



Men Are
CLAMS

Women Are
CROWBARS

*The Dos and Don'ts of
Getting Your Man to Open Up*

David E. Clarke, Ph.D.
with William G. Clarke, M.A.

This is not just another book on male and female differences. Yes, it's practical, humorous, and a fun read. You'll see yourself and others through new eyes. You'll learn some new ways to give and receive love. But the most valuable feature is the section on spiritual intimacy. It alone is worth the price of the book. Really! This is a book you'll give to friends and want to read more than once.

GARY J. OLIVER, TH.M., PH.D.

Executive director of The Center for Healthy Relationships, professor of psychology and practical theology at John Brown University, and author of more than twenty books, including *Mad about Us* and *It's Okay to Be Angry*

In *Men Are Clams, Women Are Crowbars*, Dr. David Clarke's fresh, relevant, and humorous approach to gender differences will hit you right where you are in your own marriage. This book is sure to open the door to deeper understanding and better communication. A must read!

DAVID AND CLAUDIA ARP

Cofounders of Marriage Alive and authors of *10 Great Dates*

Refreshing, delightful, funny, practical—and *life-changing!* *Men Are Clams, Women Are Crowbars* is a must read. Regardless of how long a couple has been married, there is one thing this book can do for their marriage—improve it! A lot of books describe how to improve your marriage, but few really show you how to apply those principles practically and biblically. Clarke's book does so masterfully. *Men Are Clams, Women Are Crowbars* is a winner.

DR. RODNEY COOPER

Kenneth and Jean Hansen Professor of Discipleship and Leadership Development at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, former national director of Promise Keepers, and nationally known speaker and author

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TYNDALE HOUSE PUBLISHERS, INC.
CAROL STREAM, ILLINOIS

Men Are Clams, Women Are Crowbars: The Dos and Don'ts of Getting Your Man to Open Up

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A Focus on the Family book published by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188

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Editors: Larry Weeden and Kathy Davis

Cover design by Nathan Cook

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This author is represented by Hartline Literary Agency, 123 Queenston Dr., Pittsburgh, PA 15235.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at csresponse@tyndale.com, or call 1-800-323-9400.

ISBN 978-1-58997-975-8

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data can be found at www.loc.gov.

Printed in the United States of America

25 24 23 22 21 20 19

7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*To Sandy,
the most wonderful person
in the world*

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Introduction

Opposites Attract . . . and Drive You Nutty!

IF YOU COME TO A DR. DAVID CLARKE, Men Are Clams, Women Are Crowbars Seminar, you will hear me start by saying:

“Women. Will men ever really understand women? The answer, of course, is *no*. I mean, who are we kidding? This concludes my seminar. Thank you for coming.”

As I begin to walk off the stage, there is nervous laughter in the audience. The couples are thinking, *Is he serious? Is the seminar over?*

Then I return to center stage and launch into my explanation of how difficult it is for a man to understand a woman. Here’s how it goes.

“Women. Will men ever really understand women? Did you ever notice that most women have a lot of clothes? Dresses, skirts, pants, blouses. And don’t forget the accessories: shoes, belts, scarves, things for their hair. The list is endless! Most women have more clothes right now than they could ever possibly wear in one lifetime. But they keep buying more! Why? We don’t know.

“Take a look at the closet shared by the average couple. Three-quarters of that baby is jammed full of the woman’s clothes. If the light is just right, and you look really close, you can just barely make out the tiny, cramped section the man is forced to use.

“It’s not fair! It’s not right! And it needs to stop. Ladies, we’ve had

enough. The party's over. I'm starting a new national organization for men. I call it 'Take Back the Closet.'

"Speaking of clothes, there is a situation that has puzzled men for centuries. Here is a woman who owns enough clothes and accessories to outfit a small European country. She stands in front of her closet—and I mean *her* closet—and in all sincerity, says these classic words, 'I just don't have a thing to wear.' What? You've got to be kidding! The correct statement, my dear, is, 'Out of the thousands of choices I have, I can't decide what to wear.'

"Another quality about women that men don't understand is the way they talk. Women love details, and they can remember with astonishing clarity every event of their day—in fact, every event of the past twenty-five years.

