

Building a Biblical Home
Lesson 3 – Communication in Marriage
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Introduction: Communication is a foundational element of all relationships.

A. Because we cannot read minds there must be an expression of both the needs and the thoughts of another.

1. This is a mark of maturity when you learn to seek to listen and speak to others.
(Prov 18:12-13)

2. This lesson can be broadened to other relationships! We can particularly use these things in our relationships to each other in the church.

“Peter Drucker, often called the "father of American management," claims that 60 percent of all management problems are a result of faulty communications. A leading marriage counselor says that at least half of all divorces result from faulty communication between spouses. And criminologists tell us that upwards of 90 percent of all criminals have difficulty communicating with other people.”

B. A good barometer of a relationship is the quality of communication!

1. How well do you communicate? Before you answer, ask your mate!

2. Many marriages go through stages that indicate trouble. If things are caught early then matter can be corrected and great trouble can be avoided!

3. The essence of good communication is a humility that will cause you to put another first. As a Christian we should already have this in our hearts! **(Phil 2:3-4)**

I. The Need of communication

A. Lives can drift apart.

1. We face this danger in our relationship to God. **(Heb 2:1)**

2. One of the real dangers we face is our schedule! Do we take time to talk?

3. Over time our circumstances change and we change. How do we work together?

B. Problems must be solved.

1. The key to a happy marriage is not finding the “perfect” mate but rather finding one who has the kind of heart to face problems and work them out.

2. It is foolish to ignore problems and hope they go away. **(Prov 6:9-11)**

3. We need the wisdom to face the issues of life! Communication is a step to wisdom. **(Prov 1:5)**

C. We are different in how we approach things.

1. In marriage one of the first challenges is learning the differences between men and women! **(1 Pt 3:7)**

2. We must assume we know what the other is thinking!

Class Discussion:

1. Why do some people choose not to communicate?
2. What must be in the heart of one if effective communication will take place?
3. Why do some put off communicating about serious issues? What happens when this occurs?
4. What are some basic differences between men and women in this communication?
5. What things can change in a marriage over time that requires continual communication?

II. The commitment to communication

A. It does not come naturally.

1. We have already noted the differences between men and women, personality styles, and changing lives.

“If more men were self starters in the area of communication, fewer wives would be cranks.”

2. The “natural” way of the world is to be self-centered and demand that your needs be met. (**Prov 18:2; 17:16; Jas 3:15-16**)

3. It is easy to give up on others and write them off or get angry and quit trying.

B. Consider the four stages of decay in a relationship.

1. Mutual needs are met.

- a. Remember when you were dating? What has changed your actions since then?
- b. Have your needs changed since then?

2. Mutual needs are ignored by one or both

- a. Many times one thinks they are responding, when in fact they are giving their mate what they want their mate to give to them!

“There is a story about a man and wife who were celebrating their golden wedding anniversary-fifty years of married life. Having spent most of the day with relatives and friends at a big party given in their honor, they were back home again. They decided, before retiring, to have a little snack of tea with bread and butter. They went into the kitchen, where the husband opened up a new loaf of bread and handed the end piece (the heel) to his wife. Whereupon she exploded! She said, "For fifty years you have been dumping the heel of the bread on me. I will not take it anymore; this lack of concern for me and what I like." On and on she went in the bitterest of terms, for offering her the heel of the bread. The husband was absolutely astonished at her tirade. When she had finished he said to her quietly, "But it's my favorite piece."

- b. For those who want to help their mate, communication is essential!

Dear Ann Landers:

My husband doesn't talk to me. He just sits there night after night, reading the newspaper or looking at T.V. When I ask him a question, he grunts "huh, or Uh'huh." Sometimes he doesn't even grunt uh'huh. All he really needs is a housekeeper and somebody to sleep with him when he feels like it. He can buy both. There are times when I wonder why he got married.

3. Mutual needs are demanded to be met by one or both.

- a. Attempts are made to force or manipulate the other to respond.
- b. Demands are often made: "I will serve you, if you will serve me!"
- c. Emotional breakdown often adds to the deterioration of the relationship.

4. The relationship ends.

- a. It ends in either divorce or resignation to a "house keeping" relationship.
- b. Both mates seek their needs to be fulfilled elsewhere.

III. The Basics of Communication

A. Make time for communication. (**Eph 5:15-16**)

1. Look carefully at your life and see how you spend your time together! (Ex. TV)

A fascinating experiment on addiction was reported in Good Housekeeping magazine.

Not drug addiction. Not alcohol addiction. Not tobacco or candy addiction. It was on television addiction.

A Detroit newspaper made an offer to 120 families in the city. The families were promised \$500 each if they would agree not to watch TV for one month. Guess how many turned down the offer: 93!

Of the 27 families that said yes, 5 were studied and reported on in the magazine article. Right away you realize it was quite an adjustment for them. Each family had been watching television from 40 to 70 hours a week -- that's between 5.7 and 10 hours a DAY. Think of it! Every day the monotonous sounds and electronic pictures were a continual part of those households -- year in and year out.

Serious pains accompanied the sudden, cold-turkey withdrawal from the plug-in drug. Remarkable things occurred, some almost bizarre. Like the lady who started talking to the cat or the couple who stopped talking to each other altogether.

But some good things also occurred. Books were pulled off the shelf, dusty from neglect, and read. Families played games, listened to the radio, and enjoyed playing records together. In one family two young kids spent some time practicing how to spell their names and addresses!

