

Marriage Enrichment (7) Communication (1)

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Marriage Enrichment

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Well, it's a privilege to have you here tonight again. It's been a long time. That's because this topic is so difficult to prepare for. It took me a long time to get it ready. Now that's not really entirely true but there's other truths to the delay.

If you would turn with me in the opening here to Ephesians 4. Our last time about half a year ago I think, maybe not quite that long, it was on Ephesians 5 but now I'm walking backwards with you just for a little bit and I'll read a few verses of Ephesians 4 and I know that speaking about the church family and how we are to live together, but there's much there also relating to communication.

Verse 15,

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Then in verse 24, the apostle picks up the same theme of speaking,

24 ... that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. 25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. 26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27 Neither give place to the devil.

And he picks up in verse 29 on the speech,

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. 30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger,

and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32
And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even
as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Welcome back to these Scriptures, but let's together seek the Lord's blessing.

Lord, without thy blessing also our gathering this evening will not be fruitful and, therefore, we desire to come before thee in prayer to pray that thou would graciously bless us in speaking and in listening and Lord, those are already the two aspects of communication also within our marriage life, and we pray that we may tonight either be refreshed or renewed, that we may be encouraged or grow in our way of communicating. We know this already, Lord, that that is an area where the devil often gets hold of us and brings division and distress in our relationship, and so we pray that we may not give him any room, any place. And Lord, will thou graciously bless our tongues which have been created to be vehicles of blessings but we have turned by our sinfulness often in very vicious instruments of evil. We ask thee that may not be in our lives and if it has been, thou would graciously weed out this evil habit. Renew us thereto, Lord, by thy Holy Spirit in our hearts for that is also where the root of our tongues are. We ask thee all this also for those listening at home to bless them, and those listening to this later. We ask thy blessing upon all such and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

So I gave you a booklet. This is quite a booklet and used to that now, that you are having to drink on the fire hydrant for an hour to get this overload, and then you have lots of time to begin to process it drop by drop again, and that's, I guess that's the nature of a topic, you get it concentrated.

Now I wasn't able to really do this all at once. You get one more topic on this. Communication is a big chapter and I don't want to really really really overload you tonight so I thought I will just break it out in one more second one to round off the subject. And you say, "Oh, why do you need two topics?" You know, this, the tongue is the most often mentioned subject in the Bible. No other subject besides money receives that much attention in the Holy Scriptures in the practical things of life. So if I only spent two times on the tongue, then we are really not doing so bad either in terms of timing.

Now let's begin with a little introduction. I have a dream about a satisfying marriage and marriage where my wife and I would never have an argument anymore, or never have an argument that would leave us pained or wounded or distant. And sure, that's happened in our life too, as in all of our marriages. But I have this dream that our relationship would grow deeper and closer and more intimate and more passionate and more dynamic and more exciting as the years go by. That's a nice dream when you get older, that it gets better. And here another dream that each date would end with a passionate romanticism instead of a frigid formalism, and I wrote first "each day," but I thought, "Yeah, that's reaching really for the stars." So let's keep it with each date, right? But ideally that's how every day should end. We read that tonight out of the Scriptures, before the day ends, let not the sun go down upon anything that is divisive or that has been difficult to deal with. So yeah, ideally in our marriage life.

So, okay, that's the dream so how do we get to there? What are the secrets of making this dream reality, and there's some typical answers and the one is, "Well, have the perfect wife." Right? That would really help. And of course, the other side would say, "Well, okay, have the perfect husband," and I suppose that also would really help. The biblical answer is actually not as realistic and we're not perfect. We will never have a perfect marriage outside of paradise anymore. That's reality. But we have looked at a couple of biblical answers to really grow this marriage relationship. Remember we've looked at the difference between masculinity and femininity. We spent about three or four evenings on that really detailing that. If you have lost that memory, go back and refresh yourself on that.

Secondly, nurturing of each other and I tied it in the last time with the axle and the wheel bearing. Remember that? Axle, wheel bearing relationship? And I tied it in with Ephesians 5, unconditional love and unconditional respect, the two components that are to work together.

Now the question we could ask tonight is what is now the most important part of that, the axle or the wheel bearing? We could have a little argument about that and we don't want arguments tonight. We're doing communication exercises so we want to not get into any conflict, but it's kind of like a discussion of what's, you know, what's first the egg or the chicken? We could go endless circles on this. So whatever our answer is on question wheel bearing/axle, let's go to B, are unconditional love and unconditional respect equal partners in the marriage? Yeah? Are they indeed equal in our life? In other words, what's more important for the marriage, unconditional love, husband, or unconditional respect, the wife? And sometimes I hear and perhaps have said I would take ownership of that, they are equal playing fields and, you know, in the last couple of weeks or months, I began to take that back. They're not equal playing fields. They were not that in the church. Yeah? The initiative came with unconditional love. That was first. That was primary. That was fundamental. And the church came secondary, derivative, derived from that. Yeah? And if you now take that analogy a little bit closer to the family life, I am going to say tonight that also in your marriage, we husbands are the fundamental in this relationship between and the quality of the relationship, and that's what I have in your outline, unconditional love is first and fundamental and unconditional respect is second and derivative.

I think an unconditional lovers are hard men to resist, so if you want submission in your wife, then what? God never allows you anywhere in the Bible to demand submission of your spouse, nor anywhere does he command you to coerce submission, and if we as men are showing this unconditional love, I don't think the submission issue will be an issue because unconditional loving husbands, my wife tells me, are hard to resist.

So, and why do I want to emphasize this? It's because I've done a lot of reading over the last months, to be honest, about the sore that is also impacting our families, spousal abuse, and I think after reading and studying that a little bit more, I think it's important to emphasize this sequentially, the sequence. We need to protect women against domestic

abuse by over-controlling in the harsh demanding husbands. That's why. The one comes first, the other comes second, and sadly there is too much domestic abuse in our own Christian conservative churches.