"This is fine in and of itself. The problem is that a woman wants to share all the details with her man. The man wants the big picture, the overall sketch. He gets drowned in too many details while the woman spends twenty minutes describing what happened, how she feels about it, and how it affected her life. And that's just to cover the time from her car door to the mall entrance. She's just getting started!

"For me, as a man, listening to this kind of story is like ordering a pepperoni pizza and having it delivered one pepperoni at a time. Please give me the whole pizza—give it to me now! Get to the point before I die of old age.

"We men have also never really understood why women cry and cry so much. Women cry when they're happy. They cry when they're sad. They cry when they're angry. They cry when they're tired. Sometimes they cry and don't even know why. Now, that's spooky.

"There is no more pitiful sight in the world than a man whose woman is crying. He doesn't know what to do. Everything he tries seems to backfire and lead to more crying, which is the last thing he wants. If he moves in close and tries to comfort her, she says, 'Back off, bud. How dare you touch me! You caused this problem.' If he backs off and

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gives some space to the woman he loves, she says, ‘That’s right, ignore me. You never cared.’”

I look at the audience and say with a straight face, “Look, I’m living with a woman. Help me!” And then I say, “Men, can I get an *amen*?”

All the men give me a huge amen because they can relate to what I’m saying. The men know it’s all true, and now a relationship expert is actually saying it out loud. Plus, they realize with great relief that I’m not going to bash men in my seminar.

But why should the men have all the fun? At this point, I turn my attention to describing men. Fair is fair, and the men must take their turn in the hot seat. Here’s how this seminar segment goes.

“Well, enough about women. I’ve been married since 1982 to Sandy, and I have a lot of material from my experience with the opposite sex. But it’s time to get to the men.

“Men. Will women ever really understand men? During courtship, the man is the absolute spirit of romance. He’s a cross between George Clooney and Brad Pitt: suave, charming, attentive, and caring. His only goal in life is to please his woman. Her every wish is his command. But what happens after marriage? A terrible transformation takes place that his wife can’t understand.

“After the wedding and a few years into the marriage, things are just a little bit different. The man becomes the absolute spirit of selfishness. He’s about as romantic as a wet blanket. His idea of a romantic evening is eating a big, juicy steak (that the woman cooks), renting a war movie, and falling asleep on the couch with his hand in the potato chip bag. The poor woman goes from the days of wine and roses to the days of cheeseburgers and dirty underwear. It’s a long drop!

“Another nasty surprise for women is learning that men don’t like to do routine household chores. Men consider laundry, washing the dishes, and vacuuming beneath their dignity and position. Men prefer big, glamorous projects like building the Panama Canal, buying a new

car, remodeling the den, or installing a sprinkler system. These are jobs that will be noticed and stand the test of time.

“Ladies, isn’t it amazing how a man who holds a responsible job requiring hard work and a variety of skills can be so lazy and useless at home? When a man comes through the front door, his IQ drops forty points, and he is suddenly unable to operate appliances and perform simple housecleaning tasks. And when the man does complete a small household chore, what does he immediately expect? You know, ladies. A parade in his honor and the Nobel Peace Prize! If the woman doesn’t sink to her knees and thankfully kiss his ring, he pouts. He did a job, and no one noticed. Poor thing!

“The real capper for women is their frustrated attempts to engage men in deep, personal conversations. Men aren’t very good at deep, personal conversations. It seems to women that all men think about is food, their jobs, sports, and sex—not necessarily in that order. Men don’t talk much, and when they do open their mouths it’s to belch or ask you to pass the mustard.

“A woman watches a man express a broad range of intense emotions during a ball game on television: rage, joy, fear, passion. I mean, he’s all over the map emotionally. After the game, she asks him how his day was, and he says, ‘Okay.’ And the crazy thing is, he expects that one word to satisfy her curiosity. ‘Oh! It was okay. Thanks for sharing. That tells me so much.’

“After years of clinical experience and careful research, I have discovered that most men have a very limited vocabulary after marriage. In fact, the vast majority of married men utter only four phrases: ‘I don’t know.’ ‘Did you say something, dear?’ ‘I need a shirt for tomorrow.’ And, of course, the most important question, ‘What’s for dinner?’”

