

Marriage • Parenting • Spiritual Growth • Sexuality • Relationships • Mental Health
Men • Women • Hurts and Emotions • Singles • Ministers and Mentors • Technology



a resource in:

Marriage

Communication in Marriage



APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN

Counseling and Family Services

Helping the hurting. Nurturing hope. Encouraging growth.

Phone: (309) 263-5536 | www.accounseling.org

Communication in Marriage

Directions: Read through the verses and information below allowing adequate time for discussion about each topic. The material below should not be considered exhaustive; rather, it should serve as a beginning point for you to search the Scripture and to learn more about marriage.

I. SCRIPTURAL DIRECTION AND BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES.

A. The power of communication and its impact on a marital relationship is great.

Your communication can determine the course of your marriage by strengthening or weakening it. Therefore, you must closely watch your words and the way you communicate with each other. Love your spouse and consistently make sure your words support that love.

Proverbs 25:11, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

Colossians 4:6, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

Matthew 12:35-37, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

B. Speak words of blessing and edification.

Your words should build up and strengthen your spouse and those around you. To communicate in a Christ-like manner, the welfare of others must be more important than getting your own way.

Ephesians 4:29, "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."

Romans 15:2, "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification."

Romans 14:19, "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."

C. Effective listening is one of the most important components of communication.

Through active listening, you communicate respect, honor, and love to your spouse. Communication often goes awry when one or both spouses are trying to speak before they have taken the time to understand the other.

Proverbs 18:13, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him."

Romans 12:10, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another."

Proverbs 29:20, "Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? There is more hope of a fool than of him."

Communication in Marriage

D. Your words have the power to build up and bless or tear down and hurt.

Avoid making critical, hurtful, or demeaning comments to your spouse or about your spouse to others.

James 3:5-10, "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."

Ephesians 4:29, "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."

Ephesians 5:28, 29, 33, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. . . Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

1 Peter 3:10, "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile."

E. Give priority to having adequate time for good communication with your spouse.

You can easily get caught up with the responsibilities and demands of life and forget the importance of regular communication with your spouse. Communication will occur at different levels over time. However, be aware of the depth of communication you are having, and make sure that there are opportunities to get beyond surface-level communication.

Mark 6:31, "And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat."

F. A crucial aspect of communication in marriage is communication with God together.

This discipline both fosters spiritual intimacy and deepens your individual relationships with God. You need to find a quiet, peaceful place to talk, rest, and be alone together with God. Regular communication and prayer together can help you stay connected.

Hebrews 13:15-16, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

Communication in Marriage

G. We must speak the truth in love.

In healthy marriages, the spouses are open and honest with each other, but they do not use “honesty” as an excuse to “blast” their spouse or just “let them have it.”

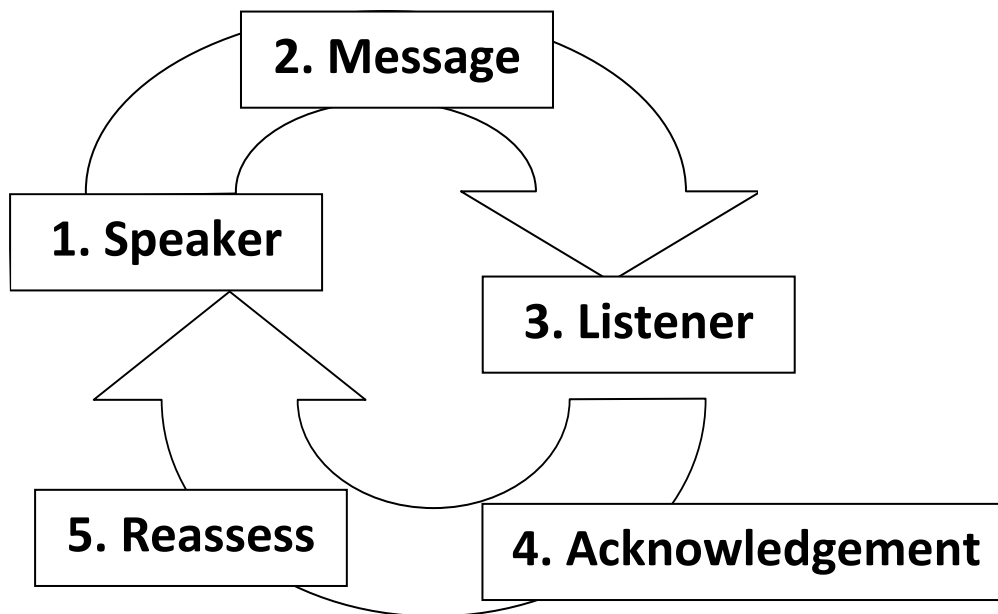
Ephesians 4:25, “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.”

