



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Hello, Are You There Dear? – Part 1

Guest(s): Howard Hendricks

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Dr. Dobson: Well welcome everyone on this Monday edition of Family Talk. I'm Doctor James Dobson and I want to thank you for joining us today. We already appreciate it. There are many ways you could spend this time and you chose to join us for this outreach to families during this most challenging summer season.

Dr. Dobson: I thank you for giving us an opportunity to share a classic presentation from my late friend Professor Howard Hendricks. He's affectionately called The Prof even today by the students who remember him at Dallas Theological Seminary where he mentored many students who went on to become very influential, including Doctor Tony Evans, the first African-American student to earn a doctorate at DTS, Doctor Chuck Swindoll, and Pastor David Jeremiah, and 100s of others who were influenced by Professor Hendricks. He was also a noted author, a passionate speaker, and a good friend of mine.

Dr. Dobson: Well the message that you're going to hear today is on the subject of communication and marriage. Howard Hendricks was certainly qualified to discuss that topic having been married to his wife Jeanie for 65 years before his passing in 2013.

Dr. Dobson: Let me tell you why we've brought this message to you. If you've listened to me for many years, and some of you have, I've been at this for over 40 years, I have never aired this message that you're about to hear today because this man is a treasure trove of information on family relationships. Here's a good example of it today. So we're going to hear this recorded message by Professor Howard Hendricks of the Dallas Theological Seminary in this edition of Family Talk.

Howard Hendricks: Now tonight we want to discuss an option, communication or chaos. If you're talking more but enjoying it less you may be on the verge of the greatest breakthrough in your marriage and family life for nothing is as easy as talking, nothing is as difficult as communication. Yet, nowhere is communication more serious than in marriage and family relationship.

Howard Hendricks: Every day, 100s of times a day, another judge's gavel drops to the des and those words are uttered "Divorce granted." That which began with delight has ended

with disillusionment. What they thought were stars in their eyes turned out to be sand.

Howard Hendricks: But unfortunately, whereas we have dramatized legal divorce, we have totally ignored an equally serious problem and that's psychological divorce, people who under no circumstances would ever separate or divorce legally. They live in the same home and it's a quiet misery. Before their marriage they had no problem whatever discussing all kinds of subjects. In fact, you wonder how a young couple could find so much to talk about. Shortly after the marriage they are suffering from lock jaw and they're silent in 27 languages.

Howard Hendricks: Perhaps you heard of the couple who really did not communicate very much, occasionally a grunt, pointing in the direction, they were giving each other the silence treatment. But finally they decided to take a drive out through the country and as they were driving along the man noticed a donkey just on the other side of the fence and he got a brilliant, creative idea. So he broke the silence by saying, "One of your relatives?" She was equal to the occasion as she responded, "Right, on my husband's side," and back they plunged into their silence.

Howard Hendricks: A man by the name of Doctor Albert Mehrabian, after a decade of communicational research, attempted to unravel the tangled secrets of conversation. He came up with a formula to express the accurate proportion between the content of communication and the way it is expressed. He said, first of all, that a couple tends to communicate about 7% through words alone, about 38% through the tone of voice, the inflection.

Howard Hendricks: See, it's possible to say the same expression such as, "I love you," but communicate a world of different meaning, "I love you," "I love you," just by the inflection of your voice. But this is the significant one, through facial expressions, through your postures, through your gestures, through what some writers are calling body language you communicate approximately 55%. It's the man you see who walks through a door and by a glance communicates worlds of words. This is why you can walk in the front door and your wife says, "How did it go today, huh?" "All right." "Well what's the matter?" "Oh nothing." "Oh come on, there's something." "No, there's nothing bugging me." And the truth of the matter is, you're coming through loud and clear. She's picking up the vibe. You are communicating through non-verbal communication.

Howard Hendricks: At the end of this study he made this statement, "It is not the ability to communicate that is lost when marriages grow apart, it is the desire to communicate that undergoes change. When one or the other no longer wants to be understood or to be understanding then distance will develop."

Howard Hendricks: Now for a few moments tonight I would like to share with you some basic principles of communication in marriage and family life. I have not had a couple in my office, I have never counseled with a family in trouble that was not

basically suffering from frozen communication line. Principle number one, accent understanding not talking, accent understanding not talking.

