

Study 0088

Practical Issues in Marriage (3.4.2)

We began to look at the fourth ‘C’ (Communication), in the last study, focusing on five main areas: (a) what communication is generally, (b) what effective communication is more specifically, (c) the value of effective communication, (d) impediments to communication, and, (e) what a man and his wife must do to eliminate ‘noise’ and achieve effective communication. We defined communication as what happens when a person expresses himself or herself through speech, body language, facial expressions, eyebrow movements, sms, letter, etc., to another person in a manner that seeks to ensure that what is being expressed is received as it should. Communication becomes effective, if when I say “Yes”, I actually mean “Yes”, and it is received as “Yes” by the person to whom it is being communicated; anything else is ineffective and confusion! Effective communication therefore requires that both the sender of a message and the receiver of the message are of “*one language and one speech*” (**Genesis 11:1**); that is, they speak the same language, use the same words or vocabulary, and, communicate at the same spiritual frequency, and thus perfectly understand each other—no ambiguity whatsoever! We also noted that the value of effective communication is in the achievement of unity between a man and his wife, which leads to their ability to achieve anything they decide on achieving, provided it is in line with the word of God, as well as in enabling the achievement of effective communion! The reverse is unfortunately, also true; that is, if a man and his wife are unable to effectively communicate with each other, they will scatter and work across purposes, thereby defeating one of the purposes for which marriage was instituted by God. It is in the place of such unity and communion between a man and his wife that God’s blessings are abundantly poured forth upon them and all that pertains to them (**Psalm 133:1-3**). Finally, we observed that there are ‘noises’ which impede effective communication between a man and his wife, and distort the message being sent by one spouse to the other, resulting in inability to correctly discern what is being said. Impediments to effective communication include; the exposure, experience, environment, educational level, and idiosyncrasies of both spouses. One of the examples we provided is a situation in which a man has all his life, experienced women who say “No”, when they really meant “Yes”; for such a man, he is going to take “No” from his wife to mean “Yes”! To be able to eliminate ‘noise’ when a man and his wife are communicating therefore, they both need to: (i) submit themselves to the dealings of the Holy Spirit in their lives (**James 3:2-12; Acts 2:1-4**); (ii) give up their idiosyncrasies and discard all impediments to their being able to effectively communicate (**Matthew 12:33-37**); (iii) seek to understand and be tolerant of the other spouse (**Luke 6:41-45**); (iv) be temperate in their conduct and conversations (**Proverbs 15:1-2; 25:15; 16:14**); (v) speak words “*always with grace, seasoned with salt*” (**Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16; Proverbs 25:11; 15:23; Isaiah 50:4; Colossians 4:6**); (vi) ensure that wagging a finger at the other spouse, speaking into the face of the other spouse, and, purposely speaking words that will set-off or upset the other spouse, are all seen as they should—an abomination, and unbecoming of the crucified life!

We now continue in this study, by looking at the absolute necessity of effective communication, and key ingredients for effective communication.

The Absolute Necessity for Effective Communication in Marriage

The link between the human head and the human body is the spinal cord. If the spinal cord is broken, the link between the head and the body is severed, and that individual, if he does not die, is said to be ‘an invalid’; confined to a wheel chair with no movement of any part of his

body! Indeed, the spinal cord is one of the first parts of the human anatomy that develops in the foetus. In much the same way, the vital link between a man (the head) and his wife (the body), is communication. Once a man and his wife are unable to effectively communicate, their marriage and union is in jeopardy; and if there is a breakdown in communication between them, divorce may be imminent. Once there is a noticeable breakdown in communication, a restoration must be worked at as soon as possible, otherwise, their marriage becomes 'an invalid' like the individual with a broken spinal cord. If the break in communication persists, a state of total communication breakdown results, and the marriage dies! It follows that communication cannot exist where there is no communion; and communion is at best bland, where communication is ineffective! Couples do not usually have effective communication from the start of their relationship, but must work at developing it from the time of courtship, and continue to grow in it, in the marriage. As this happens, the couple would increasingly be able to effectively communicate with each other, except one or both of them decide to 'put a clog in the wheel'. Thus, as communion between a married couple increases, communication between them gets more effective! Over time, a married couple that is communicating effectively would develop unique forms of communication between each other, such that no one except themselves would understand what they are saying to each other. This is only truly possible where they are both in constant communion. Communication in marriage is not learned; rather it develops and grows as a couple have communion with God and each other over the years. Such well developed effective communication keeps third Parties out of the world of married couples; thus making third Parties ignorant of what the couple in their midst are communicating to each other, even if they are speaking in a language that such third Parties are verse in.