Ephesians 4:15, “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”

II. PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

Readers should note that sections “A” and “B” below and on the following pages cover similar concepts, but from different perspectives. Section “A” defines and explains each component of the communication cycle as seen in the diagram below. Section “B” teaches a specific communication skill called the “Speaker-Listener Technique.”

A. Parts of the communication cycle.



1. Speaker.

- a. The Speaker is the spouse that is sending the message by sharing his or her thoughts and feelings about a topic.
- b. Often when we communicate, we don't stop to determine who is speaking and who is listening. However, couples are able to communicate more clearly and avoid conflict when they intentionally note who is speaking and who is listening.

Communication in Marriage

2. Message: Communication is more than just words.
 - a. Verbal communication: The specific words and phrases we use to communicate.
 - i. Timing is essential: Couples need to identify appropriate times to bring up certain issues. This requires awareness of your spouse's needs, as well as your own. It is often helpful to ask your spouse a question like, "I would like to talk to you about _____ sometime. When is a good time to talk?" This communicates your desire to bring up the topic and honors your spouse by allowing him or her the courtesy of having input into when the timing would be good.
 - ii. Say what you mean and mean what you say: Don't say one thing and really mean another, and don't expect the Listener to be able to "read your mind." As *James 5:12* says, "...but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay..."
 - iii. Don't switch topics mid-conversation: Communication between spouses often gets "muddy" when they switch topics because they try to address too many issues at once.
 - iv. Helpful communication tools:¹
 - Use X, Y, Z format: This format helps keep your communication clear: "In situation X, when Y occurred, I felt Z."
"When you don't call me to say that you'll be late, I feel frustrated" is clearer than "You knew you were going to be late. Why didn't you call?"
 - Use "I" statements: These types of statements allow the Speaker to take responsibility for his or her own emotions and thoughts.
"I feel frustrated when you don't call me to say that you'll be late."
 - Avoid "You" statements: These types of statements automatically put the listener on the defensive.
"You never help me around the house."
 - v. Be aware of filters:² Filters are anything that come between the Speaker and Listener that can potentially alter the meaning and/or reception of the message. There are two main types of filters:
 - Environmental filters: Noise from the radio, children, telephone; being in different rooms, etc.
 - Internal filters: Being tired, frustrated, having a headache, being sick, etc.

What to do about filters: Filters are often present, so you need to let your spouse know that a filter is interfering in the communication and figure out the best way to proceed. Sometimes this means that you will simply need to go into the same room alone and talk. Other times, as in the case of one spouse feeling sick, you may need to schedule another time to talk.

Communication in Marriage

b. **Nonverbal communication:** Nonverbal communication often has a larger impact on overall communication than the specific words used. This doesn't mean that your choice of words doesn't matter; however, it does mean that "how you say it" is often more important than "what you say." This is because nonverbal communication can alter the meaning of the words you use and is often the strongest indicator of the true message. Remember that even when you are not aware of your nonverbal communication, it is evident to the person listening to you. The following types of nonverbal communication are things that can help or hinder your ability to communicate with your spouse.

i. **Tone of voice:** The tone of your voice can completely change the meaning of the words you speak. Your tone of voice is a combination of volume, quality, pitch, and rate of speech. The emotional meaning of a message can be understood just by these components, without hearing the actual words. Read the words "I love you," placing emphasis on the words in bold type as you read them and see how the message changes.

(1) I love you. (2) I **LOVE** you. (3) I love **YOU**. (4) I love **YOU**?

A tone of voice conveying warmth, care, and love will get you the furthest in your relationship. Even when disagreeing, trying to maintain a calm, even tone will help you communicate in a civil manner.³ The truth of *Proverbs 15:1* often rings true, "*A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.*"

ii. **Body language, posture, and eye contact:** Your body language and posture can give evidence of your openness or defensiveness, anger or calmness, and interest or disinterest to the person you are communicating with. Some nonverbal behaviors that help reveal that you are actively involved in communication include: leaning forward while sitting, maintaining an appropriate close distance when standing, keeping your arms uncrossed, and keeping your hands relaxed and open. When your spouse speaks to you, face your spouse and look him or her in the eyes. Also be aware of how you use your hands when you speak.

iii. **Facial expressions:** Many times, we are not completely aware of our facial expressions when we are talking and listening. You may gain help by asking a close friend or family member about your typical facial expressions. Like tone of voice, facial expressions can reveal the emotion behind thoughts and words. Monitoring your emotional reactions during conversations can be one way to monitor your facial expressions. For example, if you have a tendency to be irritated when talking to a certain person or about a certain topic, controlling your irritation will moderate your facial expressions. Overall, a warm smile and relaxed appearance is more inviting than a frown or serious look.

