



Summer at Woodland Hills
Part 7 – The Six Levels of Communication
Pastor Ted Cunningham

Today, we're having a TwoIgnite Sunday. We're talking about communication. As my father-in-law, Denny, says, the majority of every couple's problem is a "failure to communicate." How many of you agree with my father-in-law, Dennis Freitag? Becoming better communicators... We're looking at *The Six Levels of Communication*.

A couple of years ago, I was in Prescott, Arizona, teaching on this. I tweeted out to Prescott, "Hey, come tonight to a fun date night..." Auto correct got hold of my tweet and I tweeted out to all of Arizona, "Join us tonight for a fun date night where we will be discussing the six levels of communism." Can you think of a more fun date night than that? That's a fun date night.

I don't even know what the six levels of communism are, but I know I don't want our country going that way. I just share that for those of you who like Bernie Sanders. I just want to make sure... Hey, we are working hard around here to stay at three services, and we will do anything we need to do to stay at three services, so if that's a few Bernie jokes, we can do that. I actually stopped by a Bernie Sanders rally a couple of weeks ago. I just thought I should do my part and so I wanted to pass out free lunches, but then they were already expecting so it didn't... Not working? Alright; no more of the political jokes. We're an equal opportunity offending church; we offend all parties.

Let's dig into this. We celebrate marriage here. We believe every marriage is a duet in need of great backup singers, so we are constantly celebrating marriage at Woodland Hills. This morning was special for me in the first service. I was able to celebrate my mom and dad's 50th wedding anniversary. First arrangement we gave them was swords. I have no idea what's going on with the swords coming out of it. We had a great time last night talking. We're taking them to the Top of the Rock tonight. Yep, that's right, no problem because they share meals, so I'm willing to take them wherever they want to go. They're at that point; they can't eat a full meal anymore. But we've had a great weekend celebrating them. In a couple of weeks, we're going to be celebrating someone in our church with 65 years of marriage.

How many of you want your spouse to be a better listener? So, there's this great term in the Old Testament. This term gives us a skill that we need and it's where all communication should start; it should start with listening. Before I share with you from the scripture, I want to demonstrate this term. The term is *incline your ear*. Here's what it looks like: sitting down, resting your forearms on your knees, leaning in, and looking the person in the eye.

A couple of years ago, when Amy told me that I was a five... I asked her, "Scale of 1 to 10, how am I doing as a listener?"

She said, "I give you a five."

This was over lunch, so I said, "Well, why don't we take the lunch hour to let you think about it; I don't need an answer right away."

She said, "Five." She could tell this was weighing on me. She said, "But you know what you could do to go to an eight?" Now pay attention, guys. From a five to an eight is just take the posture of inclining your ear. Undivided attention, that's what she's looking for. Do you know what gets me from an eight to a nine? Taking the posture of inclining your ear and saying, "Tell me more." I'm at a nine. And what I'm asking for is more than I can listen to.

Young people, teenagers, hear me. Even when you don't agree with your mom and dad, you can honor them with the posture of inclining your ear. I want you to do it today. Promise me you will do this. You will walk into a room that your mom and dad are in and whatever they are doing, just sit down across the room from them and take the posture of inclining your ear. That's called honor. How many parents want to see that from their young people today.

This skill will change all of your relationships: your relationship with God, your relationship with each other, your relationship with your kids and with your parents and with your spouse. I believe that after you've been in a relationship for a while, we go from inclining your ear to reclining your ear (leaning back in the chair and slumping). If you were to come into the office and want help in your marriage and I would sit there for an hour slumping back in my chair, you would say, "He's not interested. He's not listening. He doesn't care." That's because I'm reclining, but leaning in and listening is a life and death issue.

In Isaiah, the Lord is speaking through his prophet Isaiah to his people. And we hear him say, "Incline your ear." "You're not listening anymore. Incline your ear; lean in and listen." Why? Isaiah 55 – ***3 Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live...*** This is a life and death situation. I believe we do this in our relationship with the Lord, especially if you've grown up in church or are a new believer.

I see this with someone who places faith in Jesus and at the beginning of the relationship they incline their ear, they're soaking it in. Every Bible study they can attend, everything they can get their hands on, every podcast, every blog, every Bible study, they are leaning in. If we're not careful, as the relationship goes on... Again, relationship with God, relationship with others. If we're not careful, our relationship can begin to look like reclining your ear. "He ain't going to say anything today I haven't heard before. I've heard it all."

