

The importance of
intimacy and effective
communication
theology religion
essay



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The Bible gives us deep insight into the biblical principle of communication within our human relationships. God shows us in His Word that He is more concerned about understanding than He is about speaking. Paul tells us that the objective of prophecy is to “ build up,” and if something is said that does not build up, it should not be said. Paul also instructs us about order – speaking when it’s your turn in order to avoid confusion and to pursue peace. When God speaks to us from heaven, 1) it is decent and in order, 2) we will know what He is talking about (we have an understanding), and 3) there is a purpose behind it- to build us up!

Communication is a skill! Communication is defined as taking what is inside of us and conveying it to another person. I have also heard it characterized as “ an exchange of sincerity.” Not being able to communicate constitutes the bulk of our marital problems, which is why I decided to give this tool its own chapter.

Communication is the process by which we share our thoughts, feelings, and ideas in such a way that others understand us. The goal of communication is to make things common. To do this, we define terms and reduce everything down to its common denominator. If we do not define terms and find commonality frustration will result, leading to conflict. The divorce rate in our country is greater than 60%, and research indicates that one of the biggest problems that lead to divorce is communication issues – people’s inability to talk with one another

This chapter is designed to help you and your partner learn the art of successful communication, whether that partner is your spouse, your friend,

or your significant other. When we make things common, we have communion. When we have communion, we have community, which is belonging or relationship. Unfortunately, with the way that we currently communicate, what is meant, what is sent, what is received, and what is interpreted are different conversations!

Before you begin your journey to learning successful communication, realize that this investment will take some effort! Effective communication is not for wimps!

Communication is or involves:

Dialogue

Hard work

Time consuming

Reveals your perspective

Requires courtesy

Requires body talk

Must happen at the right moment

Succeeds with positive regard for the other person

Getting an understanding

I pray much success as the Holy Spirit guides you in your efforts to learn how to speak, listen, understand, and be understood through the art of successful communication. I also pray that you develop tolerable communication.

The Importance of Intimacy and Effective Communication

Intimacy is necessary for skillful communication. Intimacy is from the Latin word *innimus* meaning “innermost.” We share our innermost thoughts, opinions, feelings, and goals. When we are able to share these things with others, we can connect on another level.

Reflection: Have you ever felt like you were talking about something, but the person you were speaking to never quite got what you were saying? How did it feel when you could not connect?

A consequence of not being able to communicate due to a lack of intimacy is that it creates distance as opposed to the closeness that we desire from our partner.

Reflection: Did you sense a distance between yourself and your partner when you did not connect?

Intimacy or the ability to speak freely from your inner being is a must if there is going to be effective communication patterns in the relationship. The stage of negotiation will be ineffective if intimacy does not exist. Why? Because people will not be honest with each other; they will simply say what causes the least amount of stress and conflict.

Here are five keys to intimacy – the five (5) “musts” for intimacy:

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Access – you must possess the ability to link spiritually, emotionally, and physically. In order to have access to your partner, your values must be compatible and in the same camp.

Exercise: Does your partner share the same values that you do? List three values that you share with your partner.

Availability – making sure that both you and your partner are available for one another physically, spiritually, and emotionally. Do you and your spouse have a space and a time where you just chill out and talk and laugh? Is there a time for you to access each other?

Exercise: Does your partner ever complain that you are not available to him/her? What practical, reasonable steps can you take to ensure that you are available to the extent that it makes your partner comfortable?

Argot – an inside language that you develop with your partner. No one else may know what you are talking about because this is a language specific to your relationship such that you can have a conversation in the midst of other people and they have no idea what you are talking about.

Exercise: Give three examples of the types of words, phrases, or gestures used in the relational argot between you and your partner.

Abandonment – you have to be willing to become transparent and self-disclosing. If you are unable or unwilling to reveal yourself, you can't become intimate.

Exercise: Describe an instance in the past when you or your partner revealed something about yourselves to the point where you understood him/her (or vice versa) on deeper, more intimate level.

Application – you must be willing to apply yourself in your relationship.

Exercise: Give an example of how you might apply yourself even further towards developing a quality relationship with you partner.

After having lived with a spouse for a number of years, it is apparent that the couple becomes unable to communicate in a normal, meaningful fashion. If either spouse is unable to avoid exchanges that invariably result in conflict, a communication breakdown in the marriage has occurred. In extreme cases, especially if accompanied by abusive tendencies or other symptoms of dysfunction, a growing inability to deal with any verbal exchanges without conflict could be indicative of a much more serious problem that requires the attention of a mental health professional. More often than not, however, growing differences between the spouses, which may have their roots in the above-mentioned causes, are to blame for communication breakdowns.