What is domestic abuse? I give you in your outline one small definition, defined as the husband's deliberate, ongoing, systematic, relentless destruction of his wife both in soul, body or both, and you know that's a catchy-all, there's of course, lots of variety in that, right? There are mild cases and there are super super serious cases. And when a husband is abusive, he does not necessarily need to use his hands at all. Abusive husbands are also those who use their mouth in speaking, belittling, name-calling, criticizing, put-downs, or even silence. Obviously there's also the physical and so on.

So that's why I think why it's important to empower also those who are struggling with this issue to realize that, yes, we husbands are owing our spouse unconditional love, fundamental starting point and that hopefully also will bring along a Christian submission.

Anyways, that's a little off the topic but I thought it would be good to refresh your mind. Now let's go the actual axle and the wheel bearing analogy again. That's really not the whole story of that thing, isn't it, but what sits on this thing is the wheel. So I would like to take that a little step further today as I've been trying to get another analogy that pictures this in front of us.

The wheel, we all know how important the wheel is for the car. That was a great invention to have a wheel. I mean, how things changed in the world after the wheel was invented. How smooth our rides are, especially if you have these tires with rubber and, you know, pressure in it. But the wheel is to me the picture of communication within the relationship. Yeah? There's nothing more vital for your relationship as husband and wife as the way you communicate. If you want to grow in your relationship or if you want to stay away from conflicts or you want to stay away from growing apart, this is the point to begin to concentrate on, and that's kind of the wheel. We want this wheel to move forward, right? We want it to ride comfortably. If that wheel is the relationship of marriage, then that wheel is the communication within the marriage relationship.

Now each wheel, as you know, has five lug nuts and I began to be really creative last week about this wheel and the five lug nuts, and as I was studying and preparing for this I thought, "Well, let's see if I can name those lug nuts because we need five of them to make good communication." So I got the five of them that actually all have to do with the subject of communication. First, conflict resolution. We just read about it here, "Be angry and sin not." That's all about communication. The second one is charity. We read the word "love" in the chapter here already two times of Ephesians 4. Then choices, the choices we make. Do I speak or don't I speak? Do I speak loud, do I speak soft? Yeah, that's a choice so it's all communication. And the fourth lug nut is the compromises, solutions. We need to come with a solution. And the last one is connection.

So brothers, you guys are in wheels and which lug nut is the most important of these five? Which lug nut is important on the wheel? The most important lug nut?

"[unintelligible]."

Okay, to have love. So that's the most important one? Charity? Can you have a wheel with four lug nuts or with one or are all five important?

"[unintelligible]."

Interesting that the ladies are telling me that they're all five important.

"[unintelligible]"

Okay, one too tight and we've got problems, wobbly wheel.

"[unintelligible]"

So it's, the wheel bearing is important, everything is important but the five lug nuts are important too.

Now there's only one car that has a different lug nut, a different on this answer, it's the Volkswagen. There's one lug nut more important than the other four because there's a lock on it. You can't take it off, at least maybe other cars have that too but I discovered that to my distress. Yeah, well, you couldn't take that lug nut off so there was a special key I needed inserted to actually loosen that. I think that's a theft prevention issue. So good, good thinking, you know, these Volkswagen engineers but I thought I'd take that up for a moment because I think one lug nut of these five is the most important and that's the word "connection." Connection, and I'd like to think today or tonight about connection which is really your most important starting point in communication. Is there a connection? Is there an ability to connect with each other in a way that is going to be constructive? That's what communication is. Now it could be negative communication or it could be positive communication.

So let's think about that word "connection." And one more thing, this wheel is not for sale. There is no way anywhere you can buy a wheel for your marriage called communication. This is something you're going to have to learn on your own. This is something you learn over years, really. Communication is just not an app you can download on your phone, it's a skill, and that skill has already been formed by you by your parents, the way they communicated with you is how you communicate with your spouse. Somebody is nodding her head, but that's how it is. So sometimes you have to do a lot of unlearning in your marriage life about communication in order to really get this relationship growing.

Now what is communication? Communication I define as the connection between a husband and a wife that transfers positive energy into the relationship. I don't know if you

remember this bank deposit idea, the love bank? You can have deposits and you can have withdrawals. Now communication is the way that we connect as couples in which we are transferring positive energy into our relationship which makes us grow and makes us more close, it makes us more passionate, makes us more at peace with each other, makes us happy. And also the opposite, of course, and a lot of negative energy comes into our marriages by connection or communication that is not good and on your outline, dysfunctional connection creates negative energy and that will hinder your growth, it will hinder your intimacy, trust, excitement and passion and what's going to happen eventually if it's between you, it's going to spill over in the kids and if you don't correct it, it's going to spill over in the grandkids. It just keeps on rolling over and over into the next generation.

So here are three quotes of men that have had a little bit of experience in this. The first one is Norman Wright. He is a counselor that I read on communication. He said, "If any would ask what is the most important issue in marriage, my answer is communication." In my mind now I also remember James Dobson, a well-known name to you, he says, "Finances and communication are the two bombs in marriage." J. Adams in his counseling book he says, "Christian communication is the basic skill needed to establish and maintain sound relationships." So again, two men who are having some counseling skills behind them. Arnoud Vergunst, another man who has some authority on this issue, he claims this, that 99.99% of all the conflict with my beloved co-conflicter usually are due to miscommunications. Just slight miscommunications and we can have an argument or something that is creating negative energy rather than positive, and you look back and you say, "Oh, so silly." You weren't listening to me or I'm usually not listening to her. Yeah, I'll take most of the blame for this. My mind sometimes is off in space when my wife is having a conversation with me. So you miss the critical details and it ends up to be, right? You recognize this?

So God confirms the importance of communication. If you compare the order of Ephesians 4 and 5, what do you notice? What comes before a good marriage? Or what is connected to a good marriage is chapter 4 about communication. I don't think that this is without divine intent. Before the marriage chapter is the communication chapter which is what I very briefly sum up to be chapter 4. And you notice, I'll read it again, Ephesians 4:15, "speak to the truth in love." So we ought to speak the truth but lovingly where we may grow up in him.