In our first service, we had 84-year-old Pat Kershaw who sits right there. Do you know who her pastor was for 12 years? Her pastor was A.W. Tozer. Is that a little intimidating? I quote her pastor all the time up here. She's been at this church for 17 years. She is one that could easily say... She was in a church

for two years where they taught, verse by verse, through Revelation. So, she knows the Bible inside and out. Do you know what I appreciate about 84-year-old Pat Kershaw when she shows up each and every week? She takes the posture of inclining her ear. She's not done learning. She's leaning in and she's listening.

Children, when you read the Book of Proverbs, you know it's a picture of a dad sharing wisdom, telling his kids, "Listen to me and you'll live. Stay away from the adulterous woman, stay away from strong drink, and don't hang out with people who get drunk." There's all this wisdom, but it's a dad sharing with his son, "Lean in and listen." We read it all throughout Proverbs. Incline your ear. "Son, lean in and listen. Take hold of these words. Be a joy to your mom and dad. Don't be a burden. Lean in and listen." Proverbs 22 – ***17 Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise and apply your heart to my knowledge...***

In the Song of Solomon 2, Solomon gives us the verse of curiosity and fascination for couples. This is Solomon speaking to the Shulamite Woman and he says, ***14 My dove...*** this is my little pet name for Amy. Sometimes she tries to have conversations with me in the kitchen and I'm in the family room or she's back in the master closet, trying to talk to me and I can't hear a word she's saying. Now all I do is go, "Coo, Coo" I want to draw her out. She's my dove. ***...in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside...*** This is a gentle, tender bird that's stuck back in there and he's trying to draw her out. What beautiful imagery. He wants to bring her out and he wants to get to know her.

...show me your face, let me hear your voice... "I want to get to know you. I want to know what's really going on inside of you. And when I do find out..." ***...for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.*** "When I find out something deep in your heart that I didn't know before, I'm not going to respond with shock or judgment." Can you image coming forward to the prayer team after this service, sharing some sin that you're struggling with and they respond with shock and judgment. That would be unsafe. You wouldn't share again. He's saying, "I want to get to know you and when I do get to know you, let me tell you, your voice is sweet and your face is lovely."

What marriage researchers call this is a **Bid for Connection**. It's happening all the time, all throughout the day in your marriage and a bid for connection is just your spouse giving off a little sigh. That's a bid. It's a moan, a groan; it doesn't even have words with it, but something it's done and the bid is put out there, and your spouse wants you to respond to it. The problem is when the bid comes to us, what does that sigh mean. A sigh can mean a lot of things and, guys, this is your tutorial today. Long day? Bad meeting? Slow commute? Hot? Cold? Tired? Kids? Your outfit? Your hair? Boss? This is where men are like, "I know something just happened. I can't quite put my finger on it. What was that?"

If you've been married for a while, you get the bids, you understand what they are. I can give you Amy's. When Amy makes a certain sound, it means she cold. A different sound means, "Have you touched the thermostat? I'm hot!" I know her bid for connection when she doesn't like what the humidity is doing to her hair. I know when she's not happy with her outfit. It's all by these bids of connection.

You're going, "How do I interpret them?" Here's what you need to know first and foremost about a bid. Don't worry about interpreting them; just acknowledge them.

Acknowledging the bid is more important than interpreting the bid. When the bid comes out, do you know what you need to do? You need to take the posture of inclining your ear. When your spouse sighs... this is so important. Listen, when you get a sigh from your wife in the passenger seat of the car, just turn to her, inclining your ear. You're leaning in. You don't know what the sigh means. You don't know what just happened.

Amy's other favorite bid for connection is when in the passenger seat, she braces herself. I know what that bid means. That bid means "Slow down." Make the bid. Here's what's powerful. Thousands of couples have been researched and observed with this bid for connection. We have great research to back all of this up. They are in two categories: **Masters and Disasters**. These couples have been put in these categories. Masters are high levels of marital satisfaction. Disasters are low levels of marital satisfaction.

Here's the part I love. Remember, acknowledging the bid is more important than interpreting the bid. Here's how it breaks down. Masters will turn towards each other 86% of the time. Disasters only turn towards each other 33% of the time. Now, I'm not good with math, but I can tell you 86% is a B, kind of mid B, solid B. Guys, are you getting that? You don't even have to be an A student to experience high levels of marital satisfaction. All you need to do is lean in and now add to it the turn, turning towards it will increase marital satisfaction.

