



THE MARRIAGE ADVENTURE

JOURNEY MARRIAGE CONFERENCE

WHY DON'T WE COMMUNICATE BETTER?

Daniel & Bonnie Hoover



ATTENDEE GUIDE

Journey Church Marriage Conference

FEBRUARY 2021

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OUR SPEAKERS

Daniel & Bonnie Hoover

We're Daniel & Bonnie Hoover and one of our greatest joys is getting to tackle this Adventure of life, family, and ministry together as intimate friends! After years of walking with couples through their most difficult seasons of marriage, we've seen that the enemy has launched an assault on the core of the church... marriages and the family. Our hearts have been broken and God has given us a massive calling to help couples develop a healthy biblical marriage. Our prayer is that you will join us on this journey of the highs, the lows, and everything in between and you'll experience marriage as the adventure God has designed it be.

We endured the heartache and miracle of infertility, then walked the road of adoption. We are the parents of Josie (10) and Colby (8). Bonnie has a BA in Psychology and Daniel holds a Masters Degree in Pastoral Counseling and Leadership. Currently, we are both pursuing an advanced diploma in Marriage and Family.

While Daniel serves as Executive Pastor at NorthStar Church in Kennesaw, GA, he is also a Pastoral Counselor who meets with couples daily to work through issues such as infidelity, infertility, communication, conflict resolution, poor financial management, parenting, etc. We are certified Prepare/Enrich facilitators and together we lead premarital workshops for couples preparing to be married, as well as weekend intensive workshops for married couples.

Together, we host The Marriage Adventure Weekly Podcast where we talk about a multitude of topics that couples encounter on their marriage journey. We also interview married couples ranging from authors and celebrities, to pastors and their wives, to everyday couples who have endured extraordinary circumstances.



SESSION ONE

Why Don't We Communicate Better?

Communication is the process of understanding someone and being understood.

In communication, why do we in-authentically represent ourselves?

Question: What happens when we allow truth and emotions to get all out of whack?

Answer:

The Flat-Brain Syndrome

Normal Stomach Functions : Consists of our emotions or feelings, our responses to the world around us, to what we're thinking and to our bodies. It's the seed of our emotions.

Normal Heart Functions : Give and receive concern, support, and ready to consider suggestions and possibilities. Open to others views while owning our own.

Normal Head Functions : Thinking, planning, processing, decision and problem solving. Based on logic, and truth alone.



SESSION ONE

What happens when the Flat-Brain Syndrome occurs?

Fat Belly :

When our emotions are triggered negatively, and the unresolved emotions residing in the stomach expand leaving no room to express the emotions calmly.

Hardened Heart :

When stomachs bulge they squeeze the heart functions into the chest cavity. We cease to be open to other people or to varied options. We can't give or receive suggestions. The ability to use heart talk is gone.



Flat Brain :

Expanding bellies push up through our bodies, until the pressure hits our brains, flattening them against the tops of our skulls. When flat-brained we can't hear well, see accurately, think straight, or act sensibly.

"Emotional arousal actually makes us different people than who we are in moments of greater calmness. When we are angry or fearful, our adrenaline flows faster and our strength increases by about 20%. The blood supply to the problem-solving part of the brain is severely decreased because, under stress, a greater portion of the blood is diverted to the body's extremities."

— Dr. Robert Bolton, People Skills

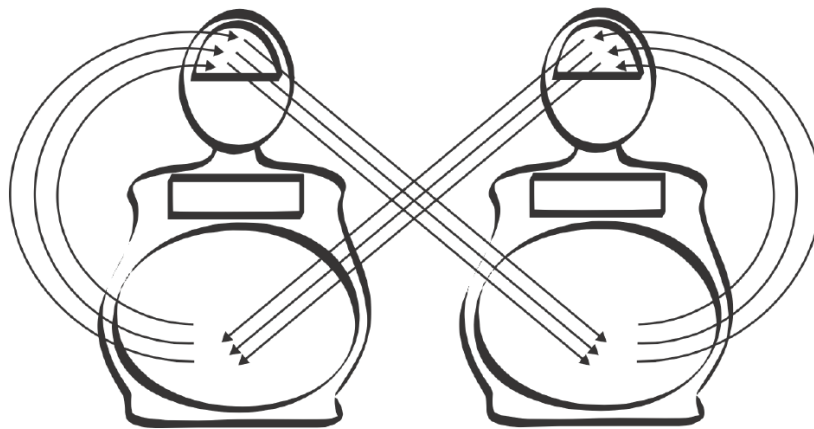
SESSION ONE

The Flat-Brain Tango

The Flat Brain Tango is the infinite cycle of engaging each other in the midst of being flat brained.

