13; Proverbs 20:5; Romans 12:15; Ephesians 4:2.

# Day 3 – Speaking the Truth in Love

Core Text: Ephesians 4:15 — "...speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ."

## Devotional Reflection

Truth and love are not rivals; they are covenant partners. Truth without love can feel like a hammer; love without truth can become flattery or avoidance. Christ embodies both—"full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). In marriage, truth heals when it is delivered with humility, tenderness, and a desire for the other's good (Proverbs 27:6; Ephesians 4:29). Avoiding hard truths may buy short-term peace but often mortgages long-term trust. When we speak truth in love, we invite growth, restore connection, and honor God's design for holiness and unity (Colossians 3:9–14).

**Key Insight:** The aim of truth-telling in Christian marriage is restoration, not victory; understanding, not scoring points (Galatians 6:1).

## Today's Aim

Be honest and gentle at the same time. Name what is true—about your feelings, needs, and limits—while guarding your spouse's dignity (Proverbs 15:1; 1 Corinthians 13:4–7).



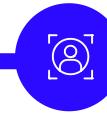
# The L.O.V.E. Truth-Telling Framework

Before a sensitive conversation, walk through L.O.V.E.:



## **L – Locate the log**

What do I need to own first? Confess briefly (Matthew 7:3–5).



## **O – One clear topic**

Keep it focused; don't pile on (Proverbs 10:19).



## **V – Voice it gently**

Choose a calm moment; soften your startup (Proverbs 15:1).



## **E – Engage to understand**

Ask, "How did you hear what I said? What feels fair or missing?" (James 1:19; Proverbs 20:5)

# Words That Heal vs. Words That Harm

## Harmful openers:

- "You always..."
- "You never..."
- "What's wrong with you?"

## Healing openers:

- "When X happens, I feel Y. Could we try Z?"
- "I need your help with..."
- "Can we find a way that works for both of us?"

📌 **Tip:** Use I-feel/I-need statements: "I feel [emotion] when [specific behavior]. I need [clear request]."

# 12-Minute Exercise

## **Prepare (1 min each)**

Write one need you'll share (clarity, help, time, reassurance, etc.).

## **Speak (3 min)**

Use L.O.V.E. + I-feel/I-need. Stay on one topic.

## **Reflect (2 min – spouse)**

Paraphrase what you heard; name a feeling you heard.

## **Clarify (1 min)**

Speaker adds anything missed.

## **Respond (3 min)**

The listener offers one step they can take; avoid explaining away.

## **Pray (1–2 min)**

Thank God for courage and ask for tenderness.

Ground Rules: Low voice, no interruptions, no kitchen-sink accusations, no sarcasm.

# Conversation Starters & Micro-Tools

## Conversation Starters

- "What makes it easier for you to receive hard truths from me?"
- "Which part of my delivery do you experience as harsh—even if I don't mean it that way?"
- "If I could change one small habit this week to serve you, which would help most?"

## Micro-Tools for Courage + Kindness

- **Gentle Start-Up (first 10 seconds):** Appreciation + request "I appreciate how hard you're working. Could we look at our evening routine together?"
- **Two-Beat Pause:** After sharing your truth, count "one...two..." before continuing—this invites safety (Proverbs 14:29).
- **Repair Phrases:** "Let me try that again more gently." "I'm for you." "Can we reset?"

# Role-Play & Journal Prompts

## Short Role-Play (3 minutes)

Pick a real but manageable topic (e.g., phone time at night).

- **Old way:** "You're always on that phone. You don't care about me."
- **New way:** "When we're both on our phones after dinner, I feel alone. I'd love 20 device-free minutes to connect. Could we try that tonight?"

Discuss how the new way changes the emotional temperature.

## Journal Prompts (each spouse)

- Where have I withheld truth out of fear? What did that cost us?
- Where have I spoken truth without love? What repair is needed?
- Complete: "A loving, honest sentence I will practice this week is: \_\_\_\_\_."

# Memory Verse & Declaration

## Memory Verse

"Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person." (Colossians 4:6)

Companion texts: Ephesians 4:25, 29; Proverbs 12:18;  
Proverbs 27:6.