Here's what I want ladies to understand. Ladies, please I need you to grasp this. Your like, "He's not into me. He's not attracted to me." Nope. Shaunti Feldhahn says it's not the big-ticket items that bring marriages down; it's the small ones. That's what we're talking about right now. Small ones done over a long period of time. You know what she calls it? It's simply this: **cluelessness**. "I didn't know that was going on."

John Gottman says, "It's mindlessness, not malice."

We want to help you with this. We've created this card. It just simply says BID on it. It's bright orange and it's big. Everybody's going to get one when then leave here today. If you put a bid out there and your spouse doesn't turn towards you, he's not mad at you; he's clueless. He didn't catch it. He's mindless; he's got something else going on. So, we're giving you a card like a bid at an auction. If you get in the car and sigh and there's no turn, hold up the BID card. You're just going to flash this in front of his face, and you'll get his attention. Have it at home.

Guys, you can have too. Amy receives my bids for connection I'm going to say 90+% of the time. I'm a moaner and a groaner. When I'm getting ready in the morning, I don't know what's going on, but in the shower, I'm moaning and groaning... loudly. How many of you moan and groan as your getting ready in the morning? We're thinking about our day; it's too much. Amy's not only acknowledging them, she's starting to interpret them. She's great at interpreting too. She has a lot of conversations with me and I'm not even in the room. She can ask me question, answer the question. She doesn't always like my answer, but she will answer the question for me, receiving the bid. So, pick this up on your way out.

Today, what we want to do is go from the bids, we want to keep going to the deep waters of your spouse's heart. Proverbs 20 : 5 puts it this way, ***The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters.*** We're done with shallow marriages. You can say the six levels of communications, but you can also say the six levels of intimacy, going deeper into the heart of your spouse. Your spouse's heart is deep waters. But one who has insight, a person of understanding is able to draw those out. We want to get off the shallow levels of communication and down to the deep waters of your husband's heart and of your wife's heart.

Level one – Small Talk. Next to this level, you should put a zero because there is zero risk of escalated conflict at the small talk level. If you've ever met a stranger on the street and you ask, "Hey, how's it going?" And your met with frustration and anger and that toxicity is flowing out of them, if you're not careful, you'll think you just did something. You did nothing. What's coming out of them was already in them. This is the conversation you have with strangers on the street, with a teller, someone working concessions, with a clerk at a grocery store. Small talk – zero risk of escalated conflict. Healthy people should be able to communicate at the small talk level, no problem

Level two – Facts. You need to put a zero here. We need to agree on this; a zero means I should be able to exchange basic information with you and a healthy person can receive it with zero risk of escalated conflict. Although, have you ever been with a couple that are trying to tell you a story and he says, "You know, last Tuesday..." and she goes, "It was Wednesday!"? "Okay, we were at the store..." "We were having dinner!!" You're like, "You know what? I don't even want to hear the rest; this is so painful to listen to."

Here's why I stick with the story. They're not having problems at the facts, details, right wrong... They're not having that issue. I want to find out what's really driving this. Where is all this coming from? What is the issue?

Level Three – Opinions. Do not put a zero next to this. I should be able to tell you... "Did you read what Donald Trump tweeted this week?" I should be able to say this... Some of you are thinking, this has been a good message... until now. But I should be able to tell you what he said in a tweet; it's a fact. But when you get all frustrated and angry is when you put in your opinions. Was it Winston Churchill that said, "You're not entitled to your own facts."? Like facts are facts, right?

But coming into opinions... We have opinions on boarder security. The problem is the news today is really confused between facts and opinions. Remember when the news used to be getting the facts? Now it's turning into getting the opinions. I grew up listening to Peter Jennings on the ABC Nightly News. My dad loved watching that. I can remember, as a 10-year-old, thinking *this is so boring*. Because it was. He was just giving you information. Not today. You turn on the news and it's what should I be mad about today? It's level three. Understand cable news networks are level three opinions.

In marriage, here's how this plays out. I remember when Amy and I were getting ready for our daughter's first birthday party. It was fifteen years ago. I'll never forget the day Amy walked into the house with two bags from the party store over in Branson Meadows.

I go, "Hey, babe, how's it going?" We're at level one – no problem.

She says, "Good."

I ask, "What did you do today?"