Howard Hendricks: You see, communication is a two-way street. It is much more listening than it is talking. It's not what this individual says but what this individual understands as a result of what he said. What you discover happens in many a marriage is that these two individuals, or in the family, are talking more but communicating less.

Howard Hendricks: In fact, frequently I will get people in my office who are not only talking at each other but were literally shouting at each other and as the moments go by the decibel level rises until finally I'll jar the whole experience by saying, "Hey man, did you hear what she said?" "No, what did you say?" So I started a very interesting game, I dare you try this if you want to blow your mind. I say, "Okay man, I'll allow you to make one statement and one statement only. Before you can make a second statement I want this individual to repeat back to you what you have said and what you mean by what you say so that you accept that statement and then you may make one statement and you can't make a second statement until this person feeds it back to you in terms of what you said, in terms of what you mean by what you say." Well at the end of three hours we get three statements because you see they are now at the stage where they're talking and yelling but they've long since tuned each other out.

Howard Hendricks: I ran across a prayer some years ago by Francis of Assisi which made this statement, "Lord, grant that I may seek more to understand than to be understood." That's the heart of communication. Communication involves a meeting of meaning in which I not only communicate how I feel to another individual but this individual so loves me and is so concerned about me that they listen and love and seek to feel with me in terms of what I'm trying to communicate.

Howard Hendricks: Now I really wish my wife were here because she taught me everything I know in this area. I came from a Pennsylvania Dutch home. Now I don't know if this says anything to you or not, but let me explain. I was reared by grandmother. My basement floor was cleaner than 99% of the homes I get into. You could eat off our floor. I can never remember once going like on anything and finding dust. My grandmother used to clean the front concrete sidewalk by hand three times every day. We used to kid her, "Grandma, when you die we're going to bury you with a mop and a broom."

Howard Hendricks: Well then I got married and my wife did not exactly come from this kind of a home, which is the understatement of this generation and we had some fascinating times of adjustment. I can remember when my children came along it used to bug the living daylights out of me that my kids would walk through that door and go right by me. Mind you, great big spiritual giant that I am. They would go right by me and sometimes not even say hi and throw themselves into my wife's arms, and share everything that went on, and you know that has a way of getting to you. Until one day I sat down and said, "If I were my kids I wouldn't go to me either."

Howard Hendricks: That began a process of instruction, I wish every women in this auditorium could become a master of, and that is good relationships are far more important than a clean home. Some people will ruin a whole family and marriage before they ever get that picture.

Howard Hendricks: I can still remember one day my wife scrubbing the floor, it was immaculate, it was beautiful, I was complimenting her how tremendous and all of a sudden Bob, my older boy, came plowing through the door with his dirty feet and said, "Hey mom, look at the picture I've drawn." I just about came unglued, and she smothered him in her arms and said, "Bob, I'm so proud of you."

Howard Hendricks: While I'm still stewing in my juice my sweet wife turns to me and says, "Dear, we can always redo the floor, but we can't always rebuild the relationship." The whole process of learning to communicate is a process of understanding and respecting another person so much so that you want to hear and understand, and feel with this individual.

Howard Hendricks: Let's try a second one on for size. By the way, that first one will take you a little while to choke down. Develop common interests. Now let's see if we can illustrate this as well. See you can tell the quality of your marriage by how much you have in common. Let's let this circle represent the man and let's let this one represent the wife. At this stage of the game this is what you have basically in common. Now the question is in which direction are these circles moving? Are they moving in this direction? If so, then you are dynamically growing in your communicational skill. If they are moving in this direction then you are in a process of tearing your marriage and family apart. This does not mean that you ever get to the place where there isn't something that you as a man enjoy doing as a person and you as a wife enjoy doing. We need to learn to preserve the integrity of the other person and allow them the luxury of this kind of involvement that's a part of an expression of love.

Howard Hendricks: What you often see is a scientific fact and that is you have two people who may begin with the minimal area of commonality but who, because of a tremendous price tag, and because of a tremendous desire continue to move in this direction until finally the circles become virtually coterminous, and everything she likes, he likes, and what he enjoys, she enjoys, and the greatest desire of his heart is to experience that which he enjoys, and the same is true of her. The interesting thing is the conflict that people like this have is finally deciding which one will we do, what you want to do or what he wants to do, which is slightly from what many people experience.