3. Listener.⁴

a. The Listener is the spouse receiving and actively listening to the message from the Speaker. Listening is a crucial component of good communication.

Communication in Marriage

- b. *Just as you need to learn to talk so your spouse will listen, learn to listen so that your spouse can talk.* Listening is a gift you give to your spouse. It is a practical way to show honor to your spouse.
- c. Listening involves more than just hearing the words your spouse is saying; it involves being in tune with the various messages being sent through words, body language, tone of voice, etc.
- d. Active listening is a skill. It is developed and honed with practice over time.
- e. Listen with the goal of understanding your spouse.
 - i. Listen by fully focusing on your spouse. This means when you listen to your spouse, you are not thinking about formulating your response. Rather, you are listening in a way that communicates respect and honor. You will get your chance to share your thoughts and feelings when you are the Speaker.
 - ii. To listen is to love. Active listening also involves hearing and taking in what is being said, even if you do not agree. You can acknowledge what your spouse is saying as an expression of what he or she is feeling and thinking. It is important to attempt to understand your spouse's perspective before trying to respond or solve a conflict. As *Proverbs 18:13* says, "*He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.*"

4. Acknowledgement.⁵

- a. The purpose of the acknowledgement is to let the Speaker know that he or she has been heard. Unfortunately, this part of the communication cycle is often omitted.
- b. Remember that even the best attempts at listening may still result in misunderstandings. This can occur because we all tend to hear things in a way consistent with what we already believe about something. Unfortunately, this can hinder us from accurately hearing what our spouse is saying. When you reflect back to your spouse what you think you heard, he or she can correct any misunderstandings.
- c. "Reflecting back" what you heard the Speaker say is one of the best ways to acknowledge what the Speaker said. If you have effectively listened, you will be able to reflect what has been said back to your spouse. Repeat what you understood from the Speaker's message; however, don't simply use "parrot-talk." It is often helpful to say, "What I heard you say was . . ." For example, "What I heard you say was that you are feeling angry because I have been getting home later than we agreed on." Statements like these help the Speaker to know if the message got through correctly.
- d. When you are the Listener, you do not necessarily have to agree with what the Speaker said. Remember, your role as the Listener is to provide validation to your spouse by letting him or her know you heard what was said and that it registered with you.

5. Reassess.

- a. When the Speaker hears the Listener's acknowledgement, he or she can then determine if the message got through correctly.

Communication in Marriage

- b. Without reassessing, each individual is simply assuming their spouse heard and understands things in the way he or she thought it should be understood. However, assuming and “mind-reading” cause significant problems in marital communication.

B. The Speaker-Listener Technique.⁶

1. The Speaker-Listener Technique includes rules and guidelines that can be applied to nearly any situation.
 - a. The Speaker-Listener Technique ensures that couples will give adequate attention to each of the five parts of the communication cycle.
 - b. This structured way of communicating is very helpful when dealing with issues that are important, difficult, or sensitive. Slowing down your communication and being clear on who is taking on the role of Speaker or Listener can prevent many misunderstandings.
 - c. Conversations are more likely to spiral out of control when there are two Speakers and no Listeners. While you don't need to use the Speaker-Listener Technique in every conversation, if you think communication isn't going well, call a “time-out” and take steps to implement it.
2. Rules for both of you.
 - a. The Speaker “has the floor.” That is, the Speaker's job is to share his or her thoughts and feelings, while the Listener simply listens and paraphrases what is heard. Using some sort of object to designate which individual is the Speaker can be a helpful visual reminder to both spouses. This object can be as simple as a piece of paper. Whoever is holding the object is the Speaker.
 - b. Share the floor. After one of you has had the opportunity to share his or her thoughts and feelings as the Speaker, hand the object representing “the floor” to the other spouse. When your spouse is the Speaker, focus on being the Listener. This process continues back and forth as each one takes turns having the floor.
 - c. No problem solving. The goal of the Speaker-Listener Technique is to help couples achieve open communication and build better understanding. Therefore, the focus is on having good discussions rather than finding solutions. Many times, good communication between spouses which fosters understanding is all that is needed. Other times, additional steps of problem solving and conflict resolution are needed.
3. Rules for the Speaker.
 - a. Speak for yourself. When you are in the role of the Speaker, use “I” statements and state your own point of view. For example, “I feel frustrated that we have not been able to create a budget for our finances.”
 - b. Talk in small chunks. Remember you are the Speaker, so you don't need to worry about being interrupted by the Listener. Speak in short sentences. The Listener can only take in so much at a time. Speaking in smaller chunks allows the Listener to comprehend more rather than overloading him or her with all of your thoughts at once. Doing this helps the Listener to focus on what you are saying and will increase the amount your spouse is able to remember. This suggestion is especially important for spouses who tend to be expressive communicators.