Amy says, "I went shopping." That's a level two fact, guys. Zero risk of escalated conflict when your wife says, "I went shopping."

"How much did you spend today?"

"Two hundred dollars." That's still a fact. Zero risk of escalated conflict.

"On what?" Now, I'm moving from facts to opinions like something is bubbling up inside of me. I say, "On what?"

This is what she says, "On the gifts for the children coming to the party."

I can't... I'm completely lost now because... I said, "I don't understand. Where I grew up... on Earth, you threw a birthday party and you invited people that brought your kid gifts." How many of you that was how it was?

"Not anymore," she says."

You theme the party. Our theme was bees. 235 Meadow Ridge North... I'll never forget it. We opened up the garage and got it all going. She said, "Yeah, everybody leaves with a little bag. You get an eraser and a pencil and bubbles and all this stuff."

I'm going, "This is absolutely insane."

Do you know what my opinion is? There's a line between the first three and the second three levels for a purpose. My opinion is \$200.00 for a child's first birthday is too much. That's an opinion. Amy's opinion is, "We're just getting started. We haven't bought the party favors. We haven't bought the decorations or the food."

Today we're talking about the deep waters. Do you want to be an above the line couple or a below the line couple? Above the line is *I'm right and you're wrong. And this whole conversation is going to be about me winning an argument.* Above the line is head to head. Above the line is *I've got to try to change your mind.* How's that working for you? It's not working. Above the line is *I'm going to get my opinion out there and spend my time persuading you.*"

But below the line, we move from opponents to teammates. I want to find out what's driving this. That's why we say around here as parents, "I'm not obsessed with my child's behavior. I want to be obsessed with my child's heart." Why? Because all of their behavior flows from the heart. Everything

going on above the line here is flowing from **level six**. I want to find deep levels of intimacy with Amy by getting to level six.

How many of you are fishermen? You already do this. You want to find the fish. Right now, they are in deeper waters because it's so hot outside, they're looking for cooler water. You start thinking like a fish. You want to know where they are, you want to change up your retrieve, slow to fast. You know what bait to use. Do you know why? It's because you're at level six with the fish. So, you can't tell me you don't know how to go to level six; you do. And she's sitting there going, "Yes!" I'm not saying you're a fish, but he can do the exact same thing. Finding out what's going on at level six.

Level 4 – Feelings. I want to get off this opinions level. Two hundred dollars is too much and Amy's says we're just getting started. Why? What's the feelings? Guys, you see feelings and you go... *He's wanting us to cry. He wants me to wear my heart on my sleeve.* No, just use feeling words. Get off opinions. Amy says to me, "I'm uncomfortable with having people over to our home and them not feeling welcomed." Uncomfortable is a great feeling word. She says, "I want them to leave feeling like they matter to God and they matter to me."

Well, that now makes me feel like, "Well I don't. I don't care how they feel, and I don't think a bunch of bubbles are going to do that, but if you think a pencil and an eraser is going to make them..." See, I'm coming back up to opinions. All I have to do at this level, as we'll see today, is validate her. That's where she's at. She wants people to feel special. And I get that.

Then she wants to learn what's driving my opinion. Well underneath my opinion is this feeling like, "Babe, I'm worried (great feeling word) about the rest of our bills." This was before online banking. I had all the bills lined up behind a stapler between the wall and the stapler in the office. And I knew which one needed to be paid. "When you said \$200.00 I wasn't prepared for, that just throws me," and she goes, "Oh, I get that."

You see, we're at a very different place now. Now we have online banking and I'm grateful for online banking because before, she would come home and announce she spent \$200.00 and I would be shocked. Now, I know about 15 to 20 minutes before he gets home how much she spent at Target. It gives me some time to work through some things and I'm at a pretty good place by the time she gets home. I've worked through it. I tell her I want to be buried in the Target parking lot, so I know she'll come visit me three or four times a week. That's all I want to know. But I've worked through some things.

This is a 100% true story, not even exaggerated. One week before Corynn's birthday party, I go, "Babe, what can I do to help you get ready for the party?"

And she said, "Oh, babe, thank you so much; would you lay ceramic tile for me in the kitchen? She wasn't even joking. She does all our environments around here, so you know that's where her heart beats. I had to explain to her... That's where she's at. This house is going to look perfect for all our guests.

