

Chapter 15

CHRISTIAN FAMILY 5 ***COMMUNICATION IN THE FAMILY***

SECTION 1: PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.
(Ephesians 4:29)

- I. Good communication is essential in establishing and maintaining healthy relationships. What is communication and what does it really mean to communicate effectively? The word communication means to impart, to reveal, to share, or to be in touch. Many times communication comes through a person's body language or the way they act more than in the words they say. Communication is not just the words we speak, but it is the giving of yourself to the other person.
- II. There are some essentials to good, open communication that we need to understand as we study Communication in the Family.
 - A. In order to communicate effectively with those we are in relationship with, acceptance on two levels will be very important. First of all there will need to be acceptance of yourself. That is to know who you are in God; that you are unique and special with abilities and gifts. Then we must have acceptance of each other. We should be careful that we do not expect too much too soon from the other person. Rather we should learn to see and to recognize potential and to see the good qualities that are in the other person.
 - B. Another essential in good communication is learning to be a good listener! Practice this by being attentive and even eager (listen with eyes also) as the other person is talking or sharing with us. Ask questions and give responses that show you are really aware of what is being said.
 - C. Being honest with one another is also very important. In trying to be honest with the other person it is important that we are being honest with love and not just criticizing and trying to correct and change things we don't personally like in them. (Ephesians 4:15)
 - D. In order for communication to grow and improve in a relationship there needs to be a growing trust and confidence in one another. Always honor one another before others. If the one you are in relationship with shares something with the other person, will they hear it later as a joke or a "put down" in a gathering? If the one you are in relationship with shares some of their deep feelings, will there be undue criticism or unasked for advice? When a person gives away some of the intimate parts of their heart in sharing with another person, it is precious and should not be treated lightly. (Proverbs 31:11; Romans 12:10; Ephesians 5:22-29)
 - E. In all relationships there will be times when there is a conflict of some type. When this happens and the relationship is going through a difficult time, someone in the relationship

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must be willing to take the initiative in restoring unity. (Matthew 5:23-24; Mark 11:25)

- F. In order to grow in good, healthy communication in a relationship, there must be a commitment of yourself to do your part, a commitment of your time to work on the communicating, and a commitment of effort to follow through so that healthy communication is maintained.

III. Communication between men and women can sometimes be more difficult because of the differences in their needs and how they may perceive communication itself.

- A. Men tend to be more concerned about “doing” than in just “being.” They may find security in building what they consider to be walls of protection and provision around their family. They may substitute doing things for saying words.
- B. Men tend to think in logical lines. If there is a problem, they want to come up with a solution, preferably as quickly as possible. Once they’ve done that, they may see no reason to go on talking. Women like to talk things through.
- C. Most men, while they may feel very deeply, are loathe to talk about it. As small boys, they tend to be brought up with the idea that it is just not “macho” or manly to cry, to admit to being afraid, or shy about anything.
- D. For many men, having a conversation can be like a competitive event, like seeing who can climb the highest wall, who has the fastest car or computer, or who can run the fastest; or who goes to the gym more often. To talk endlessly about their problems is simply to admit weakness.
- E. Women on the other hand are more interested “being.” They think about building a nest, a place of security, for their families and functioning as a wife and mother.
- F. For women, right now is very important. Whatever is going on in their life at the present time is the most important thing; what they are doing, how they are feeling. And they want to talk about it!
- G. Women tend to talk more than men; they ask more questions and initiate more conversations. They’re also better at discussing their feelings. Women are also more inclined to have close friends with whom they can share all their innermost secrets.

IV. Communication with children is also important in family life. Following are some ways that this communication can be more effective.

- A. Treat them as real people by showing respect for them. Accept them for who they are now, at the age they are now.
- B. Listen to them with your full attention. Whenever possible, stop what you are doing when they are talking to you. Affirm them by letting them know that they are important enough to you for you to give them the time they need to share experiences, hurts and joys with you.
- C. Set aside quality time to spend with them, individually if possible. Do not forget that quantity time is also important. Allow and encourage your children to be honest with you. The children need the freedom to talk about things that are important to them... things

that are troubling them.

