

Session 3: The Secret To Emotional Connection

OPEN

If you could live as someone else for a day, who would you choose? What do you think your day would be like?

Living as someone else for a day might be fun, even fascinating. But when it comes to actually seeing the world from our spouse's perspective, we can fall short. In this session, Les and Leslie talk about the importance of empathy in marriage.

VIEW

Watch Session Three: *The Secret to Emotional Connection* (9 minutes)

REVIEW

Les and Leslie said the secret to emotional connection is empathy. Empathy isn't simply the ability to put yourself in another person's shoes. It's also being objective about what you're feeling on their behalf as well. **What do you think of Les and Leslie's definition of empathy? Would you add anything to their definition?**

Empathy involves the head and the heart. According to Les and Leslie, men tend to be analytical and need to learn the feeling side of empathy. Women tend to more heart than head—it can be easier for them to relate emotionally, but they sometimes need growth in the thoughtful side of empathy. **In what ways have you seen the head and heart aspects of empathy play a role in your marriage?**

In the story, Sue and Dave dealt with stress and grief in different manners. Sue was more emotional and needed to talk about things. Dave tended to withdraw and escape. This led to a lot of frustration and anger on both sides. **How did Dave manage to bridge the gap to connect with Sue emotionally again? In what ways did that prepare them to remain connected during Sue's later health challenge?**

Les and Leslie talked about rapport versus report. Women tend to want to build up the relationship in a conversation, or rapport, while men tend to desire the facts, or a report. **Which of the two do you value most in a conversation? Why is either rapport or report important to you?**

We all have a weakness when it comes to empathy—none of us empathize perfectly. Les and Leslie closed by encouraging us that being married makes us better people. Our spouse can help us grow in the areas we're weak. **In what ways has your spouse helped you grow as a person since you've been married?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Read Romans 12:15.

This verse falls in a section about how to love others as members of God's family. One of the ways we love people is by mourning when they mourn and rejoicing when they rejoice. **In what ways does this verse relate to Les and Leslie's discussion of empathy?**

Empathy means we choose to put ourselves in someone else's shoes. We feel and analyze their situation from their point of view. **When has someone empathized with you? How did you react? What impact did it make on you?**

What does it look like when you mourn with your spouse? What does it look like when you rejoice with him or her?

What does your spouse's next week look like? Think of what might be overwhelming or over-scheduled or causing stress. What could you do this week to empathize with him or her?

Les and Leslie discussed how we become better people by being married. This passage shows how becoming more empathetic makes us more like Christ. Our spouse can play a significant role in helping us become more Christlike.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

Select an activity from the list below to begin applying the lessons of this session to your life.

Pray: Pray with your spouse this week. Ask God to grow each of you to be more empathetic towards each other and pray for opportunities to put empathy into practice.

Read: Read chapters 10–11 of Les and Leslie's book *Love Talk*. Talk about the chapters with your spouse.

Assess: Take Les and Leslie's Better Love Assessment. Discuss your results with your spouse.

Practice: Intentionally try to put yourself in your spouse's shoes this week. Imagine a day from his or her perspective. Think about how the day's events might affect you. Talk with your spouse about his or her day to see how accurate you were.