Treatment: James 1: 19-20, Ephesians 4: 15, 29-32, Philippians 2: 14 “ Do all things without complaining and disputing”

Failure to Communicate

In any relationship, communication is essential. One needs to let the other person know what is on his or her mind. You cannot keep on second-guessing the other person. Open communication becomes critical, so misunderstanding can be minimized. Problems arise when one partner

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expects the other to read his or her mind – you will agree with me that this is close to impossible. The following five things hinder the creation of a context of toleration of communication.

Five Hindrances to Communication

The Complexity of Communication – Communication is not simply about people’s ability to access vocabulary words. It is a skillful exchange between two people. There are listening styles and communication styles that exist in order to help facilitate this. If your spouse is a visual communicator and you are auditory, saying “ I love you” will never reach them as much as actually seeing a symbol of your love, such as flowers, a card, a nice gift, etc. Many times, we are talking the wrong language to our spouse.

Low Self-Esteem – If you have low self-esteem, you will not talk, because you feel that what you have to say is not important. At some point in time, you will talk, but that time you may explode. You must learn to value your feelings enough to share them with your spouse. Understand that your unwillingness to share your thoughts can destroy the future of the relationship.

Fear of Criticism and Judgment – Some people live in fear that what they say may be interpreted in a way that they did not intend, or they are unwilling to allow their words to be potentially judged or criticized negatively. Rather than risk this potentially negative backlash or misunderstanding, they can be hesitant to communicate clearly with sincerity and with honesty.

Lack of Knowledge of Internal Happiness – You really do not understand what is going on inside yourself, so you are unable to put your true feelings into
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words. Thus, your words and what is going on inside of you are totally disconnected, and you feel unfulfilled.

Inability to Put Thoughts and Feelings into Words – Some people put thoughts and feelings into actions, such as being mean, slamming doors, withholding physical intimacy, and name-calling, because they are unable to verbally communicate exactly how they feel. If you can be comfortable without any talking with your significant other, there is something wrong and dysfunctional with your relationship.

Exercise: Choose the hindrance that most affects communication within your relationship and then list two alternatives to overcoming those hindrances.

Communication involves talking with objectives and the following are the objectives behind talking. Determine which ones you are trying to achieve when talking with your spouse.

Information

Talking informs you or makes you aware of something you do not know. We must talk in order for others to understand us. We cannot expect others to know what we are thinking or feeling. Some people tend to say, “ He should ALREADY know!” But this is not the case. Simply because we articulate what we want over and over does not mean that our partner gets the message.

Revelation

Information is based on words; however, the basis for revelation is self.

Revelation is the self-disclosure behind the words. The objective of

communication is not just words, because words are inadequate to holistically explain what we are trying to say.

Communication

There is a difference between talking and communicating. Communication is the process by which we share our thoughts, feelings, and ideas in such a way that others understand us. The goal of communication is to make things common. To do this, we define terms and reduce everything down to its common denominator. If we do not define terms and find commonality, frustration will result, leading to conflict.

Exercise: Pick one issue or need that you feel your partner has not responded to in ways that satisfies you, and answer the following questions regarding this issue:

Have I fully expressed to my partner what it is I want? Yes No

Have I revealed to my partner what it is I want? Yes No

When I expressed these issues and revealed myself to my partner, based upon the definition of communication, was I simply talking or were we truly communicating?

How can I more effectively communicate this particular need to my partner?

The 5 Levels of Communication

There are, what I refer to as, five levels of communication that at some level are correlated with the objectives of talking, but differ due to the emotional involvement in communication vs. talking.

Level 1

Cliché – Shallow level of communication we use when talking with strangers. We don't talk about anything of significance because we are not trying to relate.

Level 2

Reporting Facts – A simple exchange of data. This occurs frequently in relationships, as people may simply report the details of their day to one another. A husband and wife may talk about the kids, what happened on their jobs during the work day, what's for dinner, and what bills need to be paid, rather than anything on a deeper level.

Level 3

Sharing of Ideas and Opinions – This is the first level of risk communication, because it taps into the core of who we are. On this level, we risk possible conflict and/or rejection that may result from disagreement. What if your partner shares his/her ideas or opinions about this and you do not agree? For this reason, most people stay away from this level and stick to Level 2. Many couples have tried this level and found it to be too challenging.

Level 4

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Revealing Emotions – This level of risk is the “ I feel” level where you communicate your joys and sorrows to your partner. The problem with this level is that if a woman communicates her emotions to a man, he will tend to blame himself for causing the woman to feel this way. Rather than hear the emotions of the woman, the man may move into a posture of defense that might thrust him into warfare. People may not mind communicating the joyful emotions on this level, but they often do not like to communicate negative emotions on this level.