Now speaking the truth in love, I heard some people who say, "Well, you have to call a spade a spade, speak the truth." Correct, right? But I always say, "Well, at least you can call a spade a spade but don't use the spade to hit her head or to plant it really deeply in her heart." That's not what the spade is for. So God combines the two, speak the truth but in love, in a way that communicates positive energy, not negative. And secondly he says speak the truth honestly. Put away lying. Now I do not assume that was the first lie against our spouse, right, but when I don't speak what bothers me and I pretend everything is hunky-dory, I'm lying. That's lying. That's not speaking the truth, that's lying. Yeah?

"[unintelligible]"

Patient. Oh, it could be, indeed, if it is patient but if something is constantly annoying you, annoying you, or something is not going away and it begins to stir up in you anger, notice what he says, put away lying, speak every man, don't be angry and sin not. So God knows if you don't speak these truths openly and work it out, get it off, it tends to infest, it becomes anger and that is a lie if you don't speak to each other the truth.

Now thirdly, he says speak the truth edifyingly. My wife just reminded our son about it. Our kids had to memorize this verse so we have to have him memorize it yet. The youngest one gets away with a lot more, you notice that, right? So the oldest one had to memorize this verse, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." Yeah? That was a good verse for kids. The word "corrupt" means corrupting. Any speech that is corrupting is what God is speaking about so a put-down, a name-calling, a nasty comment, whatever, that's all corrupting communication that ought never to come out of our mouths but that which is good to the use of edifying. The word "edifying" means in the Greek "to build up; build the person up; build up the relationship." That's what needs to come out of our mouth that it may minister grace unto the hearers and then he connects it here with grieve not the Holy Spirit but imagine what it does to our spirit. If I have a communication that is corrupting, what does that do to the spirit of the child or the spirit of the spouse or husband when we're nasty, not speaking kindly.

And that's the last word the Ephesians 4 chapter gives us, speaks gently. No bitterness. No anger. No wrath. No clamor. No evil speaking, put away from you with all malice. And then the opposite, be kind and be tenderhearted and forgive. Now here you have a couple of verses that just deal biblically with the word "communication."

Now let's look again at number B, communication is the connection that builds or destroys by what it transfers into the relationship. What am I talking about, transferring into the relationship? What do you think about communication? What is it mostly? What is it mostly? It's talking, right? It's sharing. It's unburdening. It is crying. It's communication, transfer of ideas, of fears. I share with you my expectations. I've got a whole list here on there. Thoughts. Desires. Ideals. Appreciation. Respect. Admiration. Affection. You can go on with these words but this is all communication that takes place every day. We communicate every day even though if you don't talk to your wife for the whole day, that's communicating, right? If I take off tomorrow and I land in Chicago and I don't communicate to my wife I landed safely. And if don't communicate, I do communicate. I communicate I forgot that she is very important to me and wants to know I landed safely.

So you see, we communicate every day and more and more ideas and thoughts that is positive, that will grow and expand your relationship and it ought to take place once a year? No. I see the ladies shaking their heads and men are stoically looking at me. Just interesting to observe the difference of your body language here. Yeah? We often speak on the cliché level. "How are you? How are things?" Cliche level. There's five levels to communication. If you look back on your first outline on the very very first one, I gave

you all five of them. The deepest level is really the positive energy where you really share your deep thoughts, your feelings, your fears, your ideas and you expand your relationship. This is where relationship gets exciting, when you actually grow and share. You know, this is how you used to be. When we just started dating, we just went off the wall in our flames. Why? Because there was deep sharing, constantly communicating, positive energy. We kept our mouths nice and quiet. We never yelled with her or him. We were all pretenders and we really did really wonders to our relationship, didn't we? Now that is what we still need to do.

Now it is only going to work, this positive transfer, if the receptor, the one you speak to, is still receptive. If your spouse is beaten down and berated and belittled, I can assure you there's going to be very little positive transfer because whatever you pour out is not getting there anymore. So keep that in mind.

Now number C. What is communication? This is an interesting little section of our outline tonight. I always find it somewhat disheartening for preachers because most of my work is words, preach a whole hour, hour and a half, or not quite an hour and a half but a whole hour we are preaching and communication is only 7% words. That's kind of disheartening to me but if you look at that aspect, 7%, obviously words are very important. Although you have an exercise at the end of this, don't look at it yet, which we're going to try some nonverbal communication in the next month to see if your spouse actually figures out what you're trying to communicate without words. Just give it a try. It's really a fun thing to do. But words are the vehicles of our thoughts. I cannot let you know my inner thoughts without putting them into words. We can't read each other's thoughts all the time. It's a beautiful concept to think about. We cannot know God except that he put his thoughts in words, the Living Word, Christ, and the Scripture word, and that's how God communicates, through words and his deep inner thoughts are communicated to us.

When it says in the Bible we will be judged by our words or on our words, I think you need to now learn that there's lots more to that verse than just the words you speak. Communication is what God is there talking about. We will be judged on our words. You could really also say we will be judged on our communication, and if only 7% of our communication is words, what is the rest? Well, 38% is the tone of your voice. I read in the research that in English, it's different every different language, right? If you talk in Dutch about ?? and all this [guttural sound] and ?? it's a different language. But in English, apparently the professionals are telling me that the one of your voice communicates seven times the message of one's words, seven times more important what the tone of your voice is. We don't realize that enough, what our tone of voice is when we are speaking.

God speaks in Proverbs 15, "A soft answer turneth away wrath but grievous words speak up or stir up anger." So the tone of your voice transfers positively or negativity. I was thinking of some positive first. You can with the tone of your voice communicate love. Sometimes my dearest elder tells me after church that that sermon was not quite so effective because it was way too loud. You see, sometimes we preachers think that the

louder, the better but the audience tells me sometimes, "No, it's not." Softer sometimes is far more effective. Now you could differ with that opinion and I think it all depends a little bit on the receptor again. Some people really like boisterous sermons, some people like gentle sermons but why is that difference there? It's because you are perhaps associating with positive and negative experiences you've had with voices that you have heard.

