

# Communication In The Home

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Have you heard about the loving husband who cleaned the house every Saturday morning while his wife slept in? For ten years he exerted his labor of love, and never mentioned his selfless service. Imagine the husband's consternation when his wife finally exploded: *"If you think I'm such a terrible housekeeper, why don't you clean the house every day?"*

This story is probably fictitious, but it's not far from some real-life situations. It illustrates the importance of good communication between husband and wife. Industry spends millions of dollars annually to help employees communicate more effectively, but little is being done to alleviate the problem in the home.

Most counselors have traced incompatibility in many areas of home life to lack of good communication.

## I. REASONS WHY WE HAVE COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS!

- To talk and listen with understanding is the simplest definition of communication.
- Listening is not passive; it is concentrated outreach with ears and mind and heart to understand what another person is saying.

### A. Because most communication is on a very shallow level.

1. It never reaches the depths that God intended for honest sharing with others.
2. We readily cloak our feelings with glib words, underlying meanings sometimes slip out through our glances, our gestures, and our posture. Feelings cannot be entirely suppressed.
3. We fail to share what we feel. Someone has said that communication between husband and wife is an exploration of the depths of each other's feelings, an experience and adventure in each other's emotions.

### B. Because communication can be very confusing!

A cartoon read: *"I know you believe you understand what you think I said, but I'm not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant."*

That may sound like both parties are confused. When you talk to someone, you may convey several of these six things at once:

1. what you think you are saying,
2. what you meant to say,
3. what you actually said,
4. what the other person heard,
5. what the other person says about what you said,

6. what you think the other person said about what you said.

**C. Because we may give conflicting messages:**

1. Others understand one thing from our eyes,
2. another message may have come through our gestures,
3. and yet another message came from our words.

***When the message is not consistent in all forms, confusion or misunderstanding results.***

***When you say something to your wife, you think she heard it, but her mind was dealing with more than your actual words.***

4. Sometimes we say things casually and expect the listener to understand exactly what we meant.
5. We take for granted that what we said, what we meant, and what we felt is understood.

**D. Because of our own perspective and failures.**

1. Often the reason for our misunderstanding is that we filter speech through our own feelings and perspectives, bringing about a misconception of what the other person truly said.
2. Sometimes we do not hear what is said because we are busy preparing our **rebuttal** to the incoming message.
3. Sometimes our problem is inability to put our feelings into words.
4. Acquiring verbal skill takes work.  
A person may say, "I know how I feel, but I don't know how to express it."

***After years of counseling, I am convinced that a prominent cause of broken marriages is the suppression of true feelings.***

5. Estranged couples have never learned to express and accept the innermost feelings of their hearts.
6. For fear of hurting the partner or exposing a personal weakness, feelings are submerged until a crisis forces an explosion that shatters the relationship.
7. The sudden shock unnerves everyone, but the cause had existed all along.

## **II. REASONS WHY COMMUNICATION LACKS DEPTH!**

We will look at five levels on which we communicate. I like to think of them as *circles rather than levels*. Most marriages never pass the third level of communication: they are willing to talk about *places, things, and ideas*, but shrink back from personal involvement.

**Little contact of spirit with spirit is ever made.**

#### **A. The outer circle of cliches:**

1. We ask, *"How are you doing? Glad to see you. Looking fine. Hope you are feeling well. How's your family?"*
2. Most of the time we are saying nothing, and do not even desire an answer.
3. At this level you neither learn anything nor feel anything.

#### **B. The second level of communication is repetition of facts.**

1. *"Did you hear that? The news today is pretty grim! Wow, the weather was sure bad today!"*
2. This level conveys publicly known information about events.
3. This takes up much of the talk in homes, maybe out of the 37 minutes a day of conversation, which surveys say is normal, most of it is this kind of trivia.

#### **C. The third level evidences willingness to express your own judgment or ideas.**

1. *"His statement was very critical."*
2. *"I won't vote for that."*

#### **D. Deeper yet (# 4) is the frank expression of your inner heart!**

(I Jh 1:7; James 5:16)

1. *"To be honest, honey, I feel a little hurt."*
2. *"Dear, please share with me your deepest thoughts, desires, and longings. What do you wish we would change?"*

#### **E. This innermost circle of communication (# 5) bares the heart with no ulterior motives!**

4. It seeks complete peace with a conscience at peace.
5. It has nothing to hide, but both hearts are totally open for they both work at being totally transparent. No hidden agendas --- No hidden attitudes!

### **III. REASONS WHY WE HURT OTHERS!**

The Bible says, *"If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man."* None of us is perfect, but it always helps to aim high. Consider James chapter three! (James 3:1-18)

#### **A. We don't understand the great power of words.**

1. We are reminded throughout Scriptures of the tremendous power of our words. Job complained to his friends, *"How long will you vex my soul and break me in pieces with words?"* (Job 19:2) How many wives and husbands have felt that like?

2. How many of us have understand the depth of meaning in Proverbs 18:21?  
*“Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”*
3. All through Scripture we see that what we say builds or destroys people.  
 This is especially true with two people living together intimately.