## Declaration (say together)

"By God's grace, we will tell the truth in a way that builds trust. We choose courage without harshness and kindness without avoidance. Our goal is unity, not victory."

# Counsellor's Note & Prayer

## Counsellor's Note

- **Timing:** Don't choose moments of fatigue, hunger, or public settings (Mark 6:31—come away and rest).
- **Length:** Short, focused conversations reduce defensiveness.
- **Follow-through:** Turn intentions into one concrete, time-bound step. Revisit in 48–72 hours.
- **If it goes sideways:** Pause, pray together for 30 seconds (Philippians 4:6–7), then try again later. Quick repair prevents slow resentment (Colossians 3:13).

## Prayer

"Lord Jesus, You are full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Give us courage to be honest and kindness to be gentle. Purify our motives, guide our tone, and knit our hearts in unity. Teach us to speak in ways that heal and to receive truth with humility. Amen."

Supporting Scriptures: Ephesians 4:15, 25, 29; Colossians 4:6; Proverbs 15:1; Proverbs 12:18; Galatians 6:1.



# Day 4 – Removing Toxic Talk

Core Text: Colossians 4:6 — "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."

## Devotional Reflection

Words set the climate of a marriage. Sarcasm, contempt, chronic criticism, and eye-rolling don't seem "big," yet they slowly corrode trust (Proverbs 12:18). Scripture calls us to a better way—speech that is gracious (kind at the core) and seasoned with salt (preserving, purifying, adding God-honoring flavor). Jesus says our words reveal our hearts (Luke 6:45). So this is not only a mouth issue; it's a heart-renewal issue. The Spirit forms a new vocabulary in us—truthful, gentle, timely (Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 15:1).

**i** **Key insight:** Toxic talk is usually a symptom of unexpressed pain or fear. Encouragement doesn't ignore truth; it delivers truth in a way that strengthens rather than shames (Ephesians 4:15).

## Today's Aim

Replace sarcasm and criticism with encouragement and specific requests. Ask: Will my next sentence build up or break down? (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

# Spot the "Four Toxins"

Use this checklist to notice patterns:

## **Sarcasm**

Humor with a hidden blade (Proverbs 26:18–19).

## **Contempt**

Eye-rolls, mockery, superiority (Luke 18:9).

## **Criticism**

Global "you always/never" attacks (Proverbs 18:21).

## **Stonewalling**

Withdrawing to punish, not to cool down (Proverbs 17:14).

Antidotes: Gentle start-up, appreciation, specific requests, and short cool-downs (Proverbs 15:1; Colossians 3:12–14).

# The B.U.I.L.D. Language Swap

When you feel the toxin rising, swap it using B.U.I.L.D.:

## **B – Bless first**

Name one real strength: "I appreciate how you..."  
(Philippians 4:8)

## **U – Use 'I' statements**

"I feel... when... I need..."  
(Ephesians 4:25)

## **I – Identify one behavior, not the person**

"When the dishes stack up..."  
not "You're lazy."

## **L – Limit the scope**

One topic at a time (Proverbs 10:19).

## **D – Doable request**

"Could we set a 10-minute tidy right after dinner?"

# 24-Hour Fast from Negative Speech

Agree to a one-day "toxic talk fast."

## What counts as toxic?

- Sarcasm
- Contempt
- Name-calling
- Global criticism
- Score-keeping
- Shaming
- Threats

## What replaces it?

- Encouragement
- Gratitude
- Gentle truth
- Specific requests
- Brief cool-downs with a return time

Reset phrase (use anytime): "I'm slipping into harshness. Let me try that again more gently." (Colossians 3:13)

# 12-Minute Practice & Conversation Starters

## 12-Minute Practice (both take a turn)

1. Name the trigger (1 min): One moment this week you felt tempted to be sarcastic or critical.
2. Rewrite it with B.U.I.L.D. (3 min): Draft a new sentence.
3. Share aloud (2 min).
4. Partner reflects (2 min): "What I heard... The request is..."
5. Agree one small next step (2 min).
6. Pray briefly together (2 min).