So positive is love and acceptance and you can communicate in the voice compassion, patience, respect, gentleness. Now we all know examples of negative disrespect, anger, bitterness, contempt, vengeance, anxiety, pride, sarcasm. I mean, think about all the words that I just listed that all go along with the tone of your voice and begin to notice tone of voices. I don't know, maybe he's not listening in the back seat out there, my son, but I taped him once when he was trying to talk to me about something. It was not very nice so I put that phone right next to us on the couch and I put the tape button on, and then after we were all done, I said, "You know, do you want to listen to yourself? Listen to this." And he was rather shocked. "I sound like that?" I says, "Yes, you sound like that. You don't hear it yourself." So if you have kids, sometimes with an issue like that, put that phone in your pocket and let them hear. The same thing with the non-verbal because I sat at the table once and had my little video camera going to let him see his own facial expressions and rather shocked. Well, I cannot say that really has helped but it was an eye-opening experience for this particular child.

So the voice, the tone of your voice is powerful. I used to have a fellow teacher who I never have quite imitated to the extent that I would have liked to but when he got angry with his class, he started to whisper and the effect is dramatic. Next time you get angry with your child, start whispering and the tone of that whole room, even though you say the exact same words, is completely different. Now why is that? Because when our decibels go up, the defenses go up in the person you're speaking to. So their receptors are not there. And I have a preacher voice, they tell me, so my kids would sometimes remind me, "Dad, are you angry?" "I'm not angry at all." "Oh, you sure sound like it." Oops. My tone of voice was not at all matching what I was trying to say, not being aware of it. So please ask your wife and your children to give some honest feedback not at the time of your anger, but later on. Tell them how can your dad or how can your mom listen and learn from this?

Now then we looked at 38% is the voice, friends, the non-verbal body language is 55%. I don't know how they get to these numbers, you know, 55 versus 50, but if that is true, and I believe it is true, that means that the non-verbal communication is more important than words and tone of voice together. Now this is experts telling us.

Let me do a test. What do you like better, reading service or preaching service?

"Preaching."

Okay, now why? Why do most people say preaching?

"[unintelligible]"

It's body language. Yeah? The elder who stands there reading a sermon usually stands out looking, stationary, looking at himself, at the paper and there's nothing happening. You don't see his eyes. You don't his hands. You don't see gestures, right? So the context of a preaching sermon has a tremendous amount of body language to it and not only you are getting it, I'm getting it too from you. When I see you listening, I can see that, I can see when people are off in space, not listening, or you know, obviously sleeping, but even when they're not, they're not paying attention you can see that. But that's two ways in which that communication goes.

So what is the non-verbal language? It's actions speak louder than words? Still hold the door open for your wife? Start doing that again. Now you don't need to do it nowadays anymore because you've got those little buttons to open the door ahead, from a distance, right? But in the old days you had to put a key in it. Holding a door open is an action, a nice action, but doing chores and taking out the garbage or whatever, you know what I mean, actions speak louder than words.

So do facial expressions. A smile is an incredible effort. It takes more muscles, I think more muscles to make a frown than a smile. But next time when you're angry, try to have a smile on your face. It doesn't work. It simply doesn't work. It immediately changes the whole tone of the setting. Yeah? I sometimes get the feedback, again from my wife, and she says, "You know what? Make sure that you don't just always look like a thundering face on the pulpit. Have a smile or look friendly." Now I can't look at myself so you please give me the feedback sometimes, but that is an important communication. Why would we always have to look like there's a thundercloud on our head? There is something to a verbal, non-verbal facial expression.

We all know the eyes, right? Your wife says, "Can I talk to you," and we roll our eyes like this, "Yeah, you can." We already told her, "No, you can't or really I'm not interested." So you all know the ideas. A twinkle in your eye or a staring frown is a tremendous communication.

Now if these three aspects don't match, words, tone and non-verbal language, this is an important point to make. Maybe you knew those three things already but, look, I can say with my words, "I love you," that's only 7% of the message. There is 93% yet to back this up with all the rest of your language. So saying I love you a thousand times may mean nothing, yeah?

Let me give you an example. A husband goes back from work, leaves for work and stops to hug his wife and whispers in her ear, "I love you. You are just the most special woman in the world." Now that's very nice. Keep doing that. And then you leave and after the wife, after you've left and the wife notices the newspaper lays on the floor that you were just reading, just chucked it on the table, comes to the bedroom and pajamas are on the floor and the socks are somewhere else, and the nightcap is somewhere else, if you have those, come in the bathroom and the toothpaste cap or whatever, the toothpaste is not put

away and she still has in her ear, "I love you," but it's getting a little challenged this, "I love you." Do you feel that? The non-verbal cues that have been laying around are not telling this because she's told him already many times, "It just annoys me when you throw the newspaper or the pajama or the toothpaste, it just annoys me. Could you just clean up behind yourself?" "Yeah, yeah, yeah, I do that for you." But you see, he doesn't do that for her. And then during the day she is cooking and she all of a sudden discovers something, of course, missing in the kitchen, so we'll call George and say, "George, could you please stop by the grocery store and pick up some cinnamon?" "Oh, okay. Okay. Next time use your phone for a list, okay? See you later." What happened with I love you from the morning? That's communication all day long, and you come home and you're still, "I love you," but in the meantime there's a whole train of things happening through the day that has doused or contradicted I love you. This is communication, not just talking, sitting nice on the couch holding hands, having a conversation. It's a non-verbal interaction all day long. Then, of course, they crawl in bed at night and what does she hear? "I love you." And he wants something more. It's not going to be as passionate, husbands, because you've been dousing her the whole day with your actions and with your neglect and your non-verbal cues and so on. So please keep it in mind.

