

“I CHOOSE TO PRAISE YOU!”

AFFIRMING AND ADORING THROUGH GODLY COMMUNICATION

Communication is a powerful thing! It is the way God has allowed us to express what’s in our thoughts and to say what’s on our hearts. If we couldn’t communicate, we would have no idea how to relate to one another, because all relationships depend on healthy communication. Our interaction is undoubtedly one of the most important tools that God has given to us in our relationships, and especially in marriage, but without *effective and righteous* communication, our growth in relationships is stunted.

There’s no doubt, when you come to share life together in the most intimate way that there will be frustrations. Some of the difficulties come from the fact that men and women just communicate differently. Sometimes it’s because we were raised in homes with different communication propensities. For example, in different homes different things are funny, or where certain topics just are not discussed, or where everyone reacts differently in hard times, or where family members show each other affection in different ways. Learning to communicate with one another in a healthy way is one of the most vitally important patterns to establish early on in the relationship, especially because it helps **avoid** conflict at certain times and helps **work through** it at others.

It’s no wonder then, that God’s best and most helpful instruction on marriage and relationships would be packed with helpful content about loving, righteous, godly communication. In our section, **4:1-7**, standing at the altar with his bride, Solomon publicly models righteous communication, and not only honors and affirms his precious wife before the dazzled crowd, but sets the standard for his home and ours as to what godly communication looks like.

- A. How does Solomon begin and end his poetic affirmation of his bride in **4:1 and 4:7** – why is this significant?

- B. What is the meaning and impact of the powerful words this thoughtful groom uses in **4:1-6**?
 - **Eyes** –

 - **Hair** –

 - **Teeth** –

 - **Lips** –

 - **Mouth** –

- **Temples** –
 - **Neck** –
 - **Breasts** –
- C. What desire does Solomon express to his bride in v. 6 and is such language appropriate for this kind of public setting?
- D. What affirmation does he make about her in v. 7 and why is this important? Is it true? Explain.

There are 6 observations of Solomon’s righteous adoration and affirmation model for all couples, who desire to honor and praise their partners, to the glory of God:

1. **P** _____
2. **R** _____
3. **A** _____
4. **I** _____
5. **S** _____
6. **E** _____

It’s usually the breakdown in communication that lets a couple know that something is wrong with their relationship. Most couples would admit that this area of relationships is hardest. In fact that’s how most couples broach the subject in counseling – “we need to learn how to communicate with each other better.” And while that is true, we all need to learn to express ourselves better we must realize that the Bible doesn’t just offer us a list of techniques to simply change what we say; it forces us to take a deeper look into our hearts to discover *why* we say the things we do. Scripture tells us to guard against the assumption that bad communication is always the problem by itself – actually it is often times the *symptom* of a deeper problem. Jesus said in **Matthew**

12:34, “The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.” In other words, when we open our mouths, we can actually look into each other’s hearts and see what’s really going on inside. And that’s important to note because we can’t solve communication problems if we don’t deal with the heart attitudes that come through in our communication.

What we say, how we say it, and what we do *not* say, reveals something about us, which cannot be fixed merely by altering our choice of words or tone of voice. There are times when better techniques *can* be helpful to improve a relationship, but sinful, ungodly communication is only fixed by changing the heart. And if we don’t change the heart that is behind the words we use, and only refine the way we say them, then we have just become more articulate and erudite in our ungodliness.

Instead, each of us needs to ask ourselves, “*Why* did that just come out of my mouth? *Why* would I say something like that?” The problem is not that we’ve said it, but that we’ve *thought it*. When we open our mouths, what we were thinking became audible and the other person heard what was going on inside! Therein lies the problem, and it is with the heart.

Because that’s true, our goal is not to just muzzle what we really think and make sure that it never comes out! We need to change what we think, and if I can do that at the heart level then our problems with bad communication will begin to disappear. The purpose of this study is to provide a *crash-course on communication*, Biblically speaking, so that we fulfill in our relationships, the words of the apostle Paul who said in ***Ephesians 4:29***, “***Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.***” This is one of the best texts to generally summarize how we ought to communicate with each other, whether married or not, but certainly applied to marriage, its exhortation is appropriate.

- What kinds of words does Paul forbid in **v. 29**?

- What would be some examples of such categories of words, based on the following Scriptures?

Romans 3:10-14

Proverbs 10:10, 18, 31-32

Proverbs 14:23

Proverbs 20:19

Proverbs 25:23

Proverbs 26:20

Proverbs 29:5

Proverbs 29:20 (cf. 20:25)

Ephesians 4:25

Ephesians 5:3

Ephesians 5:6

- According to **Ephesians 4:29** above, when and only when should we speak, and what should characterize our words?

Marriage itself depends on healthy, godly, Biblical communication. For this reason, having surveyed the principles that govern appropriate communication, we will now consider some of the most common circuit-jammers in marriage – verbal and non-verbal, and then how we can repair them when they cause conflict.

1. VERBAL CIRCUIT-JAMMERS

We might fit these into a category that we could describe as OVERTALK – *talking too much and listening too little*. We must be especially guarded here, because in many ways, the health of our relationships depends on good, steady, consistent forms of communication. What is the warning in **Proverbs 10:19**?

- A. **Interrupting Others** – sometimes unintentional but often rude, this circuit-jammer happens when the person interrupting doesn’t have consideration for the thoughts, ideas, and opinions of others. He apparently doesn’t feel the need to hear what others have to say; his only real concern is being heard, and when he has, he has no other real need for the conversation. He has a higher view of his own thoughts and ideas than what he perceives in others. What is valuable and important is what he has to say, not what he needs to hear. How does the principle found in **Proverbs 18:2** encourage the person who interrupts to refocus why he is in the conversation?