## Conversation Starters

- "What kind of words make you feel most safe with me?"
- "When I get sarcastic, what am I usually feeling underneath?"
- "Which encouragement from me lands the deepest—and why?"

## Short Role-Play (3 minutes)

**Old way:** "You never help around here. I do everything!"

**New way:** "When the kitchen is left to the morning, I feel overwhelmed. I'd love 10 minutes together now so we can both rest earlier. Could we do that?"

Discuss how the "new way" changes the emotional temperature (Proverbs 15:1).

# Journal Prompts & Scripture to Memorize

## Journal Prompts (each spouse)

- Where did I use toxic talk recently? What fear/pain was underneath?
- Three concrete encouragements I can say this week are:
  - a. "I noticed you..."
  - b. "It helped me when you..."
  - c. "I admire your..."

## Scripture to Memorize

"Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear."  
(Ephesians 4:29)

See also: Proverbs 15:1; 12:18; 16:24; 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

## Declaration (say together)

"By the Spirit's help, we renounce sarcasm, contempt, and criticism. We choose speech that builds up, fits the moment, and gives grace. Our tongues will reflect Christ."

# Counsellor's Note & Prayer

## Counsellor's Note

- **Check your drivers:** Are you hungry, angry, lonely, or tired (H.A.L.T.)? Pause before talking (Proverbs 14:29).
- **Repair quickly:** If you slip, confess without excuses; restate the request gently (1 John 1:9; Colossians 3:13).
- **Practice praise:** Begin and end the day with one sincere appreciation (Philippians 1:3).
- **Guard the home's soundscape:** Music, Scripture, and prayer shape tone (Psalm 119:105; Colossians 3:16).

## Prayer

"Lord Jesus, You are full of grace and truth. Purify our tongues and renew our hearts. Teach us to bless, to correct with kindness, and to speak words that give grace. Make our home a refuge where Your peace is heard in our tone. Amen."

Supporting Scriptures: Colossians 4:6; Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 15:1; Proverbs 12:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

# Day 5 – Creating Safe Spaces for Conversation

Core Text: Proverbs 15:1 — "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." (KJV)

## Devotional Reflection

God designed words to heal, not harm. But even good words can land badly if the setting feels unsafe. Scripture ties tone and timing to wisdom: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Proverbs 25:11). A gentle answer lowers defenses; a harsh start raises walls (Proverbs 15:1; 18:19). If we want honest dialogue, we must prepare a refuge—a predictable place and rhythm where hearts can open without fear (Ephesians 4:29; Colossians 3:12–14).

**i** **Key insight:** Safety is not the absence of hard topics; it's the presence of honor and restraint while discussing them (James 1:19–20).

## Today's Aim

Design and dedicate a "talk spot"—a physical place and simple ritual that signals: "Here we speak gently, listen fully, and repair quickly."



# What Makes a Place Safe? The P.L.A.C.E. Checklist



## **P – Predictable**

Same chair/corner/time lowers anxiety (1 Corinthians 14:40).



## **L – Low Distraction**

No phones/TV; soft lighting; seats at an angle (not confrontational).



## **A – Agreed Ground Rules**

Gentle tone, one topic, no name-calling, no threats (Ephesians 4:31–32).



## **C – Comfort Cues**

Water/tea, tissues, a small notepad—signals care (Romans 12:10).



## **E – Exit & Return Plan**

If emotions surge, take a 20–30 minute cool-down with a set return time (Proverbs 14:29).

# Covenant for the Talk Spot

Read aloud, sign if helpful:

1. We will begin with a 30–60 second prayer (Philippians 4:6–7).

2. We will use gentle start-ups and "I" statements (Proverbs 15:1).

3. We will listen to understand before replying (James 1:19).

4. We will avoid sarcasm, global accusations ("always/never"), and score-keeping (Ephesians 4:29).

5. If flooded, we will pause and return at the agreed time (Colossians 3:13).

# A Simple Conversation Liturgy

10–15 minutes:

## **Open (30–60 sec)**

"Lord, make our words gracious and our hearts humble."

## **Speaker A (3–4 min)**

One topic; feelings + need.