Now the opposite contrasting story is much nicer, really. He's going back for work and, of course, during the day she gets text messages from him and he says, "I can't wait to get home. So boring out here without you." Things like that. Lunchtime he calls and he listens for a moment to her outpouring her heart about these frustrating kids who just, you know, threw all the laundry again on the floor that she just all folded and she has to start over again, and then they're doing that, then this happened, that happened. He very patiently listens for this half hour download time. Now this is I love you, okay? This is big bank deposits. And then he comes home and he says, "You know what? How about you go get the groceries and I'll watch these kids and I'll get them off to bed." Pool, big bucks.

"[unintelligible]"

It's only one point but it is still a good point. It's a big point, indeed.

Now that's what I mean with communication. I want you to start looking at that and talking together about that because here often we get this negative energy. "Yeah, he says it but he doesn't mean it." And if this is really true what the experts are saying that our words are really that little important and the tone of voice and the non-verbal cues are that important, then we should really give that a little bit more attention, shouldn't we?

So now I've looked about communication, let's look in the last part today the keys to good communication. Now it begins with the recognition that males and females speak and hear the same words differently, and I'll just give you a couple examples, but really we use the same language but we mean something different. Yeah? I hope you recognize some of this as I share it with you, but if not, then maybe this is very enlightening to you.

The meaning of a man's and a woman's silence is not the same. It's kind of strange because I'm talking about speaking here and I'm talking about silence, but I want you to think that silence is an incredible communicator. I come back to that. So when a man is silent, it sometimes different than when a woman is silent, when they don't want to talk. When a man is silent, does that mean I don't love you? What does it mean then? "Just leave me alone. Give me some space." Yeah? We men sometimes like space. You can call it a cave, you can call it space, whatever. But I'm talking about an issue between you and him, right? We're not just talking about all kinds of other things but when there is something that has been between you both that's not good and you've been talking but then after a while you men are silent, then you think sometimes, "Well, he's not interested or he doesn't want to talk about it or he doesn't love me," or whatever. That's not what it is. It is, "I'm alright but leave me alone for a moment and I'll come back to you." Whereas when a woman is silent, what does that mean when she's silent and she doesn't want to talk? Could be hurt. We men are not necessarily silent because we're hurt, but when the woman is silent she is often struggling with hurt.

But now words. A woman talking doesn't always mean she's nagging, even though they sound like it. That's not what it is. They simply love to talk and to share and to unburden and to go over it again and again and again and again. Not quite that often, maybe take one or two off, but it depends if the issue is big. And why does the female sometimes like to talk more than us? It's simply because in talking she communicates not only to you but I think she communicates with herself as well. That's the interesting part about females, they talk to themselves out loud to you, or to other friends. And as they do, they are resolving a lot. That's opposite to us, isn't it? We come to them and we have our solutions. We don't need their advice unless we ask, and if you don't ask, don't give it. And it is a very good thing to ask the wife, I love asking my wife for advice and I get lots of good advice.

So the meaning of a man's and woman's talking now is in the style of a man's talking and a woman's talking is all the same, and when we men talk, we talk about facts and we talk about information. Females talk about feelings a lot more than facts and, of course, as women talk, they have some kind of a poetic license to use various superlatives or gross generalizations, and we men, we just jump on those every time. I mean, I still seem to do that after many years of being married.

What do I mean? "Well, I will never feel better again." What word did you pick up in that? Ever. "Come on, never. Don't be ridiculous about never." Where women use the word "never" a lot and they don't mean it literally but they actually say it in order to get the point, the point is really big, "I will never feel better again." It's not never, that's not what they mean. So when we hear this, we've got to remember, "Oh yeah, this is my dear wife talking about never. That doesn't mean never." Or, "We never go out." What is she really saying? It's been a long time. Get it? So don't say, "We went out last year."

"January 7th."

Well, it's only February, right, so it wasn't that long ago. But you see what I mean. The word "never" is not always the same. "The house is always a mess." That means, "I'm frustrated with this mess. And I got nothing done today." I like that one. I've heard that a lot. "I got nothing done today." Shoot, man, I think you did this, this, this. "Yeah, but there were 15 other things on the list." Okay, don't make your list so big, then, is my suggestion but I got nothing done means, I didn't get all the things done I wanted to get done. Correct? So when I hear this, "I get nothing done," I say, "Come on, Michelle, you've been working from 8-5. You got lots of things done. Phone calls. Emails. Blah, blah, blah, meal, whatever." "But I didn't get the things done. So here again, the meaning of a man/woman talking, very different. We also do not take it literal, guys, we just ought to take it serious though don't take it literal. So when they say, "I've never been out for a long time," that is probably true, so then take it serious.

Now one more, when men talk they use telegram style, except ministers, but of course, they get paid for it. But when women talk, I have this picture for you, they talk like eating a steak, they slowly take a little bite and they savor it with every ounce of their tongue slowly little by little. That's how they talk. We men already are a mile ahead and they are just on the first bite.

"[unintelligible]"

Exactly, exactly, and that is kind of hard, isn't it? You're always ahead of her and you have to remember, you think 10 times faster than you talk too. So if they talk long, I hope the women are getting a little pity with us because it's difficult to communicate.

"[unintelligible]"

I always predict when I get a text message and it goes beep-beep, beep-beep-beep, I say, "Michelle, there's a woman texting me here." Usually correct.

Alright, number B, recognize that most marital conflicts are based on miscommunication. This is an experiential statement, okay? Like I said already to you, I think most of my conflict with my wife has been simply because I didn't listen well or I didn't speak clearly and if you have periodically or often arguments and disagreements, please consider whether you are not speaking clear enough.

For example, Ross says to his wife, "I'll be home early today." Evelyn goes, "Yeah, really?" But what does it really mean? She thinks he's going to be home at 4 o'clock, early, so she's got the dinner ready or whatever ready, everything is ready for Ross to come home at 4 o'clock. Well, he comes home at 5:30 or 6, and that's early maybe for him. I don't know, maybe 7 is not early. So do you see the conflict arising here? You said one thing, he said something else but you never talked about what is that early mean and this is just a small little example of a miscommunication. "Sure, I'll do it soon." A month. She thought the next day. So there we get a conflict.