How to Avoid the Tango:

1. Recognize the **Thud**.
2. **Pause** and **Decode** the message.
3. Take **Ownership** of your response.



COUPLE EXERCISE

- Decide together the last time you entered the flat brain tango.
- Identify the initial thud each of you felt during the discussion.
- How did that particular argument resolve, or did it?
- Talk through how the flat brain tango played a part in this argument.



L.I.F.E.

DANIEL & BONNIE HOOVER

LIFE. Life is a word that holds different meanings. For most people, it simply means that you have breath in your lungs and you are still on this rock orbiting the sun. Believe me, that is a good thing! However, life has other connotations as well. It also means that you have stuff going on. That you have loved ones, you have a job, extracurricular activities. It means that you have plans for the future.

Some people might look at their lack of all these things and say, “I have no life.” Simply meaning, “The things I have going on in my life, aren’t as good as the things most people have in theirs.” We all want to have a life.

When little boys and girls dream of being married, they dream of having a life. Maybe a handsome husband or a pretty wife that is sweet and kind to them. That picture they see in their heads probably includes a couple of kids. They dream of going on adventures together. Do you think they dream of ball games on Saturday mornings? How about having 4 kids, and they all have ball games on Saturday mornings?

Now throw in PTSA responsibilities at the school, and overtime at work. Oh yeah, let’s not forget the mortgage

and insurance, how about school and ball team fundraisers, and birthday parties in the middle of a college football game on Saturday, arguments over who’s going to drive where? On and on and on it goes!!! Sorry, I know, I totally just ruined that kid’s picture of marriage.

This brings us to our other meaning of the word LIFE. It means that I have a life that is meaningful, rich, and fills me with breath in my lungs. No, I don’t mean the air in your lungs. I mean breath, passion, excitement, meaning.

The sad truth is that we fill our lives so full that the stuff we fill our life with actually sucks the life right out of us. We look more like a clown juggling balls in a circus than we do someone full of life.

Who is putting this so-called life on our plates? Is it society? Does society tell us that we have to fulfill every expectation

that is put upon a married couple living in the 2020s? Or, could it be that we are putting it on ourselves? Do we have a fear of missing out? Or maybe it's a fear of being different. It could be a fear of letting other people down. Fear of saying, "NO, I'm sorry, we just can't do that." How does someone stand up to that? How do they develop that kind of moxie? An attitude and confidence that allows them to look at the world and say, "I'm sorry, you won't tell us what we have to do?"

It starts with a question. It's a question that we very seldom ask ourselves when it concerns our marriage or our family. Here's it is.

"What do I want my family to look like in 10 years?" We must begin with the end in mind, then work back from there and develop a plan. Develop a path that will lead us to that preferred future.

That plan will need to have certain things in it. However, certain things will need to be intentionally left out. If we don't have a vision for the future and a path for how to get there, we'll follow whatever path we're led to.

So go ahead. Ask the question. Then spend some time answering it. Then maybe you'll find the courage to release the unnecessary things that weigh you down and rob you of the abundant life God desires for you to experience. It may take a lot of effort to bail all the water out of what seems like an overcrowded, sinking boat you're stuck in. But when you've lightened your load you'll be able to take in a deep breath and truly experience life!

**Simplifying the Adventure,
Daniel & Bonnie**



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SESSION TWO

Breaking Bad...Patterns

1. _____ **Spot** _____ your pattern.

In what situations do you tend to get into this “well-rehearsed” dance?

Thoughts:

2. _____ **Own** _____ your stuff.

A. Problems have _____ **Patterns** _____, but patterns always have
_____ **Partners** _____.

B. _____ **Recognize** _____ the part you play in the tango. You are a willing
participant in this dance!

3. Authentically _____ **Represent** _____ yourself.

This is revealing to your spouse your truest self in regards to this topic.

SESSION TWO

This requires:

- Recognize
- Vulnerability
- Kind Assertiveness

Session Notes:

COUPLE EXERCISE

Take a moment and review the argument that you discussed in your last couple exercise.

Before talking, ask yourself and consider these two questions:

1. What is it about this pattern that bothers me so much and drives me to become Flat-Brained?
2. What do I really want and what is my ultimate goal?
 - ➔ Using the Talker/Listener Card. Place the card between you on the table. Decide who should be the talker first, based on who is the most bothered.
 - ➔ Use the card to take ownership of your part of the Tango Pattern.
 - ➔ When the first talker feels heard, turn the card and repeat the process.