Communication in Marriage

- c. Stop and let the Listener paraphrase. After saying a sentence or two, stop and allow the Listener to repeat back to you what he or she thought you said. If the paraphrase is not accurate, restate your point in a way that allows the Listener to understand.

4. Rules for the Listener.

- a. Paraphrase what you hear. After the Speaker has given you a few sentences, repeat back what you heard him or her say in your own words. The goal is to demonstrate you were listening and you received the message accurately. You can start a paraphrase by saying, “What I’m hearing you say is . . .,” or, “It sounds like”
- b. Focus on the Speaker’s message. Remember when you are in the Listener role, it is not the time for you to refute the Speaker’s message or offer your own opinions or thoughts. You will have the opportunity to share how you think and feel when you are the Speaker. Your job is to let the Speaker know (1) you heard what he or she said and (2) what was said registered in your brain! This rule is difficult, but is very important in learning how to be a good listener.

C. Communication and emotional intimacy.

1. Levels of communication:⁷ Communication occurs on different levels. As the levels progress, an increasing amount of trust, vulnerability, and intimacy is required. Different levels of communication correlate with different levels of intimacy. Communication is the way relationships begin and are maintained. The type and depth of communication that occurs between spouses helps define the kind of relationship they will have. For example, superficial communication supports a superficial relationship. While superficial communication may be appropriate with a store clerk, in marriage a deeper level is required. Of course, sometimes communication in marriage is about surface-level facts and information. However, personal, intimate communication supports the marital relationship. This intimate communication is not only important, but fulfilling as well.

To be known by your spouse and to know your spouse intimately is one of the greatest blessings of marriage. Because this level of communication is difficult for some people, couples must have a firm foundation of trust and honesty for intimacy to grow.

Review the following levels of communication and discuss at what levels you tend to communicate with each other.

- a. “Just the facts”: This level of communication involves sharing facts or information and requires the least amount of vulnerability and intimacy. This kind of communication is done most frequently overall and is done with a wide variety of people. Examples include talking about the weather or your schedule for the day.
- b. “I think”: This level of communication involves sharing your own thoughts and the ideas and opinions of other people. At this level, little of oneself is disclosed. Examples include discussing what a minister said during a sermon or what a family member shared.

Communication in Marriage

- c. “Sharing”: Sharing your own ideas and opinions occurs at level three. A greater amount of openness is involved in this type of communication as you reveal your own thoughts about a situation or circumstance. An example of communication at this level occurs when one person shares with another about a current struggle or asks for advice.
 - d. “Mutual sharing”: Intimacy is increased at level four when you both share personal preferences, beliefs, concerns, and experiences. Talking about your personal struggles, memories, goals, etc. occurs at this level. Here, a couple can work together to resolve the issues they face.
 - e. “This is me”: A complete opening up of yourself occurs at level five. Here, you share inner feelings, fears, preferences, likes and dislikes. The conversation may include emotional expressions from the heart and the disclosure of inner thoughts, ideas, and experiences. Not only does conversing at this level help a couple become more intimate, it is also beneficial when discussing disagreements, making decisions, or sharing concerns. Issues can be worked through most effectively when spouses can share their thoughts and feelings in an open atmosphere that is bathed in love and respect.
2. The importance of self-disclosure:⁸ Research has revealed that couples who disclose their thoughts and feelings to each other tend to be more satisfied with their relationship. In addition, spouses tend to match each other’s level of disclosure. So, if one spouse is not disclosing much personal information, over time the other spouse may start withholding information as well. To provide an environment where you both can regularly open up to one another in positive, honest ways is extremely important.

D. Personality and communication.

1. Spouses often differ in the quality and quantity of communication they are used to giving and receiving. Understanding one another’s personality can help to shed light on the way each spouse communicates. One simple way of discerning communication style is by looking at the amount one talks. Two types of communicators are Expanders and Condensers.⁹
 - a. Expanders: Expanders are people who tend to talk more than others. They elaborate, give detailed, lengthy descriptions, and have a dislike of silence. Expanders may be frustrated by Condensers who do not provide as much information when talking.
 - b. Condensers: Condensers are people who do not talk as much and who do not always include a lot of detail in their conversations. They prefer an efficient use of words and tend to stick to the main points or the “bottom line” when communicating. A Condenser may become overwhelmed by the Expander’s seemingly excessive use of words.