Or this has happened to me many times, well, not many times, sometimes, when I come home and I meet Michelle at the door and she's rather flustered and says, "I'm upset! Why didn't you call me if you're going to be so late, 45 minutes?" Well, 45 minutes is not a big deal, is it? It's a big deal to Vicky too, it looks like it. So when she says to me, "Why didn't you call me?" I try to douse it, "45 minutes, Michelle, not a problem." But what I didn't know is that she heard, this was in New Zealand most of the time when she heard the fire bell going which means there's an accident or there's something happening. So 45 minutes late, he was going to be home at 5, it's quarter to 6, what happened? So what is she really trying to tell me when she stands at the door saying, "Why are you so late?" What is she really trying to say?

"I'm worried sick."

"I'm worried sick," and I'm thinking, "Why didn't you say that right away? I am also worried about you. I'm so glad you're home." We have no conflict. I would not have said, "Only 45 minutes and I couldn't help it. The conversation went longer than I thought and I just couldn't stop it," and you know, all kinds of excuses. So clear communication avoids so many of these conflicts.

Now then lastly, recognize that there are quite a few obstacles and I only give you about six of them here for good connection, and if you think about this car wheel with the lug nuts and think about the long wrench here, you use these? Those are the wrong wrenches to get the lug nuts tighter to make the wheel run. Defensiveness. I'll admit this is one of my biggest weaknesses in communication. I right away want to be defending myself and someone comes to me and has a question about the sermon, I go in defense mode instantly. I keep correcting myself, "Just listen out this guy. Maybe he's just mentioned the ?? . Maybe there's nothing wrong about what you said. Maybe he is receptive of what you said isn't quite right." So don't get defensive but the moment you get defensive in confrontation or communication, you begin to refute, you begin to excuse, you begin to explain or justify and what are you not doing? You're not listening. You're not doing and making an effort to understand the other person, what really is he or she trying to say.

So correct yourself. It's an obstacle for a good open communication. The same with prejudging. Prejudging is Proverbs 18, for example, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame upon him." Now what do I mean with prejudging is when I determine ahead of time, "Well, this is not important to me." It's important to her or to him. It is important. Prejudging would be when I say, "Oh, here we go again." I already judged the matter. I might have heard of it again but, hey, I already am putting myself in the wrong spot or I prejudged the motives or the intentions of this communication and that hinders you, again, from what? A prejudgmental attitude hinders you to do what? Listening and now this is the second time we made that answer.

So are you already beginning to cue in what is actually the most important thing in communication? Is it speaking or listening? It's listening. That's interesting. Our most important aspect in good communication is that we listen well rather than speak well, and we usually don't listen well. Do you have the problem too that when you meet somebody

for the first time and they introduce their name, that you don't know two minutes later what their name was? And you think, "Now, oh, what was that again? Was he George or John or Peter? I have no clue." And you just keep on avoiding the issue by saying something. Now why is it that you forgot his name?

"I would say I forgot but it was probably because you weren't listening."

You weren't listening. Why is that? Because you're worried about what to say next after he's done talking. You're not listening. That's a common problem. Try out next time, if he comes, don't worry about what you're gonna say next. Don't worry about what he's gonna ask. Just listen. I guarantee, you will remember that name better.

Now, number 3, gunpowder words. That explains itself, right? I use the word "scolding" here and that's the Greek word which actually means in the Greek or is akin to barking and howling. What are gunpowder words? "You can't do anything right." It's a put-down and that immediately hits the other person between his ribs. Or, "That's just like you men and women always." A put-down or gunpowder word. Now maybe your wife is not such a good cook but if you tell her, "You know, why don't you ask my mom once how to cook?"

"[unintelligible]"

No, don't do that. I know that but there are people who are that helpful to break down their marriage or to break down their life by making such gunpowder statements.

"What about if I ask my wife to cook [unintelligible]?"

You go ask her that tonight.

So gunpowder words are words that are belittling, that are name-calling, that are contentious, are contemptuous, condescending, derogatory, unfair, abusive. By the way, all of these words are related to the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." That is gunpowder words because you can kill the spirit, you can kill a person's motivation, you can kill him in his own dignity, and that is not helping. And sadly, yeah, also in marriage life sometimes these things are happening.

Now another one is interruption. Why do we usually interrupt the person that is talking to us? We don't care, okay, what else? Unimportant, it's prejudging, we've already said it was not important so I don't have to listen to the whole long story. Okay, so you know they're right and you don't want to hear the whole story, okay, that's an interesting one. Why else? Okay, some good answers. Sometimes, of course, we simply don't have time to listen to the whole long story and we want to get to the point so let's help you for a moment to jump off to the end already, and that's really actually quite disrespectful. It's a disrespect. An interruption is a disrespectful thing to do. And again, it's a non-verbal communication. Well, it's usually verbal but it's also non-verbal when we are not letting the person speak their whole thoughts out carefully.

Then the wrong timing. That's also one I've learned experientially over the years. I, of course, my wife has the privilege she has most of the time her husband at home so she doesn't have to wait until 5 o'clock or 6 o'clock when he gets home to resolve an issue. So over the years, of course, we have worked it out pretty well, but it just doesn't work to always jump in in the middle of the day and say, "Hey, can I talk to you about this and that?" It could be the wrong time. It can also be why I'm a little bit flustered already and a little bit sad and that's not the right time to bring up a contentious issue. I'm already a little bit hot under the collar, even though I don't talk about myself here honestly, but if you see that your husband or your wife is already in a tight position and not doing well, then it's not a good time to bring up communication. I always think the best way to communicate about some controversial issues is do it simply like this, you go to him or her and say, "Look, I have an issue with this and this," yeah? "When is it a good time that we can talk about this?" And that's the end of the conversation. You set the time, it obviously has to be that day or the next day if it can wait until the next day, if it's not an anger issue. But what's going to happen between now and then? A lot of communication is going to take place right here and most of the time if it's an issue that needs to be resolved that is wrong and right, then your conscience is already working on this problem before you get to talk with each other. So most of the time the problem is already solved, at least the blame has been dealt with, it's accepted, and now you can constructively work on resolving the issue. So much better than just barging in and saying, "Hey, I'm upset about this!" And you know, we have energy behind and that usually ends up not to be a positive discussion.