I go, "Babe, let me explain something to you. Tonight, I'll have to spend the whole evening ripping up the linoleum. Then tomorrow, I'll do thin set back board and wait 24 hours for it to dry. Then I have to get the tile in here." Is Jon Jenkins in this service. Jon Jenkins actually came over with his saw. Gotta have friends when you're doing this. "It will take a day to day and a half to do the tile and wait 24 hours. Then, you have to grout and wait 24 hours." I'm explaining all of this to her, to which she says, "You should probably get started then." Anybody in here at Corynn's first birthday like the Gaddises? They'll tell you we had a beautiful ceramic tile floor in a week. That's how she functions. That's just in her. Her home is very important to her.

Level Five – Desires and needs. We spend time at the feelings level and then we get to level five, which is desires and needs. Some of you share your desire and need without doing the work of feelings and validating each other and you become very manipulating and controlling. Amy gets to this level and says, "I want Corynn to feel special." Well, if we've done the work in level four with feelings, I respond with, "So do I." Look how quickly we get on the same page as teammates. If we don't do the work in feelings and Amy says, "I want Corynn to feel special," I would respond with, "Well, I don't. She ain't even going to remember this party. Maybe we skip the whole party altogether and be done with it." That's if you want to live up in the first three levels, but we've committed to becoming a below the line couple because I want to get to level six.

Level Six – Beliefs. At level six, put a heart because this is proverbs 4. 23 – ***Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.*** Everything you say and do, all of this flows from your heart. I want to find out what is in the deep waters, and the beliefs are the deep waters of Amy Cunningham's heart. It's the deep water of your spouse's heart. It's the messages that have been written on her heart. And where do these messages come from?

It's cliché in counseling, but this is really what counseling is. Counseling is trying to get you to level six. That's why we say, "Lie down here on this couch and tell me about your father." We want to know what your dad said to you over and over and over again and eventually you started believing it. There's no greater joy for a counselor than to hear someone share, at level six, a lie that has been written on their heart, a lie that says you are worthless. There's no greater joy for a counselor than to say, "That is a lie." There's no greater joy for a counselor, a pastor, a coach, a friend, a spouse, to hear a lie and speak the truth to you about what God believes about you, what God says is true about you.

This level of beliefs is a strong... This is your family of origin. This is the tablet of your heart. Messages have been written on the heart and a coach, a pastor, a friend, a family member, a grandpa, mom, dad, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, they said something to you and eventually you started believing it like a tattoo on your heart. I engage with so many of you throughout the week and I'm constantly trying to figure out... As you share with me your opinions and your feelings and all that, I'm constantly listening, trying to figure out where this is coming from because it's coming from your heart.

Have you ever had that moment where you're at your in-laws' house? I've been there at Denny and Linda Freitag's house and something is said or done and I go, "Huh, that's it right there," and it's a big moment for me. Something just made sense. I just got a level six of why Amy has all this going on. Let me tell you, the belief... Yes, if you will confess with your mouth and believe in your heart... If you

confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. This is where God does his business, it's where he does his work in your life. This is important. But we're not talking essential versus non-essential beliefs today. The beliefs can be as simple as the level six belief Amy has on her heart that says birthdays are a big, huge, honkin', deal. Her family planned them months in advance. They rented blow ups and marching bands and farm animals, whatever they needed to have a party. It was a huge deal.

Guess what message level six belief is on my heart? Birthdays are no big deal. My mom and dad were in the first service. I've never once in 45 years of living, questioned whether or not my mom and dad loved me. But do you know what birthdays were in my home growing up? There weren't parties. We didn't have parties. Some of you want to feel sorry for me. I'm fine. It doesn't bother me at all. It was my dad on his way out the door to work, yelling up the stairs, "Happy birthday, son" and leaving twenty bucks on the table.

All of us have different ways of expressing this, but now I get why, when birthdays roll around, I'm so ticked. It's a week of celebration and I'm ticked because of a level six belief. And for my wife, holidays and seasons and birthdays and anniversaries are huge deals. I don't know if you know this, but we have them every month. I mean for my parents celebrating their 50th anniversary, we got flowers and balloons and Top of the Rock going on. It's a thousand-dollar weekend for me. And why am I so bitter celebrating my parents' 50th wedding anniversary? It's because of the messages they wrote on my heart. I should have driven by their house and yelled, "Happy anniversary," and left a twenty-dollar bill in the mailbox. Noooo, they're getting a rack of lamb at Top of the Rock tonight and a little Ooey Gooey Butter Cake. That's level six belief. That's what's playing out.