As I conclude my description of men, I ask the women, “Isn’t it incredibly difficult to live with a man? Can I get an *amen*?” Of course, the ladies give an even louder amen than the men. When the volume

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dies down, I fake minor irritability and say to these women, “Well, you don’t have to shout it!”

Dave Clarke Gets It

At this early point in the seminar, the couples know I get it. I understand the incredible differences between men and women. I should get it—I’ve been married to my beautiful blonde, Sandy, for more than thirty years. I’ve also been working with couples in therapy for thirty years as a clinical psychologist.

William Clarke Gets It Too

William Clarke, my writing partner, has been married to my mom, Kathleen, for sixty years. He’s a master’s-level marriage and family therapist who has been working with couples for more than thirty years.

My marriage, my experience as a marital therapist, my dad’s wisdom, and the teaching in the Bible have all helped me discover principles that help couples understand their outrageous differences and create real closeness.

Some of you may be saying: “Dave, you’re dealing in stereotypes. The actions and roles you have described don’t apply to all men and women.” My response is: “My descriptions of men and women in this book don’t always apply, but in my personal and professional experience, they often apply.”

Crazy or Close?

These differences can be funny. Even entertaining. But if you don’t find ways to deal successfully with them, they will do great damage to your relationship.

Your male-female differences will take you as a couple down one of two paths. If you take the most popular, well-traveled path, your differences will drive you crazy and ruin your relationship.

I wrote this book to take you down the hard-to-find, lightly traveled path. On this path, you learn how to work with your differences to achieve crazy-good intimacy. This is the path you want to be on and God wants you to be on.

I'm going to show the two of you exactly how to find this path and stay on it—for a lifetime.

Who Will Benefit from This Book?

If you are in a serious romantic relationship, this book is for you. It is designed for couples who are married *and* couples who are not married. My principles can help every couple dramatically deepen their level of intimacy.

Though I'm writing to married couples, if you're not married, this book can give you the confidence to marry and the tools to stay happily married.

When the Roles Are Reversed

The main theme of my approach is the Clam-Crowbar difference. When I say men are Clams, I mean they clam up and do not share personally, do not share *themselves*. When I say women are Crowbars, I mean they work too hard to try to open up their Clams, their men.

In 25 percent of couples, these roles are reversed: The woman is the Clam and the man is the Crowbar. Not to worry. This is completely normal. My principles still apply.

The Path to a Crazy Good Relationship

Here's where I'm going to take you. I'll teach you how to work with your Clam-Crowbar differences to master three vital relationship skills:

- emotional intimacy through deeper communication
- the ability to talk about any topic, including difficult topics
- intimacy with God as a couple through spiritual bonding

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I've divided the book into five sections:

1. We Can't Talk!
2. We Need Communication Skills!
3. We Need to Build Deeper Conversations Every Week!
4. We Need to Talk about Difficult Topics!
5. We Need to Spiritually Bond!

Are you ready to take your relationship to the next level? The best level? Let's get started.

ASK YOURSELVES THESE QUESTIONS

1. What differences attracted you to your partner?
2. To which of the differences in this chapter do you relate the most?
3. Which of your differences are funny and are not an issue? Which differences have the potential to cause real problems in your relationship?
4. Do you want to learn to use your differences to build a great relationship? What would keep you from reading through this book and applying my strategies?

PART ONE

We Can't Talk!

CHAPTER I

THE WAR BETWEEN
THE SEXES

THE FIRST THREE MONTHS OF the Dave and Sandy Clarke marriage was brutally tough. All of our differences hit the fan and we struggled to adjust. Battling the huge rats in our nasty little apartment turned out to be the easy part. Battling each other was the big problem!

One of our major differences was in the area of chores. I had very few chores to do in my childhood. My mom did most of the work in the home and seemed very happy to do these jobs.

Sandy, on the other hand, did a ton of chores as she grew up in the Martin household. I think her parents may have broken a number of child labor laws. She had chores in the morning, chores after school, and chores in the evening. Compared to my home, hers was a prison chain gang.

