

Recap of 10/16/16 (Malachi 2:16):

(The following is based upon an article entitled “**Why Marriages Fail**” by Kerby Anderson of Probe Ministries International, www.probe.org and the book, **A Lasting Promise: A Christian Guide to Fighting for Your Marriage** by Scott Stanley.)

1. Anderson writes: “Why do marriages fail? While the answers to that question are many, there is a growing body of empirical research to suggest there are four negative risk factors that create barriers to oneness in marriage and increase a couple’s chances for marital failure. The four negative patterns are: escalation, invalidation, negative interpretation, and withdrawal and avoidance. They are barriers to communication.
2. Escalation is defined as negative exchanges which become increasingly hostile and are often begun over minor things. It can happen as a “major shouting fight” or subtly as “muttering to oneself, rolling your eyes, or throwing up your hands.” The biblical antidote for escalation is rather than returning evil for evil or insult for insult but to return a blessing (1 Peter 3:9). Other pertinent scripture are Proverbs 12:18; James 1:26; 3:1ff).
3. The second barrier to communication is invalidation. Invalidation is defined as “... a pattern in which one partner subtly or directly puts down the thoughts, feelings, or character of the other.” It can happen in three forms: it can be caustic, attacking the other person verbally; it can be subtle, “putting down the other partner for his or her feelings;” or it can be “uttering trite clichés like ‘it’s not so bad’ or ‘just trust in the Lord.’ While the saying may be true, they invalidate the pain or concern of the other partner.” The antidote for invalidation is validation. Proverbs 25:20 warns of the dangers of being insensitive and unsympathetic to others.
4. The third barrier to communication is “Negative Interpretations.” It includes assigning negative motives to your mate’s actions and or words, making negative assumptions; as well as “mind reading”. “Mind reading occurs when you assume you know what your partner is thinking or why he or she did something.” In distressed marriages there is a tendency to discount the positive things one sees in their spouse. The antidote for Negative Interpretation is to re-assess what you think about your partner’s motives. Are you being too negative, why not give them the benefit of the doubt. There is a need to push yourself to look for positive evidence. Don’t mind-read. 1 Cor. 4:5 and Luke 6:4 give us the Biblical underpinnings.
5. The fourth communication barrier is “withdrawal and avoidance.” It is defined as: “unwillingness to get in or stay in a discussion that is too threatening.” It has two manifestations: physically leaving the room or situation, and “tuning off” or “shutting down” emotionally. It is taken by the other partner as a lack of caring. “Couples who want to have a good marriage must learn to stay engaged.” It is crucial to not let avoidance become a pattern in your marriage. Paul urged believers to keep short accounts, to reconcile their difference in the same day if possible as a goal for which to strive. (Ephesians 4:25-27).