- D. Be excited about the things that excite them. The things they are excited or concerned about may not always seem important to you as an adult, but they are very important to the child.
 - E. Know what your children are involved in; music, sports, school activities, and of course their involvement at church. Be as supportive as you can of their activities and involvements, with time, interest, and finance.
 - F. Take the time to get to know their friends. Be careful of making judgments before you get to know the friends the children have.
- V. Some guidelines for good communication between siblings within the family.
- A. Give one another sincere acceptance. They are not just like you, they will not respond just like you. They are unique in God. Show genuine respect for who they are and what they do.
 - B. Share your hopes and dreams with each other.
 - C. Be there for them when no one else is. Be loyal to each other in bad times as well as the good.
 - D. Be careful to settle disagreements as quickly as possible.
 - E. To grow in good communication it will be important to spend time together. Spend time doing things you both like to do. Spend time doing the things the other person likes to do. Attend functions the other sibling is involved in; sports, music, art, church activities.
 - F. Do good things for one another. Remember birthdays, special occasions, or just a special surprise.
 - G. Build trust in one another by keeping confidences.

SECTION 2: COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

***The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands
the foolish one tears hers down. (Proverbs 14:1)***

- I. **COMMITMENT TO COMMUNICATE.** If we are committed to relationships we must be committed to the communication that is necessary for building those relationships and resolving conflicts in relationships.
- A. Communication takes time. Communication requires effort. Communication requires sacrifice. Invest in good communication.
 - B. Communication is both verbal (words) and non-verbal (actions and body language).

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- C. Communication is not just talking, it is also listening. Good listening is a skill that can be learned.
- D. Words are powerful. Words have the power of life and death. Words can change people, words can change how people think and feel. Use words wisely, to help and not harm those you love. (Proverbs 18:21; James 3:1-12)
- E. The goal of communication is to understand and be understood. You don't understand exactly how another person feels.. Words can help bring you closer to understanding.

The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit. (Proverbs 18:21)

II. SOME GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE FAMILY COMMUNICATION:

- A. Day to day consistency is important. If you don't keep the lines of communication open, how will you communicate when there's a crisis? Husband and wife, MAKE TIME ON A DAILY BASIS FOR COMMUNICATION. Make time for communication with each child, PERSONALLY AND INDIVIDUALLY.
- B. Be polite at home. Say "please" and "thank you." Speak to each family member each time you see them. Say "Hello" and "Goodbye." "Good Morning" and "Good Night" and observe rules of politeness and common courtesy at home.
- C. Don't make comparisons between family members. Each is an individual with strengths and weaknesses. Having to "Live up to" an older, more athletic, or smarter brother or sister is too heavy a burden to bear.
- D. Show that honesty is important. Be honest. Don't lie, cheat, or steal. Live honestly and expect honesty in return.
- E. When you are wrong, admit it. "I was wrong. I'm sorry."
- F. Build up those who are close to you and important to you.
 - 1. Let them know that your love and acceptance is unconditional.
 - 2. Give praise and recognition for good qualities and achievements. Don't focus only on appearance, athletic skill, or performance.
 - 3. Don't emphasize appearance or other factors that the person is not responsible for or can't be changed.
 - 4. Identify and emphasize strengths, not weaknesses.

III. LISTENING IS COMMUNICATION, TOO!

- A. Why is it so difficult to be a good listener?
 - 1. Most would rather speak than listen. We like to say what we believe, feel, and think.

2. Many of us filter the things that other people say through our own prejudices, opinions, and feelings.
 3. We find it difficult to listen because we “second-guess” other people. We do this when we fail to allow a spouse or others to put a period on the end of a sentence. Do you know anyone who is always finishing your sentences for you? (Proverbs 18:13)
 4. Often we fail to listen because we are threatened by what we may hear. It may mean we have to change our ideas, ways of doing things. If I listen, they may listen and they’ll begin to really know me.
- B. We must learn to listen.
1. Someone has said, “God gave us one mouth and two ears, which suggests that we ought to listen twice as much as we talk.”
 2. Others need to be heard to feel respected for who they are and what they have to say.