MARRIAGE SHOULDN'T BE THAT HARD

DANIEL & BONNIE HOOVER

"Life's too short to stay with such a difficult person. Marriage shouldn't be that hard." We sat in shock as someone relayed the advice she had received from a marriage counselor. Maybe the counselor has been watching too many Hallmark movies! Where else would he have gotten the idea that marriage should be easy? What if we have that same mentality toward everything else in life? Job, hobbies, child-rearing, finances, friendships. Very few things worth having come easily.

This past spring, the kids and I (Bonnie) were visiting with some friends and noticed they had planted a garden in their back yard. Since we were still doing our best to social distance and were limiting our extracurricular activities, I had the brilliant idea that we should plant a garden. I imagined it would be fun for Josie and Colby to plant seeds, spend time cultivating the vegetables, and watch things sprout up out of

the earth. I spent several hours researching what it takes to plant a garden successfully. I surveyed our yard space and picked out the location that gets the most sunlight. I even went out and bought seeds. However, I never followed through with actually setting up beds and planting seeds in the ground. Fast forward three months, and guess what we harvested! Nothing.

The principle for planting and harvesting is a Biblical one that also applies to our marriage relationship. Whatever we reap, we sow. Galatians 6:7 advises, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." Whatever we invest in our marriage will spring up. If we sow seeds of jealousy, strife, and dishonesty, we are sure to find ourselves in a contentious marriage. If we allow ourselves to think everything is okay and never keep a check on our

relationship, we will eventually find the life choked out of the relationship. We have to “water” what we want to grow and “weed out” what we don’t.

Don’t expect the marriage relationship to be easy, even when you are married to the most amazing person on earth. It takes work to maintain it. We think there are three areas we can focus on to cultivate a healthy marriage. First, we must both be connected to the Vine, Jesus Christ, and allow Him to work through us. When Jesus is our life source, it will be natural to talk about Him with our spouse, pray together, and get involved in a local church. It’s impossible to over-estimate the importance of having a spiritual connection with your spouse. It’s what allows you to trust each other and move through the most difficult of circumstances. You will eventually run out of love, patience, and kindness if you rely on your own strength. But these characteristics flow naturally out of the personality of Jesus and through you when you walk with Him.

The next way we invest in our marriage is on an emotional level. It’s not always easy to invest in the thoughts and dreams of someone completely different from us. But taking the time to understand your spouse and finding ways to connect with

them will keep your hearts bound together. In his book, *The Five Love Languages*, Dr. Gary Chapman suggests that we all feel loved differently. If we can find out what makes our spouse feel most loved (Quality Time, Words of Affirmation, Physical Touch, Gifts, or Acts of Service) and lean into that, we take steps toward filling their love tank. A full love tank fuels an emotional connection.

Finally, we can make an effort to work on a physical connection with our spouse. Spiritual and emotional growth can’t happen if we are never physically present. We understand that life takes us in so many directions, and it can be challenging to make time to be together. But isn’t it worth it? We work at our marriage physically by spending time together. We make a habit of sitting close or holding hands when we’re just watching TV. It doesn’t sound romantic, but we also intentionally schedule times for intimacy. Physical affection and familiarity is the culmination of the spiritual and emotional relationship.

None of this is easy. Contrary to Hallmark movie endings, “happily ever after” doesn’t just happen naturally when you find “the one.” We must spend time working AT our marriage, so we don’t end up having to work ON it. We make sure we

are planting the right kind of seeds, watering them, and intentionally removing unhealthy weeds that could stifle a healthy relationship. Whatever we invest our time and energy in will inevitably reap a bountiful harvest!

“Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”
—2 Corinthians 9:6

**Working at the Adventure,
Daniel & Bonnie**



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SESSION THREE

Five Rules for Fighting Fair

EPHESIANS 4:25-32 ESV — ²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

1. Let your words be Truthful

EPHESIANS 4:25 ESV — Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

EPHESIANS 4:15 ESV — Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.

2. Do not Sin in your Anger.

EPHESIANS 4:26-27 ESV — Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.

3. Use words that Build Up rather than Tear Down.

EPHESIANS 4:29 ESV — Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

PSALM 141:3 ESV — Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!

SESSION THREE

4. Be **Kind**.

EPHESIANS 4:31-32 ESV — *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

5. **Forgive** and show your spouse grace.

EPHESIANS 4:32 ESV — *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

COLOSSIANS 4:6 ESV — *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.*

COUPLE EXERCISE

Complete this exercise using the Talker/Listener Card

- ➔ Tell your spouse one way you recognize you haven't been using your words to build him or her up and ask for their forgiveness.
- ➔ Confess to each other any ways you feel you have been prideful, selfish, hurtful, or unwilling to forgive in your marriage.
- ➔ Discuss how you can begin to set a new pattern for communicating better with each other.