Miracle of miracles, several actually reported that the younger kids took their baths at night without throwing a fit. And some (better sit down) willingly practiced their lessons.

The result? Well, the "no TV month" families finally had to admit four facts:

1. Their family members became closer.
2. More eyeball-to-eyeball time between parents and children took place.
3. There was a marked increase in patience between family members.
4. Creativity was enhanced.

2. We really do have the time, however we may lack the commitment!

B. Learn to listen.

1. We must control our emotions and not become defensive. (**Jas 1:19-21**)
2. We must learn to concentrate and ask questions.

C. Practice the basics of love. (**1 Cor 13:4-7**)

1. Love "suffers long and is kind."
2. Love "does not seek its own."
3. Love "thinks no evil."
4. Love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

D. Be a trustworthy person. (**Prov 11:12-13**)

1. If you use their faults as a weapon against another or if you cannot control your tongue with others, then people will not be open to you. (**Prov 13:16**)
2. Women can make a terrible mistake here in how they openly talk about their husband. Husbands need to also show they are trustworthy.

D. We must follow God's order of subjection. (**1 Cor 11:3, Eph 5:22-23**)

1. Here is where we show faith in God. Why should husbands be humble and listen to their wives? God is your head and a witness to your actions. (**Mal 2:14**)
2. Wives, what should you do after a discussion and there is a difference between you and your husband on a matter?

Class Discussion:

1. What do some call communication that in fact is not communication at all?
2. What is more important in communication: talking or listening? Discuss!
3. How does the love of God change how we communicate?
4. Make a list of things that hinder communication?
5. How does good communication go along with God's order of headship?
6. How can you know when communication is lacking?

IV. Learning Communication as a family

A. The way we communicate will teach our children how to act in their marriage.

What are we teaching? (**Eph 6:1-4**)

B. In any discipline there must be communication. (**Heb 12:5-6,10-11**)

To My Grown-Up Sons

My hands were busy through the day
I didn't have much time to play
The little games you asked me to
I didn't have much time for you.

I'd wash your clothes, I'd sew and cook
But when you'd bring your picture book
And ask me please to share your fun
I'd say, "A little later, son."

I'd tuck you in all safe at night
And hear your prayers, turn out the light
Then tiptoe softly to the door
I wish I'd stayed a minute more.

For life is short, the years rush past
A little boy grows up so fast
No longer is he at your side
His precious secrets to confide.

The picture books are put away
There are no more games to play
No goodnight kiss, no prayers to hear --
That all belongs to yesteryear.

My hands once busy now lie still
The days are long and hard to fill
I wish I might go back and do
The little things you asked me to.

-- Anonymous

C. Our love for our children will be seen in the time we take to teach them.

1. What we consider “wasted time” may mean everything to our children.

“It is said of Boswell, the famous biographer of Samuel Johnson, that he often referred to a special day in his childhood when his father took him fishing. The day was fixed in his adult mind, and he often reflected upon many of the things his father had taught him in the course of their fishing experience together. After having heard of that particular excursion so often, it occurred to someone much later to check the journal that Boswell's father kept and determine what had been said about the fishing trip from the parental perspective. Turning to that date, the reader found only one sentence entered: "Gone fishing today with my son; a day wasted."”

2. Many children do not believe their parents listen. Do you listen?

Take a Moment to Listen

Take a moment to listen today
To what your children are trying to say;
Listen today, whatever you do
Or they won't be there to listen to you.
Listen to their problems, listen for their needs,
Praise their smallest triumphs, praise their smallest deeds;
Tolerate their chatter, amplify their laughter,
Find out what's the matter, find out what they're after.
But tell them that you love them, every single night
And though you scold them, be sure you hold them;
Tell them "Everything's all right;
Tomorrow's looking bright!"
Take a moment to listen today
To what your children are trying to say;
Listen today, whatever you do
And they will come back to listen to you.

“A Reader's Digest article, "Hard Truths About Day Care", concludes: "What the very young want, and urgently need, child development experts agree, is not education or socialization, but the affection and unhurried attention of their parents. The deepest problem with paid child rearing is that someone is being asked to do for money what very few of us are able to do for any reason other than love.””

Conclusion: We must not become an island completely centered on ourselves.

A. If we are to do God's will we must take the time to work with others and listen.

B. These same principles will also make us effective in influencing the world for Christ! (1 Cor 9:22) Are you listening?

Dear Ann Landers:

"Please come home early." This was the most unreasonable request ever made by my wife of almost 40 years.

She didn't make this request often. It came mostly on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, but it seemed that I always had so many things to do that in spite of her gentle urging, I rarely came home early.

I don't want to give the impression that I was never at home. I was at home a lot. We rarely did anything out of the ordinary. We enjoyed the kids and the grandchildren. We

listened to music, read the paper, and had meals together. Sometimes we would just talk about how the day had gone.

Now I know why she asked me so often to "Please come home early." She wasn't just lonely, she was lonely for me. When she passed away a short time ago, I learned firsthand what loneliness is all about.

I have a supportive family and many good friends. I'm free now to go places and do things, but I'm lonesome. Lonesome for her.

Now that she's gone, I've found the time to "come home early," but there is nobody to come home to. There is nobody to do those simple little things with, such as watching the evening news, listening to music, and reading the paper. And nobody cares how my day went.

If I should get a call from the good Lord to "Please come home early," I won't fight it.
-- Lonesome in K.C.