Listen, you brought a tablet into the marriage and your spouse brought a tablet into the marriage. You brought your crazy family of origin into the marriage and she brought her crazy family of origin into the marriage and you're trying to make those two things work. Don't waste any time on the top levels, just going at each other all the time. Figure out why. "You crazy, crazy woman, why do you think that?" Get to the beliefs.

It's every year at Christmas. We have Christmas in July going on right now on the Hallmark Channel. I told Amy yesterday, "Christmas in July is on the Hallmark Channel," and she goes, "Are they new?" I said, "Does it matter? Who cares? I've seen her; she on all 40 of them." You see, I'm working some things out on stage right now. Johnny Cash's kids said, "Dad was always working stuff out on stage." I'm working my stuff out on stage right now. I'm out of breath. This is what good communication should do to you. You should be a little exhausted. Think about it. I have a belief on my heart that says Christmas decorations are no big deal.

Amy grew up in the White House. I'm not joking. There is a tree in every room, garland over every door. I didn't understand it when our kids would come to me with one of their ornaments like, "Oh, Dad, I made this one last year." "PUT IT ON THE TREE! JUST GET IT ON THE TREE!" Why? Why after I get the 46th box down out of the attic that says, "Christmas décor," I'm in no mood to celebrate the birth of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I'm in no mood; I'm ticked. It's level six.

Again, it's not just what was said to you; it's what you observed your entire childhood. I always love teaching this. I love teaching this on the parenting side too, if I do a parenting conference, because we're writing messages every single day on the hearts of our children. Some of you are like, "Oh, shoot!" We're all jacked up. But Jesus saves, and all God's people said... Amen.

Think about what I saw growing up. My brother was in the first service and he probably got emotional just even thinking about it because of the power of your family of origin and level six beliefs. My grandma had six grandsons. She was at 625 West Jackson Street, Naperville, Illinois. Every year, whatever grandson was with her, when grandma felt like decorating for Christmas, would go upstairs to her bathroom. She had one in the house. There was a water closet and it was a three foot pre-decorated tree with a garbage bag over it, and pushed in there, like mashed in there to about that width. Whatever grandson would grab it and put it on the little table by the window that she had, pull off the bag, and sing Joy to the World, the Lord is come. We could decorate in a minute. How many of you agree that that's how long it should take you? You should be able to decorate for Christmas on a commercial break. Raise you hand. Not Amy. Now we have this crazy thing called Woodland Hills Family Church. We do it at home and here.

So, let's talk about this. For some of you, what's keeping you from level six and getting to level six with your spouse... Have the moments this week where you go deep into the heart of your spouse.

I want to run through 15 types of bad listeners, and we're going to do it very quickly.

1. The Nodder – this is blocking you from level six. This is the person that took a management course at work where they taught emotional responsiveness. They never quite figured out the balance. The whole time you're trying to have a conversation with them, they're going, "Uh huh, uh huh, yeah, yeah, yeah." It wears you out.

2. The Eye Roller – The bid is made in your marriage. A conversation comes up, a bid is made, and you respond with rolling your eyes. *Not again, we talk about this all the time and we get nowhere with it.* Let me tell you, John Gottman says that there is no greater sign of contempt in the marriage than the eye roll. You think you're rolling your eyes at an issue or a topic, but you're not because to your spouse that eye roll is going right past the issue to the soul of who they are.

3. The Eye Wanderer – This is the person trying to have a conversation but looking over the shoulder for the next conversation. I don't want to be that at Woodland Hills. I have some of you here where I'll be sharing with somebody and behind them is a member of the church going, "Hey, when you get a second, I'd like to talk to you..." It's like, "Go away. This person is coming to know the Lord. Your issues, you've got them every week; we'll deal with them..." That's terrible. See, I'm working some things out, just working some things out.

4. The Bored – For some of you, this is your husband. The lights are home, but no one is home. Ted, he leans in, but I just kind of get a blank stare.

5. The Distracted – We're distracted in our mind and we're distracted with our environment. To lean in and focus...

6. The Watch Glancer – This is the person you're trying to share something with and they just look down quickly at their watch and move on.

7. The Scroller – This is a new one. You're trying to have a conversation... How many times does this happen and we see it happen in restaurants and stores all the time? People are talking and then all the sudden their scrolling on their phone.