Level 5

Complete Disclosure -The riskiest, but most rewarding level of intimacy, is the unrestrained, honest sharing of one’s innermost desires, whether they are popular or not to a partner The partner, in response to the sharing of emotions on this level, will then respond in a loving, accepting way that acknowledges the problem and assists their partner in resolving the problem

Exercise: Complete the following chart regarding your relationship’s communication style. For each level of your relationship, write down you and your partner’s level of communication at that particular point in time. Check only those relationship levels that apply to your own relationship and skip the levels that do not apply.

Relationship Level Communication Level

When you first met your partner

One year after you met your partner

The day you married your partner

One year after the birth of your first child

Five years into your marriage

Ten years into your marriage

Your relationship today

If you noticed a change in the level of communication, to what might you attribute this change? At what level would you like your communication with your partner to be?

If we want to have a tolerable relationship that is healthy, we must be attentive to our communication style. Sometimes we engage in negative communication styles beyond our own consciousness. Virginia Satir offers a model that accentuates what she refers to as the four styles of communication.

Four Negative Communication Styles

Placater – The “ Yes” person who tries to avoid conflict at any cost.

Blaming – The “ fault finder” who tries to find fault in your argument or something he/she can be critical of in an argument

Computing – The “ Cool, Calm, Collected, and Correct” person who is always right. They never get excited or emotional, because they know they are right. During their turn in the conversation, they will explain to you all of the

facts. They tend to believe that their partner has lost the facts in all of their emotion.

Distracting – The person who ‘ changes topics like crazy’ because the conversation becomes too conflicting, personal, and intimidating.

Circle the Communication Style that best describes YOU:

- a. Placater
- b. Blaming
- c. Computing
- d. Distracting

Circle the Communication Style that best describes your PARTNER:

- a. Placater
- b. Blaming
- c. Computing
- d. Distracting

How do you think either of your negative communication styles has impacted the communication in your relationship?

Communication Styles Characterized by Animals

Shark – The Competitor

Gets what they want no matter what it takes by shouting, sulking, withholding physical intimacy – whatever works. This type does not mind having disharmony in the home.

Bear – The Accommodator

Keeps peace at any cost

Fox – The Negotiator

Specialist in compromise such that everyone wins a little and everyone loses a little. Both Bear and Fox tend to walk away half-pleased.

Turtle – The Avoider

Pretends that problems do not exist in the relationship. Their partner tends to be the shark-style communicator. This person feels conflict, so he/she becomes passive and withdrawn. Some people think they have happy marriages, because they are married to turtles.

The Owl – The Collaborator

The win-win person who will try to get a resolution for all. Tends to operate with wisdom.

Exercise: List the potential strengths and weakness of your animal-type communication style and that of your partner.

Communication and Non-Verbals

Communication is more than the words you speak. Communication encompasses what you say, how you say it, and how your body is reacting to what you are saying. Research shows that communication is:

7% Words

24% Tonality

69% Body Language and Expressions

Reflection: What would happen if your partner shouted to you, “ I AM interested in what you are saying!” while turning away from you to intently watching his/her favorite show on the television? Would you believe the words that he/she was communicating? The tonality and the non-verbals would outweigh the words that were spoken.

Key Dynamics of Communication

Listening is one of the most important functions of communication there is. If both people are slow to listen and quick to speak, there will be chaos and lack of communication because there will be no understanding. There is a difference between HEARING and LISTENING!

Hearing – the auditory reception of sound

Listening – the ability to hear, interpret, and understand

Exercise: Give an example of how your partner may have heard something you said rather than listen to what you said:

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Listening involves commitment!

A commitment to understand, empathize, to put aside one's own interests and prejudices long enough to see the relationship through the eyes of the other person. The goal of listening is to understand, learn, and enjoy helping.

Listening involves compliment!

Because our partner listens, we tend to feel that we matter.

Roadblocks to Listening

Most men dread hearing the words, " Can I talk to you about something?" or " We need to talk." They tend to ask themselves, " What did I do now?" They dread that they will now have to engage in an activity that so many of us are unprepared for – the art of intentional listening.

The following are roadblocks to listening in which many of us engage in with our relationships:

Mindreading – ignoring what is being said while trying to figure out what is meant. In other words, ignoring the obvious in favor of the imaginary

Rehearsing – preparing what is going to be said. You cannot listen you are trying to get your argument together against your partner

Filtering – keeping the things that you do want to hear or that you do agree with and blocking out all you do not want to hear

Judging – Listening to criticize, to judge, and to find blame

Daydreaming – not paying attention or tuning the other person out

Advising – jumping in to try to fix the problem with a solution rather than hear what the person is saying. Just because your partner has a problem does not mean that he/she wants you to fix it all of the time!

