

For the Love of the Family Ministries

*Missionaries to America's Forgotten Mission Field, the Family
Communication In Marriage*

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In many years in the pastoral ministry, I have observed and counseled many people about their marriage. Through For the Love of the Family I receive many contacts each month from Christians about the needs of their marriages. Also, I receive contacts from Pastors and their wives who are struggling in their marriage. There are six points the Bible brings out concerning marriage which I believe are very important to have a Christ honoring marriage. The six keys are: 1. Maturity 2. Submission 3. Love 4. Communication 5. Prayer 6. Christ.

There are also some marriage killers which I will talk about in this article. Many of the marital problems today deal in the areas of spiritual problems. We have many people today who profess to be saved but really never have been born again. We also have many people who are saved, but not living a Spirit controlled life.

There may be those who read this article and will immediately say, "Pastor Coomer doesn't understand my situation". Or, "my situation is different". Folks, the problem is that I understand all too well. Many folks get hit in these areas and their first reaction is it won't work or he just doesn't understand. The real problem that I have found is the willingness to apply the spiritual principles to their life.

My friend let me ask you a serious question. Do you want your will or do you want to be conformed to His will and have a happy Christ honoring marriage? Many folks today are accepting second or third rate principles in their marriage and are unhappy, but they either do not understand what to do or they hear what to do and rebel against it. In essence, they make excuses for not having a good marriage.

Communication is the main problem or the starter of a problem in about 99 percent of marriages. In essence, Christians do not talk to one another, and they certainly don't talk about spiritual things in their lives. They rarely talk about anything. Young lovers rarely have a communication problem. They seem to be able to talk about anything. Somehow that ability often vanishes after they are

married. Lack of communication is almost always a problem for couples who come for marriage counseling. If it is not lack of communication, it is the wrong communication. **Ephesians 4:29 and 31, “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. Let ALL bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice”. Folks this is a powerful portion of scripture, did you notice “evil speaking”. It says to, “Put away all evil speaking”.**

Most evil speaking comes from other things in this verse. Things like bitterness, wrath, and anger. By the way it says to put away all these too! Communication under pressure of anger and shouting is not the approach. However, that is the approach most professing Christians use in direct disobedience to God’s Word. The reason that most children who grow up in Christian homes today do not end up living for God is because of the anger of their parents.

Problems and differences in a marriage are not dangerous, not being able to communicate the differences, or problem areas is dangerous. A good marriage is worked at, it just doesn’t happen.

As long as two people can keep the lines of communication open and freely express their feelings, differences can be resolved. A leading newspaper columnist who gives advice to people says, “The most single ingredient in a marriage is the ability to communicate”.

Years ago a couple in our church, Keith and Darlene came for marriage counseling. He worked all kinds of shifts and she worked during the day. Each of them had several extra curricular activities. They only saw each other in passing and they never talked. When they did talk they argued. As they sat across from me in my office, the first thing she said was “I do not love him”. It did not take me too long to realize they did not really know each other.

I said, “Okay Darlene, tell me the things that bother you about Keith”. She went on for twenty minutes with out coming up for air! It went back to six months after they were married. Since there are two sides to every argument, I said, “Keith tell me what bothers you about Darlene”. He took off for twenty minutes. They had been married ten years. He asked her why she did not tell him these things? She stated, “She was afraid he would get mad”. She asked him why he did not tell her these things? His answer was, “she would go into the silent treatment”.

By learning to communicate, that couple soon learned to exchange their honest feelings without fear. For any Pastor reading this article, I find that many Pastors who are having difficulty in their marriage are consumed with their ministry and are rarely communicating with their wife. Here is a couple that is to encourage others spiritually and they are fighting, yelling, and not being controlled by the Spirit. Folks, that means you are not filled with the Spirit, controlled by the Spirit, and are not in fellowship with God. The Holy Spirit is grieved, Ephesians 4:30. These are all the things you must have to minister to others, yet you are failing at home to do the things God wants you to do first. I recently read where someone said, “that the family is only mentioned a few times in the Bible and there is a lot more ground to cover”. How foolish of a statement that is. You lose your family and you do not have a ministry, I Timothy 3:4-5. In fact, one of the real weaknesses of the church today is the lack of spiritual families and leaders. A person who is out of fellowship with God, and trying to do the work of God in their own power is heading for a disaster. They are capable of all the sins of Galatians 5:19-21. Their children will be lead in that direction as well. Galatians 5: 25 says, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit”. Ladies and gentlemen, the statistics are staggering of the people whose children grow up in church and they end up not living for God. Yet whole chapters of the Bible are dedicated to this and God even devoted a whole

book to it, the book of Proverbs. The statistics for leader's children are staggering as well.

There are three communication killers in a marriage. How does the wall of resistance to communication gradually build up between two people that love each other? There are three weapons people use to defend themselves.

1. Explosion 2. Tears 3. Silence.

As we look at the three weapons you will find that by using them married people gradually build a wall of resistance so they are no longer able to communicate.