## **Listener B (1–2 min)**

Reflect and validate: "What I hear is... It feels..."

## **Swap roles (5–6 min)**

B speaks, A listens and reflects.

## **Decide one small step (1–2 min)**

Agree on a specific action.

## **Close with gratitude (30 sec)**

Each names one grace seen in the other.

# Set Up the Talk Spot & Conversation Starters

## Set Up the Talk Spot (today)

- Choose the place (e.g., end of the sofa, balcony corner, two dining chairs angled).
- Add one comfort cue (lamp or candle; tea).
- Place a notepad and two pens.
- Post the P.L.A.C.E. checklist or covenant nearby.

Time Rule: 15–25 minutes max, unless both agree to continue (Mark 6:31).

## Conversation Starters (use in your new spot)

- "What makes you feel safest when we talk?"
- "How would you like me to start hard conversations this week?"
- "What signal could we use to slow down without shutting down?"

## Micro-Tools that Protect Safety

- **Gentle Start-Up Formula:** Appreciation + specific observation + clear request "I appreciate your effort with the kids. When bedtime runs late, I feel anxious. Could we try starting at 8:15 tonight?"
- **Two-Beat Pause:** Count "one...two" after your spouse finishes.
- **Traffic-Light Signal:** Green: Keep going. Yellow: Slow; I'm getting activated—please rephrase. Red: Pause for 20 minutes; return at [time].

# 12-Minute Practice & Role-Play

## 12-Minute Practice (today)

1. Dedicate the spot with a brief prayer (30 sec).
2. Pick one low-stakes topic (e.g., weekend plan).
3. Run the liturgy once (Speaker/Listener swap).
4. Name one thing that felt safe and one improvement for next time.

## Short Role-Play (3 minutes)

**Old way (kitchen chaos):** Standing, raised voices, multitasking, interruptions.

**New way (talk spot):** Seated, phones away, softer tone, one topic, summary + request.

Notice the emotional temperature drop when the context changes (Proverbs 17:27).

# Journal Prompts & Memory Verse

## Journal Prompts (each spouse)

- What environmental cue most helps me stay gentle?
- One phrase I hope never to hear in our talk spot is \_\_\_\_\_.
- One phrase that helps me open up is \_\_\_\_\_.

## Memory Verse

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." (Ephesians 4:29)

## Declaration (say together)

"In this place, by God's grace, our words will give grace. We choose gentleness, clarity, and quick repair. Our home will be a refuge for honest dialogue."

# Counsellor's Note & Prayer

## Counsellor's Note

- **Body posture matters:** Sit at a slight angle; lower voice; unclench hands.
- **One topic rule:** Keeps conversations short and safe (Proverbs 10:19).
- **Praise the repair:** When your spouse resets gently, thank them—it multiplies safety (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
- **If history is heavy:** Consider inviting a trusted pastor/counsellor to help you use the spot well (Proverbs 11:14).

## Prayer

"Lord, make our home a refuge. Train our tongues to gentleness and our hearts to patience. May our 'talk spot' be an altar where grace and truth meet, healing takes root, and unity grows. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen."

Supporting Scriptures: Proverbs 15:1; 25:11; Ephesians 4:29–32; Colossians 3:12–14; James 1:19–20; Philippians 4:6–7.



# Day 6 – Checking for Understanding

Core Text: Proverbs 20:5 — "The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out."

## Devotional Reflection

God calls us not only to hear words but to draw out the heart beneath them. Wise love asks good questions and refuses to run on assumptions (Proverbs 18:13). A mature spouse slows down to seek insight (Proverbs 2:2), gives thoughtful replies (Proverbs 15:28), and listens with humility (James 1:19). In Christian marriage, checking for understanding is an act of service (Philippians 2:4): "I value you enough to ensure I truly grasp what you mean."

**i** **Key insight:** Clarifying is not nitpicking; it is protecting the relationship from avoidable hurt.

## Today's Aim

Use clarifying questions and paraphrasing to confirm what your spouse intends—before you evaluate, advise, or act.