Exercise: Evaluate the following scenario.

Jesse is listening to his wife complain once again about the gas tank of their car being left on empty after he has driven it all weekend. As his wife proceeds to give him a play-by-play of who drove the car that weekend and when and where it was driven, he is trying to pinpoint in his mind exactly who should have stopped to fill the car's tank rather than hearing his wife's issue. After she finishes, he has already concluded whose fault this whole issue was, deciding actually it was her fault. Which roadblock is Jesse employing?

- a. Mindreading
- b. Rehearsing
- c. Filtering
- d. Judging
- e. Daydreaming
- f. Advising

Dynamics of Active Listening

Step 1: Pay Attention. Listen without any roadblocks.

Step 2: Paraphrase. Restate your understanding of what your partner has spoken to you.

Step 3: Clarify. Your partner comes back with what he/she actually meant if you did not get the intended message.

Step 4: Collect Yourself and Get Feedback. The feedback should address what you just clarified with your partner. Deal with the facts on the floor and respond with what you feel about what was communicated.

The goal of communication is not agreement or convincing your partner. Rather, the goal of communication is to be heard and understood!

Exercise: Choose a neutral topic to discuss with your partner, and allow your partner to practice utilizing the four Dynamics of Active Listening while you explain your topic. After you have had your turn, allow your partner to use the same exercise. Write down the results of how this exercise transpired and how active listening made each of you feel.

Very few people actually make contact in communication, i. e., two people ending up at the same place, knowing where they are when they get there. We tend to be on different frequencies when we communicate, and thus never end up on the same channel. Everyone wants to grow close with their partner, but when people realize how difficult this is through communication,

they tend to shy away from this type of relational intimacy and decided not connect on a deeper level.

Communication allows our partners to know us, who we are, and how we think or feel. We want them to enter our world of feelings so that we can enhance them, support them, help them, or simply enjoy them.

Expression of oneself is the ability to give voice to one's emotional feelings. The only way to do this is through the process of self-awareness. You've got to learn how you feel and what it is that you are feeling and then put a voice to it so that the other person can understand it.

If you find yourself constantly saying, " You don't ever listen to me," you might consider asking the question, " Am I listening to myself?", because you might be communicating the wrong way.

The Pillars of Communication

The following charts are exercises to begin learning about you so you can clearly articulate your issues.

Pillar #1: How to Express Yourself – Prepare to Talk

Step

Task

1

Identify what it is you feel (Is it a good or bad feeling?)

2

Ask yourself, “ How important is this feeling to me?” (Is it really important enough to talk about?)

3

What is the feeling saying to me? (Something positive, negative, affirming, etc.)

4

What do I want to do about this feeling? (What do I want or expect to happen?)

5

What past experience does this feeling remind me of? (Have I ever felt this before?)

6

Name your feeling (annoyed, happy, sad, playful, jealous, etc. – you cannot explain it you if you cannot name it!)

7

Define the word for the feeling in terms of intensity (Very, a little, not at all)

8

Define the word or feeling in terms of duration (How long you’ve held the feeling?)

9

Define the feeling in cause and context (When the feeling came, where were you were, and in what context?)

10

Define the feeling in terms of its historical context (Have you ever felt this way at another stage in your life?)

Pillar #2; Scripting Your Needs – Planning in Advance How to Ask for what you want

Step

Task

1

Say exactly what you mean

2

Send the message effectively by using the right words and action

3

Obey the 10 Commandments of Clean Communication

10 Commandments of Clean Communication

Commandment 1

Avoid Judgment Words and Loaded Terms

(Words that communicate your partner is flawed, incorrect, and in error)

Commandment 2

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Avoid Global Labels

(Stay away from generalizations and name-calling, as this will shut down communication)

Commandment 3

Avoid “ You” Messages of Blame and Accusation

(Stay away from “ always” and “ never,” and use “ I” rather than “ You” statements when talking about your feelings)

Commandment 4

Avoid Old History

(Stick to the issue at hand and discuss one issue at a time)

Commandment 5

Avoid Negative Comparison.

(Don’t ask, “ Why can’t you be like Frank?”)

Commandment 6

Avoid Threats

(Threats bring insecurity in a relationship and causes people to be less self-disclosing with you)

Commandment 7

Describe your feelings rather than attacking with them.