**B. We don't understand that marriage is the thrill of the sharing of two hearts and lives.**

1. God's major purpose in marriage is companionship. (Mal. 2:11-16)
2. By giving Adam and Eve to one another, God was meeting the problem of loneliness. Yet most married people are lonely under their own roof!  
 How sad!
3. For Adam and Eve to have real companionship they had to share their deep, true feelings toward each other.
4. A breakdown in communication disrupts the flow of life. Often the result in marriage is seen in clamming up, or blowing up.  
**Devastation and heartache is the result.**

**IV. HELPS AND HINDRANCES TO GOOD COMMUNICATION!**

**A. Things that hinder the sharing of our hearts and lives!**

1. BUSYNESS threatens good communication. When the pace of life gets hectic, the finer things of life often get trampled. We must slow down, quit living for *things* and live to minister to others. (Consider Mark 4 and Luke 8... the soil of the heart.)
2. INDIFFERENCE is so often the culprit. Men can so easily be insensitive to the needs of their families because they don't really hear them. In many cases our families do not know how to communicate with us. We don't respond well, and they don't know how to get our attention, or to reach our hearts.
3. IRRITATION closes the door to good communication! *Emotional irritation puts fuzziness in the transmitter and static in the receiver.* Ask the Lord in prayer what you should say. Seek to answer as Christ would answer. Spend time in prayer before you answer. Study to answer! You'll save a lot of heartache. (Prov. 16:32; 25:28; 18:13; 15:28; James 1:19-20)
4. Preoccupation with the wrong PRIORITIES in life will bring us many problems. Most of us can only do one thing at a time -- be sure to give time to communicate with your wife. (I Pet. 3:7)
5. Seeking only "SAFE" subjects can be a LOSS! Do you subconsciously avoid conversational areas that have produced fireworks in the past? These things can only be cleared up as we determine to communicate and solve problems. (Consider the four rules for good communication.)
6. A strong streak of personal INDEPENDENCE is a hindrance for some couples. Selfishness seriously impairs the sharing that God intended for marriage. ***Two remain two instead of becoming one.***

7. CHILDREN are often a hindrance to building good communication, unity of heart and oneness. Parents may be living for the child. The spouse must be first.

***Children are not secure because you love them; they are secure because you love one another!***

8. PRIDE is a chief hindrance, if not the foundation of all sin. It is **pride** that causes us to clam up, or to blow up. (James 4:6-10; I Pet. 5:5-6)

***Because of maintaining our, so called, rights, we allow our hurt pride to control us!***

9. HYPOCRISY is another hindrance. We may call it dignity, or sophistication, not letting our real feelings show.

It is possible you have avoided this modern masking of self, but most of us find ourselves at times pretending to be better than we are. This easily extends into family life, covering our real selves. Though our intention is good the affect is **alienation. To be free we need to be completely honest.**

#### **B. Things that will build our intimacy, sharing and joys.**

1. Speak CLEARLY! Along with this “say what you mean and mean what you say.” This is partly a matter of enunciation and partly a matter of taking time to see that your message is heard.
  - Respect and consideration are shown by careful speech.
  - Show honor and appreciation, then the attention of the listener will be given.
2. Speak GENTLY until your message gets through. We men too readily **retreat** or we **sulk** when the conversational weather gets turbulent. (Eph. 4:32)
3. Strive to UNDERSTAND your wife more than you seek to be understood by her. This **outgoing effort** will generate big dividends as your wife responds to you with her heart of acceptance and love.
4. SHARE times together! Take time to talk and to observe one another’s interests. Sharing activities opens new insights and deeper appreciation. (Phil. 2:3-4)
5. Take time to unhurriedly PRAY together. **Nothing will bring you closer.** As you learn to pray together you will be drawn together. During prayer you will sense one another’s heart of concern, humility, spiritual aspirations, and divine love will draw you closer to one another.
6. Develop MUTUAL interests! This may require a sacrifice of preferred pastimes, but the resulting companionship will strengthen the sense of oneness and awareness of how to meet each other’s needs.
  - a. God gave a husband and wife to each other to make them more than they could be singly.
  - b. The completion of each cannot take place until they learn to share their mutual being and work for the good of the other.

- c. The personal areas that are kept private have no opportunity for growth. **Why not try God's plan?**

**Conclusions:**

1. Marriage, love, and communication cannot be separated from God without destroying them or making them far less than God meant them to be.  
(Matt 6:33)

2. **Maybe our problem is:**

- a. deeply rooted bitterness,
- b. feigned love,
- c. a spirit of resentment and hostility toward life itself,
- d. a spirit of revenge, scorn, and a showing of the attitudes of contempt?

**These all are poisons of the soul that God and your mate can help dispel - if you seek help and are willing to change.**

3. Men we need to be open to God's leading, His Word and His will.
- a. We must be transparent before Him that He may lead in our lives.  
(I Jh 1:7)
  - b. We must open our hearts to the search-light of His Word and allow the Holy Spirit to prompt us, deal with us, and build our lives. (Psa. 19;14)
  - c. We need to see our inner selves as God sees us and then quickly and thoroughly confess our failings, shortcomings and sin. (Psa 32, 51)
4. We must allow our wives to come into the inner recesses of our hearts and lives and thus together build mutual intimacy, victory in the Lord, and wholeness.

***Let us not allow continued defeat, failure and waywardness  
in our communication with our wives and families.***

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