Our marriage began with Sandy doing pretty much everything in our home: cleaning, laundry, dishes, cooking, grocery shopping . . . I even had her type—late at night—my papers for my seminary classes. Oh, and she also had a full-time job outside the home.

I figured Sandy, like my mom, would love doing all these things for me. She didn't. She really, really didn't. A few months into our marriage, she sat me down and told me it was time I grew up and saved her from death by exhaustion.

I'm happy to report I did step up and took over the laundry and the dishes. And I did my own typing. The problem was, this was just one area where we had to work at our differences!

Marriage Is a Terrible Idea!

The one problem with marriage is that a man and a woman have to live together. Without question, this is the worst idea anyone ever came up with. It's not just a bad idea. It's a ridiculously bad idea!

It's like putting a deer into the tiger's cage at the zoo and hoping the two of them can get along. I don't think so. There's going to be trouble. And it won't take long.

The only thing more difficult than living with a member of the opposite sex is . . . actually, there is nothing more difficult.

I had a dream that a group of the world's greatest scientists, the most brilliant minds of our generation, came together at a retreat in the Swiss Alps (important retreats are always held in the Swiss Alps). They met to answer this most important question: "What is the quickest and most effective way to drive a person insane?"

The learned men and women went into a conference room to deliberate. Five minutes later they emerged with a one-word answer: "Marriage."

We don't need a group of distinguished scientists to tell us what we already know, do we? If you're married, you know what I'm talking about.

Is there anything more frustrating, nerve-racking, and just plain exasperating than living with the opposite sex?

Marriage Changes Everything

Dating is fantastic. Courtship is bliss. Engagement is super. You notice some differences between you, but they are small, trivial, even petty. They're cute. You even laugh about them.

But when you marry and move in together, within two years your differences become big, dramatic, and incredibly annoying. You are well past the trivial and cute phase. No one is laughing anymore. Your home is filled with moaning, sighing, and the grinding of two sets of teeth.

In addition to your basic male-female differences, now you will be forced to deal with a variety of personality differences. You'll be convinced that your spouse is trying to drive you crazy.

How could you have ended up with someone who turned out to be such a nuisance? You'd like to walk up to your partner's parents and say, "Thanks for raising the world's biggest pest!"

Check out this catalog of personality and lifestyle differences. I know you will recognize yourself and your spouse in some of these.

The Thermostat Wars

One spouse is always hot. One is always cold. Complaining about the temperature and sneaking to change the thermostat becomes commonplace. You wake up in the middle of the night freezing, or you wake up dying of the heat. And you know your spouse has made a successful commando run to the thermostat.

Night Owl and Morning Glory

Morning Glory wakes up singing at 5:00 a.m. without an alarm, but is brain-dead by 9:00 p.m.

Night Owl comes alive at 9:00 p.m. and is ready to party, but has to be hit with a cattle prod to get up in the morning. When you are alive and energized, it's fun to deal with someone in a catatonic state.

Mr. Crude and Mrs. Manners

Mr. Crude belches, even passes gas on a regular basis. He sees this as being “manly.” It’s also being manly not to feel too bad about it and rarely say, “Excuse me” after the offensive behavior.

Mrs. Manners is horrified and offended by his complete lack of taste. (In some cultures, belching after a meal is an expected and cherished act. Women in those cultures are thrilled by it. The moral: Marry into one of those cultures if you want to keep barking out those belches.)

Pack Rat and Garage Saler

The Pack Rat keeps everything, including every school paper the children bring home. The Pack Rat hogs every square inch of storage room to hoard the treasure trove of trivialities and minutia.

The Garage Saler feels buried alive under a mountain of useless stuff and wants to sell everything.

The Slob and the Neatnik

One spouse is a rumpled, crumpled, and disorganized mess maker. This spouse never puts anything away and sees no reason to clean when the place is just going to get dirty again.

The opposite of this is the Neatnik, who wants to live in a museum of order and cleanliness. Messiness is seen as evidence of a weak, disturbed mind.

The Slob says, “Why make the bed when we’re just going to mess it up again?” Sadly, the Slob is deadly serious. The Neatnik replies, “I’ll tell you why. Because we’re civilized human beings, not animals.”