1. **Explosion:** Whenever a person is told his or her shortcomings, rather than face them honestly, their natural reaction is to explode. This explosion is the result of inner anger and hostility that causes them to attempt self protection, Ephesians 4:31. When someone, particularly our partner, points out our weaknesses we tend to grasp for something to cover us. What this does is to teach our partner that "you cannot come that close to my intimate weaknesses. If you do, I will explode".
2. **Tears:** This tool is used basically by women. Like other weapons, it is a way of saying to your partner, "Do not tell me my shortcomings or I will cry". So another brick is laid in the wall that stifles communication. Men you need to learn to distinguish between your wife's tears of emotion, stress, joy, and self pity. Women are far more intricate creatures and often show their emotions through tears. Do not despise your wife's tears. Be patient, kind, for the emotional creature you married is just being a woman, Ephesians 4:32.
3. **Silence:** **Silence is the weapon many older Christians learn to use. It does not take long to realize that it is not Christian to get mad and explode all over the place when our partner crosses us or points out our weaknesses. So, we resort to silence. However, that is a dangerous tool. Silence is caused by anger and when it goes on for long periods of time it causes real communication problems. In Ephesians 4: 30-32, we find that "ALL anger, bitterness, and wrath grieve the Holy Spirit". Likewise, Galatians 5:16 says, "This I say then walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh". So what is the answer? Right here very simply in this verse. The Christian is not walking in the Spirit and is fulfilling the lust of the flesh and it is leading to disaster in their marriage and in their children. What kind of children does a "lust of the flesh" Christian produce? A "lust of the flesh" child. That dear friend, is the reason most children who grow up in a Christian home do not end up serving God. You cannot be angry at your wife or husband and walk in the Spirit. It is just not possible.**

Let's talk about how we should communicate. Ephesians 4:15, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ". The Bible teaches that we should "speak the truth in love". One thing to bear in mind, is that the more truth you speak, the more love you should use in conveying that truth. Truth is a sharp two edged sword, so we use it carefully. When you have an area in your marriage that needs communication I would recommend the six following steps:

1. Pray for the wisdom of God and the filling of the Holy Spirit, James 1:5, Ephesians 5:18. When you seek God's wisdom you may find your objection to your partner is not really valid. You need to ask is this my problem or theirs? God may show you it is your problem. Or God may lead you to go ahead.
2. Plan a time that is good for your partner. Not after 10:00 P.M. Things tend to look darker at night. You and they are tired. Pick a time when both of you are in the best possible mood to look objectively at themselves.
3. Speak the truth in love. In kind words say what is on your heart. Make sure your love is equal to your truth. Proverbs 15:1, "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words

stir up anger”.

4. **Do not lose your temper. In fact every Christian needs to learn that anger is never the answer and they must put it away in their life.** Otherwise your marriage and your children are in serious trouble. It needs to be said, that many Christians do not think they have an anger problem since they only get angry every now and then. You know, once or twice a month. Folks, I like to illustrate this like this. How would you like to live by a volcano which only exploded once or twice a month? I think you see the point. Wise couples determine early in marriage that they will not raise their voices at each other. Under anger we often say more than we intend and usually this excess is cutting, cruel, and unnecessary. Anger on one person’s heart usually precipitates an angry response by the other. Kindly state your objective in love.
5. Allow for reaction time. Do not be surprised if your communication is met with an explosive reaction, particularly in the early stages of marriage. Remember you have the advantage in that you know what you are going to say. You prayed over it and have been able to prepare yourself. Your partner is taken by surprise. Do not defend yourself, but let your partner think about what you have said. He or she may never admit that you are right, but usually you will find that it will create a change in behavior and after all, you are more interested in that than verbal agreement. However, mature couples learn to communicate and do so without getting angry. God will work in your lives and you will be happier if you learn to do as he has commanded.
6. Commit the problem to God. Once you have told your partner, you have done about all you can humanely do. From that point on you must trust God either to help your partner or to supply the grace you need to live with it.

There are two golden experiences that every married couple should communicate repeatedly throughout their marriage:

1. I am sorry! 2. I love you! Learn to be able to say this and you will go a long way toward having a good marriage. Say to your partner, I love you and say it meaningfully and often. Make sure you are controlled by the Holy Spirit daily. Every day ask the Lord if there is anything that stands between you and Him. When He shows you what it is, ask for forgiveness for that sin and turn from it, I John 1:9. Then make sure to ask the Holy Spirit to fill you that day. Also, ask the Holy Spirit to help you love your partner and to communicate in the proper way each day. Make it an important part of your prayer life. Ask the Lord to help you in the same manner with your children. After all you want their heart, Proverbs 23:26. If you have an angry spirit it must be turned over to God daily.

Kim and I have practiced something down through the years of our marriage. Every Sunday night after church we take a drive together. We talk about the services of the day, our relationship, our relationships with others, and our relationship with God. I ask her what she thinks and she asks me what I think. I also ask her what she thought about the messages that were preached that day, whether I preached or someone else preached. While our girls were home I would take them for a drive individually after church on Sunday afternoon and talk. Remember, these talks are not just about mundane things, but we talk about what we are learning from God’s Word and the desire’s he has put upon our heart. I also took this time to explain to them how important it was to have an intimate, personal, and passionate relationship with God. If you are too busy to communicate you are too busy. However, it is easy to get so busy we do not communicate and years go by. You only have your children in your home for 18 years; you need to redeem the time. Also, you have to commit yourself to communicating. Make time for it. Those rides in the car become special times and my daughters every now and then talk about their rides with dad. Remember your wife or husband will be there long after

those 18 years are over. The sadness is sometimes after the children are gone, a couple finds out the years have gone by and they really do not know each other because they have not communicated.

A good marriage is something that is worked at it doesn't just happen!

If you do not talk with each other and have a Spirit filled life, you will have a disaster in your marriage, ministry, and a disaster with your children.

Dr. Terry L. Coomer is the Pastor of Hope Baptist Church, and the Director of For the Love of the Family Ministries. He has also served as the Publisher of the nation's fastest growing daily newspaper. Pastor Coomer holds Family Conferences in the local church. To have a meeting at your church or other needs he may be contacted at (501) 819-0446, tlcoomer@juno.com. There are many helpful articles and material on our web site to help you change your life at www.fortheloveofthefamily.com. We serve the God of answers. If you need help finding those answers you may contact us at tlcoomer@juno.com. To be removed from our mailing list send an e-mail to tlcoomer@juno.com.