

Study 0087

Practical Issues in Marriage (3.4.1)

In the last study, we looked at the concept of Communion, being the third of the five ‘C’s, as it concerns Christian marriage. We noted that the word ‘communion’ as used in the bible (**1 Corinthians 10:16-21; 2 Corinthians 6:14; 13:14**), connotes intimate friendship; having fellowship with, or sharing in something with, someone; partaking in something with someone; participating in an activity with someone; and, partnership in a thing or project. We saw that biblical friendship is what is meant in communion, and it is a union which can never, and should never be broken. Such a union is not a ‘fair weather’ kind of friendship; but excels any filial relationship, including the children from the marriage! We saw that the bible speaks of our union with Christ in His suffering, death, and resurrection life; hence, in Christian marriage, a man and his wife are in a union which involves their sharing in, partaking of, participating in, and partnering in each other’s lives, in good times and in bad time, in times of success and in times of failure, etc. For a man and his wife to truly enjoy communion with each other, they must first be in communion with God and Christ; for it is their vertical relationship with God and Christ, which makes their horizontal relationship with each other, a workable relationship. Their vertical relationship with God and Christ, is made possible because they have shared in the suffering, death, resurrection, and life of Christ; the result of being born again and living the crucified life.

Communion in marriage means that the pre-eminent, closest, or best friend of a married couple is each other! They should, as a result, affectionately share, partake, and participate in each other’s pains, sorrows, trials, burdens, joys, success, etc. Where there is communion: (a) a spouse takes a decision with the best interest of the other spouse in mind; (b) a spouse is sure that the other spouse will not cheat on them; (c) a spouse will not imagine that the other spouse could poison them; (d) a spouse will share in, and own the burdens of the other spouse; and, (e) sex in the marriage further unites and unifies the couple. Communion is dealt a death blow where: (a) there is infidelity by a spouse; (b) things known to third Parties are concealed from one’s spouse; (c) a spouse poisons the meal of the other spouse; (d) one spouse is left to carry his or her burdens alone; and, (e) sex is used as a weapon or object of manipulation. To enhance communion therefore, a couple must seek first, communion with God and Christ! They must afterwards seek to develop their relationship with each other by being open to one another, and selflessly give of themselves to each other.

We now turn to Communication—the fourth ‘C’.

Communication

Communication is what happens when a person is able to express himself or herself to another person in a manner that ensures that what is being expressed is received as it should be received. The commonest form of expression in communication is speech or talking; but there are other forms, which include body language, facial expressions, eyebrow movements, short message service (sms), e-mail, letters, etc. Communication is effective if, when I say “Yes”, I actually mean “Yes”, and I am understood to have said “Yes”! When some people say “Yes”, however, they actually mean “Maybe” or “No”, and this can be very confusing. In **Genesis 11:1**, the bible tells us that all the people in the earth after the flood were of “*one language and one speech*”. Some translations put it as, “*one language and of one accent and mode of expression*” (**Amplified**), “*spoke a single language and used the same words*” (**NLT**), and, “*one vocabulary*” (**Moffat**). The implication of this statement in the bible is

clear from what follows in **Genesis 11:2-8** concerning what they said and did on one hand, and what God said and did, on the other hand.

1. All the people, without an exception, knew and understood what was being said by any other person; hence, when they said they were going to build a tower that will reach unto heaven they understood what was being said and they began to build to achieve that goal.
2. Their single language and oneness of speech was a uniting and unifying factor. This was God's own statement, and He indicated that with such a unity and cohesion, there was nothing that the people wanted to do that they would not achieve.
3. The only way God was able to stop the building project which the people had begun, and whose goal of staying together and not scatter was in direct contradiction to God's command in **Genesis 1:28**, to fill or cover the earth, was therefore, to make it impossible for them to have one language and be able to understand what each one was saying.

With respect to marriage, we can infer that for as long as a married couple are able to speak the same language and the same words, that is, have the same vocabulary, there is nothing they want to achieve that they cannot achieve! Also, if you want to scatter a married couple, make them unable to understand what they are saying to each other! It is therefore important is for a man and his wife to operate in a manner that they know exactly what they are saying to each other. There should be no ambiguity in their speech to each other, otherwise there will be confusion in their marriage, and they will be unable to achieve anything worth achieving! It is not enough for a man and his wife to speak the same language; they must also speak the same words (**Matthew 16:5-12**). It is very dangerous to a marriage, for one person to be speaking the language of the Spirit, and the other, speak the language of the flesh (**1 Corinthians 2:9-16; John 3:6**). Again, we note from **Genesis 11:1-8** that speaking with one voice promotes unity between a man and his wife, and that is where God's blessings are abundantly poured forth upon them, their children, and the works of their hands, provided their unity is in line with God's will (**Psalms 133:1-3; Acts 5:1-10**).

There are factors which may impede the effectiveness of communication between two people, also known as 'noise'. These factors are called 'noise' because they interfere with the actual message, causing distortion to the message, and making it difficult, if not impossible for the person to whom it is sent to be able to correctly receive or discern what is actually intended. Such distortions do not allow for effective communication between a married couple. 'Noise' in communication includes a person's exposure in life, his experiences, his educational background, the environment in which he grew up, his inability to correctly interpret tone of voice and the medium of communication, and, his personal idiosyncrasies which he has developed over the years, to mention a few. For example, if a man has experienced women who say "No", but who really meant "Yes"; he is going to take "No" from his wife to mean "Yes"! Also, if a woman had never been refused anything by her wealthy parents, she is likely to disregard her husband's words of caution on her grandiose expenses. Again, if a man believes that a woman should be seen and not be heard, he would never pay attention to what his wife has to say to him. Another example, would be if a woman perceives that speaking with a high tone of voice is chastisement to which she is averse, her husband's high tone of voice which may seek to drive home a point which she is not receiving when he is speaking gently will equally be misread, and the essence of the husband's message or communication is lost. For these reasons, it is imperative that spouses submit themselves to the working/dealings of the Holy Spirit in their lives (**James 3:2-12; Acts 2:1-4**); make up their minds to give up their idiosyncrasies and strange ideas about marriage and discard any impediments to their being able to effectively communicate

(**Matthew 12:33-37**); and, seek to understand and be tolerant of the other spouse (**Luke 6:41-45**). There should be temperance in their conduct and conversations (**Proverbs 15:1-2; 25:15; 16:14**), and they should learn to speak the words of God (**Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16; Proverbs 25:11; 15:23; Isaiah 50:4**). The wagging of the finger at the other spouse should be considered an anathema; so also, the speaking into the face of the other spouse; as well as speaking words that will set-off or upset the other spouse. Indeed, spouses should learn to speak words “*always with grace, seasoned with salt*” (**Colossians 4:6; Luke 4:22**).

ASSIGNMENT

Please discuss the questions below, and raise issues for prayers therefrom. Also, intercede for marriages of people you know.

1. What possible impediments can there be to effective communication between a man and his wife; and how can they be dealt with?
2. How can married couples develop effective communication between each other?
3. Are you aware of any marriage in which there is communication breakdown? Take that marriage to God in prayer!