

SOLVING MARRIAGE PROBLEMS: CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND COMMUNICATION

Introduction: Communication Breakdown in the Family *Eph 4:25-32*

Conflict Resolution: Clean the Slate

A. First, get the log out of your own eye. *Matt 7:1-5*

1. The key to your relationship with each other is your relationship with God (and vice versa).

1 Pet 3:7; Matt 5:23-24

2. Focus upon your duties rather than your rights: expectations! *Jas 4:1-4*

3. Seek forgiveness where you have wronged your spouse. (“The Seven A’s of Confession” from *The Peacemaker**) *Matt 5:23-24; 7:3-5; Prov 28:13*

- Address everyone involved.

- Avoid if, but, and maybe.

- Admit specifically where you were wrong.

- Acknowledge the hurt.

- Accept the consequences.

- Alter your behavior.

- Ask for forgiveness.

B. Grant forgiveness when you have been wronged.

1. You have no choice! *Matt 6:14; 18:21ff; Eph 4:32*

2. Forgive as God has forgiven you: freely and unconditionally. In what sense does God remember our sin no more? *Jer 31:34*

3. “The Four Promises of Forgiveness” (from *The Peacemaker**).

- I will not think about this incident. *1 Cor 13:5; Jer 31:34*

- I will not bring this incident up and use it against you.

- I will not talk to others about this incident.

- I will not allow this incident to stand between us or to hinder our relationship.

C. Keep short accounts.

1. Don't let the sun go down on your anger. *Eph 4:26-27*
2. Beware of letting a root of bitterness spring up! *Heb 12:15*

D. Learn to control anger. *Prov 29:11, 20, 22; 25:28; 15:1; Rom 12:17-21; Eph 4:31-32*

1. Neither vent your anger nor bottle it up. Attack the problem instead of people.
2. Learn self-control. The legitimate use of "time-outs". *Prov 17:14; 25:28*
3. Understand the difference between righteous and unrighteous anger. *Eph 4:26*
4. Deal with the heart of your anger. *1 Cor 6:19-20; Rom 12:17-21; 14:19*

E. Steps for confronting sin. *Matt 18:15-20*

1. Overlook minor offenses. *1 Pet. 4:8; Prov 19:11*
2. Talk in private.

3. Take one or two others along.

4. Tell it to the church.

5. Treat him as an unbeliever.

Keys to Communication

A. The goal of communication: love. *Phil 2:1-5; Rom 15:2*

B. Learn to listen in love. *Jas 1:19*

1. God listens to you. *Isa 59:1*

2. Are you more concerned about being heard, or hearing? *Phil. 2:1-5; 1 Pet 3:7*

3. Develop good listening skills. *1 Cor 13:4-7*

4. Learn to draw your spouse out. *Prov 20:5*

C. Learn to speak in love.

1. God's ideal for marriage is intimacy and openness. *Gen 2:25*
2. Is total honesty always called for? *Prov 18:2; 10:19; Eph 4:29*
3. Learn to communicate on a deeper level.
4. Use your speech to build up. *Eph 4:29; 5:19; Prov 16:21, 24; 10:11, 21; 31:26; Phil 4:8*
5. Do you know what style of communication best reaches your spouse?
6. Timing can be important. *Prov 25:11; 27:14; 15:23;*

D. Communication killers. "Circuit jammers" (Wayne Mack).

1. Lies. *Matt 5:33-36; Eph 4:25*
2. Busyness and distractions.

3. Self-centered conversation: interrupting, monopolizing, hasty speech, unnecessary correction, boasting. *Prov 18:13, 18:2; 10:18; 20:20; 27:2; Jas 1:19; Eccl 5:2*
4. Destructive “unsafe” speech.
 - Angry, cruel, hurtful words. *Matt 5:21-22; Prov 10:11; 12:18; 15:1, 28; 16:21, 23-24; Jas 3:5-8; Eph 4:29, 31*
 - Bullying, threatening and manipulating.
 - Nagging, negativity, grumbling, and public criticism harmful body language and other non-verbal communication. *1 Pet 3:1-2; Prov 25:24 Prov 6:12-15; 10:10; 16:30*
5. Refusal to communicate.
6. Bitterness and dwelling on the past. *1 Cor 13:5*

Practical Ways to Build up Your Communication

- A. Set regular times in which you will give undivided attention to each other.
 1. Daily debriefing.
 2. Bi-weekly date.

3. Semi-annual get away.

B. Worship together.

C. A communication exercise.

1. First the husband explains the wife's point of view.

2. Then the wife explains the husband's point of view. (Same rules)

3. Then the wife responds to the husband.

4. Then the husband responds to the wife.

D. Set goals together.

E. Have fun together.

F. The same principles of communication and conflict resolution apply in other relationships:
i.e., children.

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Books

Mack, Wayne, *Preparing for Marriage God's Way*. For homework ideas see pp. 71,74-76.

Mack, Wayne, *Your Family God's Way*. For homework ideas see pp. 130-132,161,175-176, 192-196, 225-226.

Sande, Ken, *The Peacemaker*.



Audios

Newheiser, Jim. "Biblical Peacemaking Series."