8. The One-Upper – Brian Regan has a great bit on the one-upper. You've been there and they've been there, but they've been there more times. If you drive this, they've driven it longer and it's nicer with more upgrades. This is the person always trying to one-up you.

9. The One-Downer – You come in from a bad day at work, "Oh, honey, it was a bad day." "You had a bad day?" You're like, "I'm not competing with you, I'm just telling you..." Senior adults, you do the one-downing when it comes to your physical ailments. You do it. I see it all the time. I hear you. "I'm not feeling well." "You're not feeling well? You should see what I'm trying to pass; this is absolutely ridiculous." Okay, we're not competing; just having a conversation.

10. The Over-Validator – The over-validator is one who everything you feel, they've felt or they're feeling it right now. You can see the conversation begins to turn back to them rather than leaning in, inclining the ear, listening, and staying focused.

11. The Bottom-Liner – Some of you, when you want the conversation to be over, you're looking at the other person... We almost have a signal for this. We're like, *come on, bro, let's land that plane*. We have a member of our family who... I'm like, *We all took speech class; it's the introduction, the body, and the conclusion*. And he gets lost in the body. I want to be like, "Bro, let's just bring it on in for a landing. We got the details and the facts, but land the dang plane."

12. The Interviewer – Some of you are married to Oprah Winfrey. You're trying to share a story and there are four follow up questions for every statement. I'm not saying who it is, but let him finish. Let him finish. He's only going to give your four sentences; let him get them all out. And then you can do all your follow up.

13. The Hijacker - You get into a conversation and you're like, "I don't even think I finished my story." No, you didn't because he took over. She took over.

14. The Debater – The debater is the one who wants you to punch holes in your logic. They'll say, "Where did you get that?" You're like, "Well, I don't have sources with me. I don't have a bibliography or a citations page." They want you to prove it.

15. The Sentence Completer – They're like, "Hey, we'll have the conversation and I'll finish all of your sentences for you."

Gary Smalley taught us this years ago and this is how we go to the deep waters, and we stay there, and we move toward... I'm not saying we're going to hit a ten with listening, but I want to be an eight or nine listener. If you want to be an eight or nine listener, raise your hand. If you'd like to be married to an eight or nine listener, raise your hand. More hands.

It's simply LUV Talk – Listen, Understand, and Validate

Listen – We've been talking about listening, leaning in, distraction free, technology free, kid free. Lean in and focus.

Understand – Put what is said by your spouse, verbatim, into your own body language and tone. You've done this. You've shared back something your spouse has said by saying things like, "So what I hear you saying is..." And then you repeat back, word for word, and they respond with, "That's not at all what I said."

"Can we go back to the court reporter." That is word for word what was said. But when you put it in your body language and your tone, and it means something completely different. You've seen me do this. This is important to do. I'm going to say the exact same words two different ways that mean something completely different. "Let's eat, Grandpa!" "Let's eat Grandpa." The first one is a meal with Grandfather and the second is a meal of Grandfather. How you say the words matters. And keep going. Ask questions for deeper understanding.

Validate – That's all you want. All you want is the stamp from your spouse that says you were here. It's like a parking ticket going into a restaurant or a store; you just want the stamp that says you were there. "You visited our store and now you don't have to pay for parking." You want that stamp from your spouse after a conversation that shows you were fully present for this. You were leaning in, listening, understanding, so here's the stamp.

That's what we should have given out today, not the BID. We should have given everybody a little black ink pad and a little stamp and just start getting people a stamp that says, "You were here."

I'm going to invite you to stand as we close, and I want to remind you... Some of you are like, "I don't have anybody that listens to me." I love what the writer of Hebrews says: "Jesus is our High Priest and he understands. He understands your weaknesses. He understands what you're going through. And he listens. He is fully available."

Our prayer team will be down front and one thing I know about our prayer team is that they lean in and they listen, and they'll encourage you and share with you. Marriage 911 is a great ministry of our church. It's been going for years, helping couples. What I love about every single person that R.G. and Karen Yallaly have trained for Marriage 911 is they are all leaning in and listening to help marriages and to help spouses.

Father, I pray for the one that has never placed faith in Jesus, that today would be the day they lean in, confess with their mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in their heart that he has been raised from the dead, that they would be saved.

I pray that they know when they come to you and they share and they pour their hearts out before you, they confess their sins before you, you listen, you hear, your ear is inclined toward us and for that we are grateful.

We pray all of this in the name of Jesus and everyone agreed and said... Amen.