Howard Hendricks: Now there's a price tag to that. For example, in the process of developing our marriage I became, as you know, very deeply involved in ministry. To this day, I have very little time for recreation. Every minute of recreation I have is a priceless minute. Now I've got to make some decisions and that is how am I going to spend that time? I've got to have it just to maintain my sanity as a person. But how am I going to spend it?

Howard Hendricks: Well I discovered early in my ministry I would get up on Monday, the preacher's holiday, and my dear wife would make me the most fantastic breakfast, and she'd send me off to play my little game, and I'd play my game most of the day and come back in the afternoon, and she'd be waiting beautifully dressed at the door and say, "How did the game go sweetheart," and we embrace together. I'd say, "Man, it was a great day." She said, "I'm so thrilled for you." Then I would go into my study to sit down and ask myself the question what did she do. Well she stayed home with four kids, that's a fascinating experience, especially when you're doing it seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Howard Hendricks: Finally, it dawned on me how utterly self-centered I was and I dropped the sport, would you believe I dropped a half a dozen sports with no loss whatever. I decided to change my whole lifestyle and since my amount of time and recreation was limited I was going to spend all of that time either with my wife or with my children. To this day, my wife and I walk several miles every day and it's a short period of time but it's the most enriching part of our marriage because during that time we share together, during that time we pray together, during that time we memorize the word together, during that time we get good recreation together. But it's time that is very limited and precious.

Howard Hendricks: I'm sure I'm talking to many men and women who are professionally involved and who certainly are not looking for something to do. You've got to ask yourself how high on the priority list is the sharing of your life with that most important person. That may determine some changes in your lifestyle in order to get these two together.

Howard Hendricks: One of my closest friends is a radiologist and for a number of years they had some terrific problems in their marriage and it's beautiful to see what God has done as a result of coming to grips with some of these basic principles. I used to say for years, "I really think that woman thought that he spent the bulk of his day listening to radio." But she certainly didn't have a clue as to what was going and certainly took no initiative. Now she was very much interested in the Duncan Phyfe furniture and the rest of the junk they got under one mortgage, but listening to radios produce it.

Howard Hendricks: The thrilling thing came when for the first time in her life she went down to the hospital to find out what went on in a day and blew her mind. She told me in her own words, "I got a new appreciation as to why my husband would come home at night and literally fall into the chair and go out." She said, "I also got a new appreciation for the ministry that God had given to him in medicine." For the first time, it took two people whose lives were literally going in this direction and brought them back. Now you may have to pay a price tag for that.

Howard Hendricks: I can still remember taking my wife to a football game. I'm a nut in this area and especially since having some involvement with the Cowboys I get emotionally involved in this thing, so I decided to take her to the game. She, "Oh boy, another home run." "No it ain't, touchdown." "What inning is it?" "No, quarter." But in the meantime, I have developed some fantastic interests in dishes,

fabrics, other exciting things, nothing it'd enjoy more except leprosy. Because you see, this calls for some independent decision making on your part as a mate to be willing to flow into the life of your husband or into the life of your wife and develop some common interests.

Howard Hendricks: Just stop and think with me for a moment, my friends, approximately 50% of your marriage will be spent without children and I hope that you are not building your marriage around your children. That is the saddest core in all of the world around which to build your marriage. That's exactly the reason why the highest incidence of divorce today is from the 40, to 45, to 55 age group, because they are out of children and they're out of a relationship. They are strangers to each other. They have nothing in common. One of the arts of building a marriage is developing a companionship with your mate.

Howard Hendricks: We just got rid of the last one last year. Man, we're really living. We're having a ball. But I've often thought I'm sure glad that we took a lot of time to develop areas of commonality because we have a lot of time on our hands now. As I write the kids off and I said, "Hey, come home and make some noise, it's so quiet around here. Disgusting." But we are developing the most thrilling ministry that God has given to us just a couple that we frankly had no idea God ever had in mind as a result of the areas of commonality that we have developed.

Roger Marsh: You've been listening to part 1 of a wise message from the late Howard Hendricks today here on Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh and I encourage you to put into practice the wonderful advise professor Hendricks just shared, that you can learn more about his life and legacy on today's broadcast page and doctorjamesdobson.org, that's doctorjamesdobson.org. Be sure to tune in again tomorrow as we air the conclusion of this classic presentation. That's coming up next time right here on Doctor James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Doctor James Dobson Family Institute.