LWCC Marriage Ministries Email for April 2026
Let Empathy Transform Your Marriage

Well, first of all, our greetings to you from an idyllic valley in the Yorkshire Moors in the north of England, were we have finally arrived to spend some long-anticipated time with our eldest son and his lovely wife. Let me digress a little to things you see when travelling!

A sign on a motor bike for sale; '2016 350cc BSA. Note: Left Hand Drive Only!'
In a shop: 'Sorry, No Wifi Here: Imagine it's 1995.'

I guess the next thing is, how do we follow up from our last three emails. I can tell you, it took some thinking about, and I trust what follows over the next 3 or 4 months will be very helpful, particularly to those who have 'walked a journey' over these last 3 months. The theme this month then, is Empathy.

First off, *What is Empathy*? Empathy is understanding or feeling what another person is experiencing from within their frame of reference – or in other words, putting yourself in their shoes. Some people are natural empaths - people who show empathy. They feel what others are feeling without even trying, even people they've just met. However, most of us have to work at empathy a little more intentionally, even with someone as close to us as our spouse. Research has shown that reminding people what empathy is, can actually help them be more empathetic, and seeing things from your partner's frame of reference increases your connection and does wonders for the way you communicate. So, below we've outlined three scenarios that will hopefully outline how empathy can have a profoundly positive effect on your relationship.

Empathy reminds you that your spouse is human:

Have you ever noticed how it's really easy to feel anger and indignation toward someone when you're not interacting with them in person? For example, say you've been emailing back and forth with a Customer Service rep about a mix-up with your order. It's been going on for over a week, and your problem is still not solved! Frankly, you're not even sure the person understands the issue – how can they be so incompetent at their job? You're about to send a scathing reply when your phone rings. It's the representative you've been dealing with, and you're caught off guard by

how friendly they sound. Turns out this whole time you've both been misunderstanding each other. You get your issue resolved, he jokes about you becoming best friends, and your anger has melted away as you hang up. In actually talking to the person, you realized he is just that – a person, trying to to do his best.

Applied to your relationship, empathy is like that phone call. Putting yourself in your partner's shoes and truly seeing things from their perspective helps you remember that they are just a person, doing the best they can. It's easy to get caught up in how ticked off or frustrated we are at something they did or didn't do – that's normal, we're only human, too. They'll mess up, and so will we. So before you hit send on that stinging reply, or huffy attitude, take a second to remind yourself of the human behind the behaviour – your funny, smart, and loving spouse.

Empathy makes it easier to assume positive intent:

Picture the scene: It's Friday after a looooong week. You didn't plan anything for dinner, but your spouse assured you they'd be home early to spend some time with the kids so you can throw some leftovers together. Well, it's now 6pm, the baby just had a blow-out, your toddler is getting crankier by the minute, and the leftovers you'd planned on eating are giving off a questionable odour. Where is your spouse? They're not answering their phone, even after your fifth call and fifteenth text. At this point it would be easy to start getting yourself really worked up, stewing over how they let you down, and making assumptions about why. Just then, they burst in the door, looking dishevelled and laden with carry-out bags. "I'm so sorry!" they say. "I was in a hurry to get out of the office so I could get across town for your favourite take-out, but I forgot my phone, and there was an accident on the motor way, and…"

Leaning into empathy means that instead of immediately dismissing what they're saying as excuses, you really *feel* their distress over letting you down. They were simply trying to do something thoughtful for you, and things beyond their control prevented it from turning out as they'd planned. Instead of assuming that they're being intentionally inconsiderate, empathy allows you to see a more realistic interpretation: that your spouse cares about you deeply and 99.9% of the time would not be intentionally thoughtless, or want to make things more difficult for you. Assuming positive intent, means you can approach and react to them with more kindness and understanding in times of conflict.

Empathy promotes a team mentality:

Let's say you have a big project going on at at work, and the deadline is fast approaching. Your small team of colleagues could really use some extra hands on deck to make sure you deliver. If your manager understands your role, and can empathize with you, they're more likely to jump in to help if they can. Maybe they've been in your position, and they really understand how stressful it can be. Even though they're your boss, you probably feel a sense of team camaraderie with them, a sense of "we."

We know that remembering you're on the *same team* is key to maintaining a healthy perspective, especially when you're not seeing eye to eye, but when you're fighting with your spouse, it's easy to feel like it's you versus them. Showing empathy to your partner is like working shoulder to shoulder with them towards a solution. You can both still have your own thoughts and feelings about it, but there's comfort in knowing your partner is in it *with* you, not against you.

Experts have found that empathy in a marriage can be transformative. Have a chat together about some of the ways you have both shown empathy to your spouse. Talk together about the effect those moments have had on each of you, and your relationship as a whole. Maybe you could now be brave enough to express other times when you could both have been more Empathetic with each other!!!

Blessings on you all from Your Marriage Ministries Team - Stan & Ronnie, John & Karen, Phil & Mel.

(Adapted from an Article from Prepare/Enrich)