IV. SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN RELATIONSHIPS.

- A. Realize and accept that listening is a difficult skill to acquire.
1. To hear actual words spoken is one thing. To understand is something else again.
 2. Do not be quick to say “I understand...” if you do not. Until you’ve walked in their shoes...
- B. Over ride the “tune out” button. It seems men come into the world equipped with a “tune out” button. The next time a domestic conversation heats up make a special effort to hear what was said.
- C. Check your listening. You might say something like “Did I hear you correctly?” “Did you mean to say....?” “What I think you said is this...”
- D. Be alert to non-verbal signals.
1. One study has said that 93 per cent of our communication is non-verbal and only 7 per cent is verbal.
 2. Example: a husband decided he needed to do a better job of communicating with his wife. He stopped by a florist, picked up an expensive bouquet and handed it to his wife as he entered the door. His only verbal remark was “Here, these are for you.,” which he grunted as he handed her the flowers. He promptly retired to the den and turned on the TV. She was not impressed and it’s not hard to figure out why.

V. CONCLUSION

It has been said that listening is the cornerstone of all communication. Listening may be very difficult for you. Sometimes honest listening can be downright painful, but it will lead you out of your self-centeredness. It will force you to reconsider your attitudes. It will start you down the road to the development of a wholesome relationship and that’s surely worth all the trouble and

time. It's a beautiful thing when we learn to break through the pride, fear and self-centeredness that keeps us from being sensitive listeners.

SECTION 3: CONFLICT PATTERNS

Conflict is a normal part of most relationships, but we need to understand some healthy ways of handling it. The word "conflict" means "to strike together." Because each person in any relationship is unique and because what each person brings to the relationship is unique, there will be conflicts. But this is not all bad. There are some advantages to healthy conflict.

I. Some advantages of healthy conflict.

- A. Conflict prevents boredom. It can help us to see things from a different perspective.
- B. Conflict brings differences out into the open so they can be dealt with.
- C. Happily married couples are not those who are identical in behavior, thinking and attitudes. They are couples who know how to make creative use of their differences.
- D. Conflict enables married couples or people in other relationships to break through the barriers of a superficial relationship.
- E. Successful resolution of a conflict can enable a married couple to explore new and exciting possibilities for their marriage. It can also help to enlarge the scope of other relationships.

II. The Struggle for Understanding and Closeness

Conflict develops as we struggle to know and understand one another. It is the result of our desire to develop relationships with each other. Unfortunately many day to day conflicts are never resolved.

- A. Conflict can be the result of differences in tastes, background, temperament, and training.
- B. Conflict results when two people compete for control.
- C. Conflict is the result of assumptions and unfulfilled expectations.
- D. Conflict is the result of poor listening skills.

III. Conflict Patterns

We all learn to deal with conflict in a variety of ways. Our personalities, background, etc. affect the way we face up to conflicts and the steps forward.

- A. **Evasion.** Evasion techniques include leaving the room, refusing to speak, changing the subject and attempting to minimize the importance of the issue. People who choose this technique often do so to protect themselves from emotional pain. Most of the time, it is the least helpful of these patterns in terms of resolving the conflict.

- B. **Conquest.** Persons who choose this way of resolving conflict are determined to rule or ruin. They must have their way at all costs. Conquest tactics include intimidation, belittling, entrapment, recalling past hurts and wounds and blaming. Although a person who does this may appear to be self-assured and confident, it is possible that it is actually an attempt to cover up insecurity.
 - C. **Surrender.** People who choose this way of resolving conflict often do not want to risk confrontation. They desire peace and they think the way to have it is to yield to the wishes of the spouse or the other person. When it becomes a regular pattern, issues tend to be swept under the rug. This person may also develop a great deal of inward hostility, behave as a martyr or become heavily burdened with a sense of guilt.
 - D. **Compromise.** Both parties make concessions. This can leave one or both parties resentful of having to give in more than the other party. Sometimes values are compromised. Such a feeling of resignation could prevent the marriage or other relationships from reaching the level of satisfaction that might otherwise be possible.
 - E. **Resolution.** Situations, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors are changed as the result of open and sensitive communication. When changes take place, all involved in the relationship are satisfied with the solution
- IV. Conflict is not always wrong.
- A. The Bible says "*In your anger do not sin.*" (Ephesians 4:26). It does not say that anger is always sinful.
 - B. Some of the most exemplary people in the Bible had their moments of conflict. (Acts 15:39-40).
 - C. "Love is not the absence of conflict; conflict is not the absence of love." - Howard G. Hendricks

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

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1. If acceptance of self is, in fact, important in building good, healthy communication in relationships, why do you believe it is important?
2. Conflict is not always wrong. If that is true, how can we use it to build our communication with others? How can it be used to bring harm to the relationship?