- B. **Monopolizing conversations** – talking in a way that dominates the conversation and does not encourage others to share. The person who does this isn’t talking only about himself necessarily, but is controlling the direction and tone of the conversation to what he wants to talk about. Perhaps he is the expert on everything, or has a story of his own experience that he has to share. He may have to have the last word, because he values his own ideas, thoughts,

and opinions as more valuable than anyone else’s. It is a form of self-exaltation. How does **Proverbs 10:8; 13:3; and 15:28** help him?

- C. **Focusing on ourselves** – pulling the conversation to ourselves in a way that all we are engaged in talking about is ourselves and we are very eager to encourage others to talk about us as well, especially in a positive light. We might brag about our accomplishments, be it our sports stats, our grades, our hard work, or whatever when we draw attention to ourselves, we reveal that in our hearts we are itch for some form of commendation or recognition. How do **Proverbs 27:2** and **Proverbs 20:5** correct this bent?

- D. **Jumping to conclusions** – thinking we have heard enough or already know the other person’s thinking and assume that we no longer need to listen. We can start to assign motives and draw conclusions before we actually know the truth! Consider how **Proverbs 18:13, 15, and 17** inform a correct response when we would be tempted to *assume* rather than base our conclusions on objective fact.

- E. **Defending ourselves** – avoiding the scrutiny of others and justify our actions in a way that shields us from accountability. We make excuses. We blameshift. We minimize. We get off topic. We get technical. We rationalize. We say things like, “It’s not my fault! I can’t help it! You made me do it! Well, let’s talk about some of your faults! Well technically, that’s not what I did!” Many times, we have our own personal bias when it comes to our view of things. We tend to think that we our way of looking at things is right. Consider the example of **Proverbs 26:13-16**, how the senseless defensive reasoning of someone, whose character is obvious to everyone except him, and how his real problem leads him to actually justify himself to others.

- F. **Nagging and badgering** –using our words to get what we want, to the point of pestering and annoying the other person, wearing down their resistance until they finally give in. Sometimes we do this by bringing things up over and over again, in an attempt to “remind” the other person of what we want, just in case they forgot, or so that that move on it just a little faster. To what does the Scripture in **Proverbs 25:15** compare this person? What are some ways to be helpful instead?

- G. **Critical faultfinding** – perfecting the ability to be an expert detective at other people’s sins, and to be accomplished as a historian of past faults. Jesus described these people as those who try to help people remove specks from their eyes while they have planks in their own (**Matthew 7**). They can see in

others what they cannot see in themselves and can recall with what seems like perfect memory, the past sins of others, to use them in a strategic way. Sometimes we do this as a last resort when all other attempts to win an argument have failed. We dig up past sin in order to rub their noses in it. Consider the implications of **Proverbs 16:27** and **Proverbs 17:9** – what should be an appropriate Biblical response to sin (**Job 40:2**)?

Thomas Watson said, *“God has given us two ears, but one tongue, to show that we should be swift to hear, but slow to speak. God has set a double fence before the tongue: the teeth and the lips, to teach us to be wary that we offend not with our tongue.”*

2. NON-VERBAL CIRCUIT-JAMMERS

This includes the communication of what you don’t say, where your actions speak louder than words. And sometimes, if you listen carefully enough, you can learn just as much, if not more, by what is not said in a conversation. We might call this, **UNDERTALK**. And there might be many reasons why we don’t engage in conversation with others, especially our mates like we should. It could be:

- **Fatigue**– after all godly communication takes hard work, and sometimes we say we are too tired! Watch for this at late night conversations in bed, when one partner wants to have a deep talk, that you don’t drift off into a deep sleep!
- **Bitterness** – a desire to punish others with internal hardness and withdrawal because we don’t like the way they have treated us.
- **Self-pity** – where we feel like we have nothing worth saying and nothing to contribute, so we use that as an excuse to pull away, all the while realizing that we have actually drawn more attention to ourselves.
- **Fear** – sometimes we become afraid of what others will think of us if we speak up, or whether it will have a negative effect on us: we will be embarrassed by their laughing, wounded by their ridiculing, hurt by their rejection, etc.
- **Busyness** – we think we do not have time to communicate because we are wrapped up in so many things that we don’t have time to talk and listen to one another. Heed this well: you don’t have time not to!

Consider what the following verses teach about non-verbal communication:

- A. According to **Proverbs 18:1** what does Solomon say is the reason we don’t communicate? What are some of the ways we **“isolate”** ourselves?
- B. What do Paul’s words in **2 Corinthians 6:11-13** teach about the nature of openness and transparency in relationships?

- C. What does **Genesis 4:1-8** teach about the reality of non-verbal communication? What are some examples of sinful body language?

TAKING IT HOME AND MAKING IT REAL

- A. It’s your turn now. Take some time this week and write your lover a letter that uses carefully composed words to express affirmation and adoration. Follow the model of this couple, but don’t feel like you have to mimic the style or language of this couple – it has to be you, or else it won’t be sincere. Read or if it fits, sing it to your mate as a gift of love. If you think it is worthy, submit it next week for the Rico Suave Award, to be voted on by the class.
- B. Whether you are single or married, take some time this week to evaluate your communication. Pick one or two areas that need the most attention in your life, seek forgiveness to God and others for coming short, and solicit accountability for change. Remember, it’s more than what you have said or not said – it’s your heart!
- C. It’s time to get out your Rico Suave. Men, write your special friend a song or a poem and submit it for a special prize, to be voted on by the class. Be creative, fun, and loving.
- D. Consider purchasing one of the following helpful resources on Biblical, righteous Communication:
- Paul David Tripp, *War of Words*.
 - Wayne Mack, *Your Family God’s Way*