So the last, unresolved issues. You all know that if you don't resolve something, now maybe you don't all know but I know that if you don't resolve things, you put them under the carpet, as we call it, in common sense they always jump up again in the next conflict and they multiply. They multiply. In communication, you have to remember the white elephant story. You know the white elephant story? It's a story book that I used to own. I don't know where it ever went to, probably my kids said that's the book that goes to the recycling. But anyway it was a good book. It was a book with a family sitting in a living room. They're sitting on their chairs and so on and they're having a little snack together, but the only problem in the room is there's a big white elephant in the middle of the room. That's kind of annoying, of course, a big thing standing with his trunk and his ears flapping and his tall legs. So it's kind of hard in a circle to really look at each other, so you know, you have to move this way to look at the other person, and then of course, the elephant moves his leg again, and you have to move back again. So that story goes back and forth like that, the communication in this family's room is not happening because of the elephant. So on the next page, you see that one of them goes upstairs to their bedroom, the next one goes downstairs in the basement, the next one leaves to the car, goes somewhere else, and the whole family disintegrates. What's the point of the story? That nobody talked about the white elephant. "How can we get rid of this white elephant in this room so that we can have a conversation together?"

Now that's a simple story to illustrate that unresolved issues become this big white elephant and it clogs up the arteries of communication. It's exactly what God says in

Ephesians 4, right? He says don't lie against each other. Don't lie and lying means you don't tell the truth. There is an issue there that you are putting under the carpet, you don't talk it out, you don't resolve it, and then you get angry and anger doesn't always come out as a burst, it could internalize and then you give place to the devil. The devil goes in there and he stirs the pot, and so what happens when the next conflict comes, he just takes the whole pot out and pours it all over you both again and, "Yeah, you did that last week. You did that, that," and it all comes out again. Total mess.

So let's remember that we cannot live on with unresolved issues and expect to have good communication, and when we resolve, it's not enough to say, "I'm sorry." Here today I was, again, made privy of a marriage where the husband has never said, "I'm sorry." He never said it. He hasn't even said that, that's just the most minimal way of saying something, "I'm sorry." But I'm sorry to say that "I'm sorry" is not enough in communication. Yeah? If we use the five biblical steps of seeking to resolve an issue, it begins with acknowledging your sin against the other. That's number 1. "I was wrong when I yelled to you when you were trying to talk to me. That's a sin, I yelled at you." That's acknowledging.

Number 2, name and shame the sin. "I yelled. That was selfish and that was inconsiderate and that was disrespectful." Those are the sins. I need to name them and shame them. That's hard. Now it gets harder, right? "I'm sorry" is easy but to say, "I yelled at you and I was disrespectful and I was unkind."

Number 3, you acknowledge the harm you did. "I have really hurt you by those words and I feel terrible about that." And now you reach over in the aisle and you acknowledge what you've done. You have hurt him or her. You know, these are the harder steps.

Number 4, you express your repentance. "I should have controlled my voice and let you speak all you had to say and I hope that I will in the future no more do this."

And then the last question is, "Will you please forgive me?" And that's the hardest one because now you lay yourself at the feet of the person. There's no more rights. To forgive you is a matter of grace. You've got no rights. You know, that's where our pride comes against and that's why it's so hard for us to say I'm sorry or to go through these steps. But guess what? If you come to this last stage and you say, "Will you forgive me for all what I've done or whatever I have done?" Then this devil that sits in between can't sit there anymore. It will not be forgotten but once it is forgiven, it's buried and also never to be brought up again. Very important in communication.

Then lastly, blame-shifting. I'd say that's the oldest trick in the world in terms of communication, right? Who was the first one to do that? God started having communication with Adam and Adam immediately went in blame-shifting mode and God confronted him nicely, "Where art thou? What happened to you? How are you naked?" I mean, what a gentle way. God didn't take out a big stick, "Now you did that." No, very gentle, came and approached him and immediately Adam went into blame-shifting. No communication other than getting out of it or so, trying to not take the blame.

So please, the bottom line that you need to always remember, friends, and I am learning it slowly, the other person is never, the other person's behavior is never an excuse for your own bad behavior. That's a hard one to learn. Even if he yells at you or even if he hits you is for you still not an excuse for you to sin and justify it, and this is a common issue in communication that I deal with, of course, also in counseling. I am responsible for my own sinful choices, no matter what the other person does. You cannot make him responsible for my sinful choices and yet you know in your own mind that's what we do sometimes. "Yeah, but yeah, she was nagging me so badly! Or yeah, he was so disrespectful and therefore I lost control and I hit him, so it is really his fault!" No, you hit him. You are at fault. What he did is his problem, not yours, and that's an important mindset to really adopt in yourself.

Now the last two then, recognize that silence can be the most vicious and destructive communication. Also silence can be good, of course. I love that little picture that I saw many years ago, "To be in love means that you can be silent together for a time." Don't always have to talk. But usually silence is used in a communication as a power thing. I've heard husbands use the silent approach to coerce their wife, to belittle them or to break them down by just saying nothing for days. That's so difficult. Just totally ignores that they don't exist. Don't talk to them. Yeah, that means contempt. That means, "I don't care." That is a powerful way of manipulating. So don't use that, please.

And then the last one, recognize the influence of your self-talk. Self-talk is the message you tell yourself about how you perceive reality. The best example is in the Bible, is Martha and the story of Martha and Mary. Just picture Martha for a moment, 13 people come in the house and say to prepare a meal. So she runs off into the kitchen and she's, you know, pouring her heart into that making this meal. What's happening in her head? What's happening in her head, tell me?

