



Tim Muehlhoff is associate professor of communication at Biola University in La Mirada, California, where he teaches classes in family communication, interpersonal communication and gender. He has served with Campus Crusade for Christ since 1986.

An Interview with the Author of *Marriage Forecasting*

Describe the significance of the title and what it means to forecast a marriage.

Marriage Forecasting is based on the simple idea that marriages are a lot like the weather. Some marriages have stable climates, while others are unpredictable. For some of you the climate of your marriage is like living in Southern California—bright sunshine and wonderful predictability. For others, marriage is unpredictable and a lot like living in the Midwest—“If you don’t like the weather, wait a few minutes; it’ll change.” More than likely, you are somewhere in between: seasons of turbulence, seasons of calm. Ignoring the climate of our marriage carries tremendous consequences. Ignoring our marital climate greatly reduces the effectiveness of our communication with each other. Couples ought to place a sign that says “Weather permitting” over every conversation before it begins. Just as a runner checks the heat index and plans his or her run accordingly, marriage partners should only attempt to discuss potentially volatile issues when the climate in the marriage is conducive to positive communication. Sometimes the wisest thing a couple can do in a marriage is postpone talking about key issues and instead work on improving the general climate within the marriage.

How is this book different from other books on marriage?

Marriage Forecasting introduces readers to the crucial concept of communication climates. A communication climate is the overarching sense of value and satisfaction individuals feel as they interact with each other and go about daily activities. While all marriages roughly engage in the same activities—dividing up household responsibilities, making ends meet, instructing and disciplining children, helping with endless homework, balancing work and home schedules, preparing for holidays, interacting with in-laws—the communication climate for each particular couple can greatly vary.

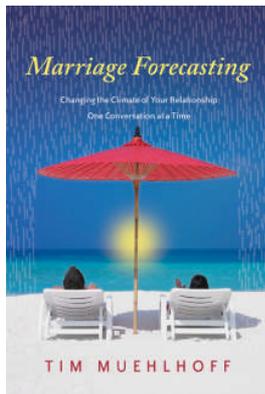
How you interact with your spouse on a daily basis is the single greatest factor that establishes the type of communication climate that surrounds your marriage. It isn’t “what we communicate about that shapes a relational climate,” note communication experts, “as much as *how* we speak and act toward one another.” The book of Proverbs forcefully states that both life and death reside in the tongue (18:21). Just as our speech can impart life and death, it also establishes the type of marital climate you experience every day.

While communication scholars agree that communication climates are vital to healthy relationships, not all scholars agree on the specific elements that make up a climate. After surveying journal articles, wading through current research, conducting my own research and speaking at marriage conferences for over thirteen years, I’ve come to identify four key

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Q&A

AUTHOR INTERVIEW



*Marriage Forecasting:
Changing the Climate of Your
Relationship One
Conversation at a Time*
192 pages, paperback, 0-
8308-3841-4, \$15.00

elements of a communication climate: acknowledgment, trust, expectations and commitment.

Marriage Forecasting uniquely discusses three aspects seldom explored in books on marital communication:

First, what role does abuse—verbal, physical and emotional—play in shaping a marital climate? What steps should a spouse take if he or she identifies an abusive climate?

Second, the importance of couples calling a marital truce. A marital truce is *the decision to temporarily avoid controversial issues and overlook the offensive actions of each other as you seek to strengthen the overall climate of your marriage.*

Third, understanding how our climate with God impacts the climate with our spouse. C. S. Lewis writes: “Human beings can’t make one another really happy for long. You cannot love a fellow creature fully till you love God.” By learning to improve our climate with God, we’ll learn to strengthen our marital climate with our spouses.

What does it mean to take a climate reading of your marriage?

There are three aspects to taking a read of your marital climate. First, determine how you feel about the climate. Second, imagine how your spouse feels. Third, check your perceptions with your spouse. *Marriage Forecasting* includes a series of questions exploring each of the aspects of a marital climate and allows the reader to judge the overall climate of the marriage and if the time is right to discuss crucial topics with his or her spouse. The writers of Proverbs state that a word spoken in the *right circumstances* at the *right time* is “like apples of gold in settings of silver” (25:11). The conditions in which you choose to speak, suggest these wise conversationalists, are just as important as what you say.

What are a few different types of marriage climates?

Some couples live in a climate that is perpetually chilly. They don’t argue with each other, yet there isn’t a sense of warmth or intimacy between them. They go about their daily routines and never really connect. Other couples exist in a climate that is stormy and filled with arguments. These couples can’t seem to agree on anything, and talking about issues only seems to make matters worse. Others live in a climate that is partly cloudy where communication is fine so long as certain topics—finances, sex, schedules—are avoided. Like rain clouds, these topics hang over a marriage and threaten to disrupt intimacy if discussed. Then there are some couples we meet that seem to live in a state of never-ending sunshine. They seem to always be happy, affirming of one another and never utter a harsh word toward each other. The key for each of these couples is to understand how their climates formed and what it takes to maintain or alter them.

Q&A

AUTHOR INTERVIEW

"I'm bullish on Tim Muehlhoff. He's authentic. He's anchored in truth. He's passionate about helping and equipping people. And he is a brilliant communicator. He doesn't just grab your attention, his pithy writing will transform your life and marriage. Buy this book. Read and apply it. In the months that follow, the climate in your marriage will improve!"
-- Dr. Dennis Rainey, president, FamilyLife, and host, *FamilyLife Today*

What steps can couples take to change the climate of their marriage?

Remember that every communication climate is made up of four elements: acknowledgment, expectations, commitment and trust. The key to improving marriage is *not* just being aware of these factors, but learning how to strengthen them. *Marriage Forecasting* provides readers with practical suggestions—rooted in current communication research and the Scriptures—of how to cultivate commitment, acknowledge each other's opinions, address issues of trust, and negotiate spoken and unspoken expectations. Specifically readers will learn how to

- recognize how the cultural climate surrounding us impacts their marital climate
- identify words and actions that foster a positive communication climate
- invest twenty seconds a day to keep a positive climate strong
- understand what causes a poor communication climate to develop
- stop negative communication from spiraling out of control
- effectively assess conflict
- understand the role gender plays in creating positive or negative climates
- rebuild trust in a relationship if trust has been severed
- call a truce in their marriage
- understand how their relationship with God deeply influences their marriage

What do you hope couples take away from *Marriage Forecasting*?

By applying the principles in *Marriage Forecasting* we can, with God's help, restore and strengthen our marital climate in a fairly short amount of time. Our climate will be strengthened and transformed not by having more conversations, but by having conversations in an intimate and healthy climate. As the proverb reminds us, a word spoken at the right time is invaluable (25:11).