(Your goal is not to make your partner feel bad, but to express how you feel)

Commandment 8

Keep Body Language Open and Receptive

(You speak louder with your body than with your words)

Commandment 9

Use Whole Messages

(Use your thoughts, your feelings, and your emotions)

Commandment 10

Use Clear Messages

(Make sure you're specific, and do not ask loaded questions of your partner)

Exercise: Complete the following exercise by listing which commandments the following statements are violating (some may violate more than one).

Statement

Commandment Violated

You have the biggest stomach in the whole class. Why can't you lose weight?

You have one more time to hang the telephone up on me before I walk out for good!

I wish I would have known that you were this stubborn before I married you!

I am very upset about the way you treated me yesterday. Why did you totally ignore me?

This is just like when you almost had an affair three years ago. You've never changed!

I can listen and do my paperwork at the same time. My hands are occupied, not my ears!

Sometimes I think that you don't like me anymore. That's all I have to say.

Well, maybe if you weren't so uneducated, you wouldn't be so closed-minded!

You always decide to call one of your friends on the phone when I say we have an issue to resolve!

Yes, I am jealous, and it's all your fault! You don't have to hug people like that in front of me!

How to Communicate with Your Body

The following are steps that you and your partner can exercise to communicate more effectively with your body language:

Maintain Eye Contact

Lean in Close to the Person

Nod and Give Short Verbal Affirmations

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Smile or Frown, Whichever is Appropriate

Keep Your Posture Open. Arms Unfolded, Towards Your Partner

Actively Move Away From Distractions

Exercise: Evaluate the following scenario:

Lynn certainly thinks that she looks like she is listening to her partner. She is seated in a comfortable chair, leaning forward with her arms unfolded, and she is making direct eye contact with him. However, she is neither nodding nor shaking her head, she says nothing, and her face is expressionless. Even further, when her partner finishes talking, Lynn remains in her same posture, gazing intently at him, but not saying a word. Her partner thinks that she is in a daze. What is Lynn communicating to her partner with her body?

“ Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who [are] spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” – Galatians 6: 1

Sometimes you are talking to someone who hurt you, but you have to be eager to restore the relationship. However, if the goal of communication is not restoration, there really is no need to talk.

There are certain parameters to fair communication that each partner in a relationship should employ.

Do's and Don'ts of Communication

Don'ts

Be judgmental

Expect too much from one session

Bring up your mate's past

Butt in or be rude

Overstate by saying " you always" or " You never"

Lose your temper

Pout or give the silent treatment

Tell endless stories

Compete

Think in terms of winning and losing

Belittle your male

Do's

Be accepting and tolerant

Plan to talk again

Be forgiving

Be courteous as to a stranger

Be accurate by saying " Sometimes, " Many times", To me it seems"

Be in control of yourself

Be positive, outgoing, and unselfish even when you don't feel like it

Be concise

See yourself as an equal partner

Be cooperative and not combative

Be affirming and build up your mate

Exercise: Choose three Do's listed and list the possible positive consequences of the chosen behavior. Then, choose three Don'ts listed above and list the possible negative consequences of the chosen behavior.

Difference in the Way Men and Women Communicate

There are a number of differences between the communication styles of men and women. For example, you have a 96% chance of the conversation continuing when the man initiates it, and yet, you have only a 36% chance of the conversation continuing when a woman initiates it. Also, because men have a larger ego, this ego drives a man's awareness of what is received and what is blocked out in communication. Differences do not have to hinder our communication if we acknowledge, understand, accept, and learn to work with them. Men and women must have positive regard for the differences that exist between them.

Men

Women

Focus on achievement

Focus on relationship

Focus on solving problems with the facts

Like to share their feelings

Need an agenda when communicating

Tend to use intense adjectives

Tend to interrupt more

Tend to be more descriptive in conversation

Talk more in public settings than they do in private

Tend to talk more in small groups

Talk loudly and tell lots of stories

Talk more quietly with focuses on fewer topics

Talk about reports

Talk about rapport

Assume you are sharing what you want revealed

Ask a lot of questions

Tend to be competitive in their dialogue

Tend to be cooperative

Tend to be exclusive

Tend to be inclusive

Information

Intuition

Listen for what's important

Listen for details

Need time to process their thoughts and feelings

Process immediately

Say women are too emotional

Say men are not sensitive enough

Say women talk too much

Say men don't listen

How God Broke Down Differences to Communicate with Humanity

The incarnation was a divine example of communication that transcended differences. In John 1, the incarnation taught us that communication has to be reflective. The Word accurately described what God was feeling. The word <https://assignbuster.com/the-importance-of-intimacy-and-effective-communication-theology-religion-essay/>

God spoke was so reflective of God that it was God Himself. We have to take time to come up with the words that accurately reflect what i