"[unintelligible]"

She's talking, right? Alright, she's talking. "Mary ought to be here. I know why Mary's not here. This is not fair for Mary and this is not right. Now why do I have to make these 13 people a meal? Why is she sitting out there in the living room just listening to Jesus?" Right, self-talk? Now along comes the devil and he really gets her going. He says, "This is not right. You should not allow this. You should do something." And she does, she jumps in the living room and she doesn't address Mary, she addresses Jesus and she says, "Doesn't thou care?" This is totally inappropriate to say this to the Lord Jesus, "Doesn't thou care that my sister is not helping me?" Now that's what self-talk does. Yeah? We do this all along, we self-talk all the time, don't we?

Let's give another example that's not so much in the Bible. Self-talk is that you are evaluating the other person or the facts around your life and come to a conclusion and that conclusions sometimes comes into actions that are totally out of place and it becomes a source of reaction. Let me give you an example here in your own life. You are the wife and you observe your husband sitting in the chair reading a newspaper after he comes

back from work. So what goes on in your head? "I hope he notices that I am tired too." Right? Something, first thing, "I hope he notices I'm tired too. I'd like to sit down as well. It's been a busy day for me." I'm just trying to imagine what goes on in the minds of these women. "The whole day I have not had a moment of quiet with all these kids running around and there he sits nice in that chair. Spent all day actually quite quiet, he's only been painting in the house by himself." So, sorry, painters here. "And you know what? It's already 6:30 and we're running late and we have Bible study tonight." All this goes on in her head, right? So now what's happening next? You can predict.

So finally she interrupts John just like Martha did, "Say, John, don't you care that we are late and that we are having to do all this?" Bang. John is just kind of nicely in his newspaper and he all of a sudden, his wife jumps on him. What's gonna happen? John is gonna really fold the newspaper nicely, he raises, "Oh, my darling, I am so sorry that I forgot to notice." No, he doesn't, he reacts defensively. "You know, I'm so tired!" Do you see the self-talk? Begin to notice your self-talk. So indeed you have every right to say to John, "John, hey, could you give me hand here? It's kinda late and I'm also tired and, you know, if we do it together, we could sit down here for half an hour before Bible study starts." Something like that.

The other way goes around too, of course. The house was a mess and you spend two hours cleaning and dusting and doing dishes and whatever is necessary and then you see her coming home. She, in other words, that was you doing all the cleaning. The he was doing all the cleaning because he wanted to give his wife a good surprise. So she comes home and she hauls out all the groceries for the next month that she's been taking and she begins to talk to you, who she saw in the store and she found such a good deal, and you know, we just stayed in our budget, and she's talking all that stuff but she's not saying a thing about this clean house, about the clean kitchen. She doesn't see that we vacuumed. She doesn't see that you did the dishes. What goes on in your head? There is self-talk going on. Something like, "Well, she should really have noticed all I did, huh? She doesn't even see that?" Self-talk. "How can she be so inconsiderate after all this work for her and she doesn't even notice that? I don't even get a thank you." Now that's wrong perhaps that she didn't notice but the wrong is in you, and maybe a better self-talk is, "Shoot, man, I do this every day, I forget to notice what she's all done for me, isn't it?" Maybe you get a cookie of my own dough today. No, self-talk can be very destructive and, again, it's a little bit of an experiential thing because I think we do it all and I look back at my own life, I can see my self-talk sometimes gets me into trouble.

Okay, we've come to the end. A little bit longer tonight. Finally, I have another C I found out as I was concluding my message and this lug nut, so we're going to invent a new wheel with six lug nuts. This is going to be a seller, okay, but in good communication, let's put another C, it's called compliments. Compliments. It's a very handy one to have. Try it out. Try out complimenting and I predict something, that once you have done a lot of more complimenting in your family and in your relationship, that you are going to have a lot more fun with each other and at home. Kids thrive on praise. Kids thrive on compliments. Kids thrive, thrive to do better when they are surrounded with people who recognize what they do well and I am just speaking this loud to myself and my wife

knows, because that's not my tendency. My tendency is always to see what is not done and what's not finished and what's not in its place and what is not cleaned up, right? And I usually focus on those things. "Hey, guys, can you clean up your mess?" Instead of saying, "Oh, how nice! We've got at least one coat on the rack today." You know, but that's a positive twist to it and why don't we do this? Because immediately it changes the whole mood.

"[unintelligible]"

Well, it does but it isn't a sarcastic compliment.

"I don't know if I agree. [unintelligible]"

It is a fun way of getting something across, I realize that, but we often get our negative energy out to get something done, but try something in a positive way to get something done.

"[unintelligible]. They don't get it."

Maybe your age kids don't yet.

"[unintelligible]"

They hear what, they have totally selective hearing. That's correct. We need to keep that in mind when Joyce gets bigger... "I didn't hear you," that's a lie. "I didn't want to hear you," right? So they're hearing you alright but what I'm trying to say this last point is compliment is positive communication and we, I'm gonna say, I usually am a little bit lean in that. That's all I wanted to end it with.

Hey, thanks. Any questions? Thanks for coming. Much more nice. Ah, home instruction, home construction, right? Here again, want to evaluate yourself about harshness and then another one about biblical communication inventory on page 2. Just go through that and give yourself a great one and see how well you do this or not well, not do, or not do it well. And then the last part is the fun assignment, practice communicating non-verbally the following emotions, attitudes, issues over the next month. Don't tell your wife, tell her at the end of the day if you tried and failed, that, you know, maybe she has to tweak you a little bit in terms of how to do it better, but it just shows you the power of non-verbal communication. That's the idea of it.

Let's take a moment to come before the Lord and close tonight.

Lord, once again we come before thee to pray that the thoughts and instructions of tonight may have been helpful and may also enrich our understanding of the importance of communication and how to connect with each other so that we have a positive building exercise as we share and as we communicate with each other. Lord, thou knows how easily sin and how easily also Satan takes hold of this and stirs disagreements and

distances and pain. I pray that thou would graciously watch over us now as we go home again and remember those in need, those in sickness, those also, Lord, nearing the end of their life's journey and thou communicate to them thy word through thy Spirit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Good night.