Key Ingredients for Effective Communication in Marriage

Effective communication in marriage is not about one spouse speaking always, but about one spouse speaking, and the other responding in a manner that suggests that he or she has indeed understood what is being communicated. Where it is obvious that a message has not been correctly received, the spouse communicating the message must resend it or restate what he or she said at first, but in a more simpler form, so that it can be easily understood (**Isaiah 28:9-13**). The spouse receiving the message on the other hand, should not think that he or she is being made to look foolish, rather he or she should see themselves as learning how to best understand their spouse, and be understood by their spouse (**1 Peter 3:7**). Effective communication is thus not a monologue, but a dialogue; requiring both spouses talking to each other, and a lot of back and forth, until a message is well understood. Effective communication is not barking orders at the other spouse; neither is it speaking uncontrollably to the other spouse; rather, it is speaking with a lot of respect and regard for each other. When communication becomes ineffective and there is a breakdown, married couples should immediately each go and speak with God, and do as He tells them. It is vain to want to know from God what has caused a breakdown in communication in your marriage, and then refuse to do as you are asked to, just because you feel it would belittle you (**Ezekiel 20:1-3; 14:3-8**)! Humility is a major attribute required in maintaining effective communication. Couples should move very quickly to restore communication between each other (**Ephesians 4:26-27**), and the following should be noted (even after talking to God):

- (a) Apologies are essential when you are at fault.
- (b) Forgiveness from the one who feels offended or is offended is very important.
- (c) The removal of bitterness or resentment in the heart is extremely crucial; else it will be transferred to your spouse, and could become an impediment and a stumbling block in your marriage (**Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:19; Hebrews 12:14-15; 1 Peter 2:1-2; James 1:19-25**).

- (d) Sensitivity, submission, and, yielding to the Holy Spirit is absolutely vital (Galatians 5:16-18).
- (e) Following God's order for married couples as a ground rule is non-negotiable—wives submit to your own husbands as unto the Lord; and, husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5:22-32; Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1-6).

One very important key ingredient to effective communication in marriage is the matter of the channel of communication. A channel of communication is the way by which a man and his wife communicate with one another. For example, there is the direct channel of communication, where a man and his wife speak face-to-face or on phone; and there is the indirect channel of communication, where a man and his wife communicate through another medium, such a third Party. Usually, communicating through indirect means may become necessary once in a while, where there are emergencies and the direct means has become practically impossible. An instance of this could be, to send a note to your spouse to explain your lateness in coming home from the office, or, to ask your secretary to inform your spouse as to the reason for your absence from a family function. But all these indirect channels must be only utilized because using direct channels are not immediately possible; however, spouses should ensure that even after using an indirect channel, a direct channel should still be used! Spouses should not make indirect channels a regular practice, and should avoid them when sending messages that are secret, even if it is heavily coded; because such heavy coding can raise suspicion and cause a deciphering which can lead to confusion due to presumptuousness! Spouses should also ensure that they do not fall into the temptation of utilizing indirect channels of communication when they have an issue between them, unless there is total communication breakdown; and even at that, an indirect channel of communication must be carefully chosen (**Proverbs 26:6; 13:17; 25:13; Philippians 2:19-23**).

ASSIGNMENT

Please discuss the questions below and pray about the issues arising therefrom.

1. In what ways can a couple be more effective in their communication with each other?
2. How should a couple proceed when there is gridlock in communication between them?
3. What are the various channels of communication available to a man and his wife; and under what circumstance(s) should they be used?