# The D.R.A.W. Method

To "draw out" deep waters:

## **D – Describe what you heard**

"So you're saying..." (Proverbs 18:13)

## **R – Reflect the feeling**

"It sounds [overwhelming / lonely / hopeful]."  
(Romans 12:15)

## **A – Ask a clarifying question**

"Did I get that right, or am I missing something?"  
(Proverbs 20:5)

## **W – What would help**

"What support would feel most helpful right now?"  
(Galatians 6:2)

## **Paraphrase Formula (10–20 seconds)**

"What I hear is that [content] and you feel [emotion] because [meaning/concern]. Did I get that?"

Example: "What I hear is that when evenings run long, you feel anxious because sleep is scarce and tomorrow's work is heavy. Did I get that?"

# Five Clarifying Questions That Help

Use one at a time:

- 1 "When did you start feeling this most strongly?"
- 2 "What part of this matters most to you?"
- 3 "Is this mainly about information, reassurance, or a plan?"
- 4 "What would 'better' look like by tonight?"
- 5 "Is there anything I said/did that made this harder?"

Guardrails: One question, then listen. Don't stack questions.

# 12-Minute Practice & Conversation Starters

## 12-Minute Practice (each takes a turn)

Set a timer. No phones.

1. Speaker (3 min): Share one current stress/hope.
2. Listener (2 min): Use D.R.A.W. + Paraphrase Formula; no fixes yet.
3. Speaker (1 min): Confirm/correct the paraphrase.
4. Listener (1 min): Ask one clarifying question; re-paraphrase in one sentence.
5. Together (1 min): Name one next step or simply pray.
6. Switch roles and repeat.

## Conversation Starters

- "What's the main headline of what you want me to understand?"
- "On a scale of 1–10, how understood do you feel—what would make it a point higher?"
- "Do you want empathy, ideas, or action right now?"

## Role-Play (3 minutes)

### Old way:

Speaker: "I'm swamped."

Listener: "You always say that. Just plan better."

### New way:

Listener: "What I hear is you feel swamped because three deadlines piled up. Sounds stressful. Would support look like me handling dinner or helping you time-block?"

Discuss how the new way lowers defensiveness.

# "Assumption Audit" & Indicators of Understanding

## "Assumption Audit" (quick self-check)

Before replying, ask yourself:

- Am I assuming tone or intent? (Proverbs 14:29)
- Did I reflect a feeling as well as the fact?
- Did I ask at least one clarifying question?

## Indicators You Understood Well

- Your spouse says, "Yes—that's it."
- Their body relaxes, pace slows, eye contact returns.
- The talk shifts from argument to alignment.

# Journal Prompts & Scriptures to Memorize

## Journal Prompts (each spouse)

- One assumption I made recently that hurt us was \_\_\_\_\_.
- A clarifying question I'll practice this week is \_\_\_\_\_.
- When I feel defensive, I will say: "Give me a moment—I want to understand you."

## Scriptures to Memorize

- "If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame." (Proverbs 18:13)
- "Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger." (James 1:19)

## Declaration (say together)

"By God's grace, we will be quick to understand and slow to assume. We will draw out each other's hearts with patient questions and honoring words."

# Counsellor's Note & Prayer

## Counsellor's Note

- **Slow the physiology:** Breathe slowly; keep your voice low. Calm bodies make clear minds.
- **Name and normalize:** "I want to get this right; I may paraphrase clumsily—please help me."
- **Repair if you miss:** "I misunderstood you. Can we rewind so I can try again?" (Colossians 3:13)

## Prayer

"Lord, Source of wisdom, teach us to listen beneath the words. Quiet our hurry and our defensiveness. Help us draw out each other's hearts with patience and humility, so our home reflects Christ's gentleness and truth. Amen."

Supporting Scriptures: Proverbs 20:5; 18:13; 15:28; James 1:19; Philippians 2:4; Romans 12:15.

# Day 7 – Thanksgiving and Praise in Conversation

Core Text: 1 Thessalonians 5:18 — "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

## Devotional Reflection

Gratitude is not denial of problems; it is choosing to notice God's gifts in the midst of them (Philippians 4:6–7). Scripture repeatedly links thanksgiving to renewed perspective and strengthened hearts (Psalm 92:1–2; Colossians 3:15–17). In marriage, gratitude re-tunes the atmosphere: praise softens criticism, warmth disarms defensiveness, and noticing small faithfulness builds trust. "Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body" (Proverbs 16:24).