Ratty Clothes Man

This husband parades around in twenty-year-old, threadbare T-shirts, college sweatshirts, and gym shorts from his high school days. His old clothes are filled with holes and hideous stains, but he considers them old friends. He’s horribly out of fashion. But he’s comfortable.

The wife can barely handle his nasty, disreputable, shameful clothes inside their home. Her greatest fear is that he will go out in public wearing his disgusting rags.

Social Media Maven

She spends hours a day doing Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and every other existing social-media channel. Her every meal, her every shopping trip, her every day at work, her every experience, and her every thought must be shared with her massive network of very close “friends.”

Sports Man

To say that he is into sports would be the understatement of the century. He lives for sports, and every game, every event is of vital importance. He watches games on television and listens on the radio, and he checks the progress of games and the statistics on his iPhone or iPad or computer.

He’s in at least three fantasy leagues at the same time. He’s on the verge of quitting his job so he can have time to keep up with his players and their production.

HGN and Hallmark Channel Diva

She watches only two television channels, and they are every man’s living nightmare. On HGTV, she watches wealthy couples redecorate, remodel, and buy fantastically expensive homes. The really bad news is, these shows give her all kinds of makeover ideas for her home. Expensive ideas.

Most men would rather—if they could afford it—remodel the home or buy a new one rather than watch the *other* channel preferred by the woman. Imagine every sappy, insipid, predictable, silly, romantic movie collected in one place. Oh, that’s right. You don’t have to imagine it. Press three numbers on the remote and there it is. It is called the Hallmark Channel.

As he watches yet another small-town girl fall in love with a big-city guy who has a mean fiancée, this husband thinks, *I am being punished. And I must have been awful.*

Never on Time

One spouse is chronically late for everything. Church. Social events. School activities. Doctors' appointments. Work. Airline flights. He or she is usually married to someone who wants to be fifteen minutes early for everything. They make a tough combination.

I'm Going to Die—Again

This partner thinks that every illness or pain is a symptom of a final, fatal disease. Pain in the chest means catastrophic heart problems. Pain in the back means the kidneys are failing. Pain in the rear (he or she has become a pain in the rear to the spouse) means rectal cancer. And so on.

I could go on and on. There are sunny optimists married to gloom-and-doom pessimists. Bedroom television watchers who have the set on to help them go to sleep. Physical fitness enthusiasts who pressure their spouses to work out and consume fruit drinks. Vegetarians. Lip-smacking, slurping soup eaters. Snorers. Bed hogs. Toss and turners. Putterers. Social butterflies. Lone Rangers. Free spenders. Fort Knox savers. Reckless drivers. The rare drivers who drive the speed limit.

The Biggest and Most Destructive Difference of All

Every married person must put up with a variety of their spouse's annoying differences and habits. Some can even be amusing. The ability to laugh at ourselves helps to lessen the tension. What's *not* funny is that many of these differences push us further apart.

Why do our differences push us further away from one another? Because we do not learn how to manage them, how to adjust to them.

And we don't learn how because of the biggest and most destructive difference between men and women: how we communicate.

Because we aren't communicating successfully, we can't understand and deal effectively with our male-female differences. So we experience a gradual breakdown in intimacy. Fewer and fewer needs are met in the relationship. Our emotional, spiritual, and physical bonds are diminished. It doesn't happen right away, but it happens.

I cannot overstate the importance of healthy communication in a marriage. Without it, you will lose all your intimacy. With it, you will develop a deep and lasting intimacy.

Because men are Clams and women are Crowbars, we start every interaction—and I mean every interaction—miles away from an emotional connection. First, we need to figure out how to get past the Clam-Crowbar blocks to break through to real communication.

I'm going to help you do that. Starting right now.

ASK YOURSELVES THESE QUESTIONS

1. Which of these personality and lifestyle differences I've described ring a bell with you?
2. If I haven't covered some key differences in your relationship, talk to each other about these differences now.
3. Which of your differences are not a big deal, and which are really more than annoying and are causing problems?
4. How intimate is your relationship right now (1 being very low and 10 being high in intimacy)? What differences are stopping you from getting more intimate?

