

## How to Share Your Thoughts and Feelings

by Jimmy Evans

This is what God said when He created marriage: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). In the next verse, the Bible says Adam and Eve were both naked and unashamed.

Being "one flesh" refers to total intimacy. Nothing is hidden from each other. People often use the phrase sexual intimacy to refer to physical closeness—and that's certainly an important part of marriage. But emotional intimacy is just as vital.

A husband and wife should be able to openly and safely express emotions in an atmosphere of sensitivity, care, and emotional support.

**You must value each other.** Couples fight about things like money and sex, but they also fight when they don't feel valued by the other. "You don't care," one will say. "You don't care about the kids. You don't help me around the house. You don't care about how hard I'm working or the sacrifices I make."

Life is better when you care about each other. That's called empathy. It means putting yourself in another person's shoes. Ask yourself, "What must it be like to be married to me?" Examine your attitude and behavior. Do they indicate that you value your spouse? If not, you won't experience intimacy.

**You must put energy into meeting each other's needs.** You both come from different backgrounds. You have different ways of communicating. You have different needs. That makes marriage hard work.

That means learning to communicate in a healthy way requires effort. When a husband talks to his wife, she needs to hear security in his words. Conversations need to reflect that emotional need. On the other hand, a man needs to hear friendship and respect. What does your spouse hear in your words?

**You must sacrifice for each other.** You and your spouse have different emotions. You won't feel the same way about things, but this doesn't mean one person's feelings are less valid than the other. Recognizing this can require sacrifice.

The worst marriages in the world say, "Your feelings aren't valid unless you feel the way I feel." A good marriage says, "We may not feel the same right now, but I'm going to exit my world and enter your world. I'm going to take care of your need." Can you sacrifice your inclination to be self-absorbed or detached?

**You must trust each other.** To create an atmosphere where you're both free to share—to be emotionally naked and unashamed—you have to feel safe. No one wants to be judged for the way they feel. A healthy marriage offers a place for one person to share any feeling or emotion and know it will be respected.