**i Key insight:** You tend to see more of what you name. Couples who speak thankfulness begin to spot it everywhere.

## Today's Aim

Train your tongues and eyes to notice and name specific graces in your spouse, out loud and often (Hebrews 3:13).



# The A.I.M. Framework for Everyday Gratitude

## **A – Accurate**

Be concrete, not vague. "Thank you for calling my mom today at lunch."

## **I – Impact-aware**

Name the effect. "It calmed me to know you'd handled it."

## **M – Meaningful**

Tie it to a virtue or value. "That showed your kindness and loyalty."

Try to AIM for one 10–20 second gratitude sentence, three times today.

## **Your 5-Minute "Praise Round"**

Action Today: Each spouse shares three specific appreciations. Use A.I.M.

Example: "Thank you for setting up our talk spot yesterday. It helped me feel safe to share; it shows your commitment to our growth."

# Conversation Starters & Gratitude Habits

## Conversation Starters

- "What is one quality in me you've seen grow this month?"
- "Which small act from me lately carried outsized impact?"
- "Where did you notice God's provision through your spouse this week?"

## Gratitude Habits that Stick (micro-tools)

- **The Doorframe Blessing:** When your spouse walks in/out, name one appreciation.
- **Table Toast:** At the evening meal, each offers one sentence of thanks for the day and one for the other (Psalm 128:2–3).
- **Sticky Note Mercy:** Leave a short note where they'll find it (mirror, bag, dashboard).
- **Text of Thanks:** Send a midday line: "I noticed... It helped me..."

# 12-Minute Practice & Role-Play

## 12-Minute Practice (today)

1. Quiet prep (1 min): Ask God to bring to mind specifics (Psalm 103:2).
2. Share three appreciations each (6–7 min): Use A.I.M.; no rebuttals, just receive.
3. Reflect (2–3 min): "Hearing that, I feel..."
4. Pray briefly together (1–2 min): Thank God for these graces.

## Role-Play (3 minutes)

**Old way:** "You finally did the dishes—took you long enough."

**New way:** "Thanks for doing the dishes before bed. Waking up to a clear sink helped me start calm. It shows your care for our mornings."

Discuss how the new way changes tone and motivation (Ephesians 4:29).

# Journal Prompts & Scriptures to Memorize

## Journal Prompts (each spouse)

- Three graces I've received through you this week are: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_.
- One virtue I see in you that I want to honor more is \_\_\_\_\_, because \_\_\_\_\_.
- Where did my words give life yesterday? Where can I upgrade today?

## Scriptures to Memorize

- "Give thanks in all circumstances..." (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
- "Enter His gates with thanksgiving..." (Psalm 100:4)
- "Let the peace of Christ rule... and be thankful." (Colossians 3:15–17)

## Declaration (say together)

"Father, we choose gratitude. We will speak what is true and good, naming Your gifts in each other. Let our words give grace and set a gentle tone in our home."

# Counsellor's Note & Prayer

## Counsellor's Note

- **Specific beats general:** "Thanks for being you" is warm; "Thanks for taking the car for service at 7 a.m." is formational.
- **Daily ratio:** Aim for 5:1 positive to corrective comments.
- **Repair with thanks:** After conflict, thank your spouse for one repair effort ("Thank you for circling back to finish that hard talk").

## Prayer

"Lord, we thank You for the gift of each other. Train our eyes to see grace, our tongues to praise, and our hearts to rest in Your goodness. Make our home a place where thanksgiving crowns every conversation. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Supporting Scriptures: 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Philippians 4:6–7; Colossians 3:15–17; Psalm 92:1–2; Proverbs 16:24; Ephesians 4:29; Psalm 103:2.

## Optional Stretch Challenge (this week)

**Gratitude Journal (shared):** Each day, write one sentence about your spouse under three headings: Effort, Character, Blessing received. Review together on Day 14.