Communication in Marriage

2. Combinations of Expander-Condenser couples.

- a. Expander-Condenser couples: When one spouse is an Expander and the other spouse is a Condenser, problems can arise if you are not careful to respect one another's communication style. Respect and compromise is necessary. The Condenser may need to make an effort to include more detail in his or her communication and may need to build a tolerance for listening to a talkative personality. Conversely, the Expander may need to learn when he or she needs to leave out extra details and give the "Reader's Digest" version of the story. An Expander may also need to learn to be satisfied with less detail and to build tolerance for silence.
- b. Expander-Expander couples: When both spouses are Expanders, they are likely to enjoy frequent and lively discussions. However, this pattern is also likely to lead to situations in which there are two Speakers and no Listeners! Be intentional about learning to be a good listener and taking turns speaking and listening.
- c. Condenser-Condenser couples: When both spouses are Condensers, they are likely to have pleasant conversations that are more specific and to the point. However, there is also a tendency for these individuals to not bring up things that need to be discussed. At times, Condenser-Condenser couples need to push themselves to be more open.

E. In marriage, you cannot not communicate.¹⁰

1. Communication will occur even without the use of words. Silence, for example, is a powerful communicator. It can mean several different things: contentment, anger, dissatisfaction, etc.
2. While knowing when to "hold your tongue" is important, silence, in general, is an ineffective problem solver.
3. Be aware of what you are communicating with your body language as well as your silence. Unfortunately, silence leaves space for another person to add his or her own interpretation, which may or may not be correct.
4. While desiring time to think and pray before talking through an issue is reasonable, giving your spouse "the silent treatment" is hurtful and can be emotionally abusive.
5. If you are ever wondering what your spouse is trying to communicate through actions or silences, use appropriate assertiveness and ask for clarification. To ask for clarification from your spouse is better than to assume you can read his or her mind.

F. Choosing your words wisely.

1. Words have the power to build up and to destroy. You must communicate in ways that enhance and build up your marriage. As *Proverbs 25:11* says, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."
2. Grace and truth must be joined together in communication. This means we need to speak the truth, but to do it lovingly. Too strong of an emphasis on truth without grace and love may lead to harsh, insensitive statements like, "My mother's cooking is much better than yours." Conversely, trying to be loving but avoiding the truth can be just as counterproductive. Saying, "I sure love this casserole," when in fact you do not, can lead to a lifetime of force-feeding yourself.

Communication in Marriage

3. If your words and attitude are accompanied by the following elements, there is a good chance communication is healthy.
 - Love
 - Honor
 - Respect
 - Clarity
 - Honesty
 - Self-control
 - Sensitivity
 - Understanding

4. If your words and attitude are accompanied or characterized by the following elements, you are likely in the realm of “*corrupt communication*” (Ephesians 4:29).
 - Criticizing
 - Quarreling
 - Comparing your spouse to others
 - Lying
 - Nagging
 - Fault-finding
 - Being defensive
 - Being emotionally withholding

5. Questions to ask yourself before you speak:
 - “Am I under control?”
 - “Am I speaking the truth in love?”
 - “Will what I’m about to say help or hurt?”
 - “Is this the right time and place to say what needs to be said?”¹¹

G. Communication is necessary and beneficial, but it takes work. Become a student of your spouse’s unique way of communicating.

1. Clear communication leads to understanding, while unclear communication leads to confusion. Individuals come into marriage with their own unique way of communicating. They each communicate using certain rules and styles they learned through interactions with friends and family. Learning each other’s style of communication in marriage takes time and effort; however, you must make the effort to understand how to communicate together clearly. Learn how to talk so your spouse can best listen and understand.¹²

2. Focus on building communication skills rather than simply putting stock in your hopes and dreams. Research indicates that having positive expectations about marriage does not predict a couple will do well.¹³ Rather, higher relationship satisfaction is seen when a couple has positive expectations about marriage in combination with having good communication skills to help them interact. Couples that don’t have the skills to communicate and interact well experience less marital satisfaction.

Communication in Marriage

3. Some people find it easier to open up than others. This is often due to differences in personalities, families of origin, and life experiences. For example, some people have experienced hurts in their lives that make it difficult to open up and discuss personal issues. Other times, individuals simply have not had healthy models that taught them how to communicate and open up.
 - a. If you have a spouse that finds communication difficult, be patient with him or her and encourage your spouse to open up in small bits. Trying to open up “too much, too fast” often causes people to “shut down.”
 - b. If you are a person that finds communication difficult, take it slow, but continue to take steps forward. Don’t allow yourself to stay emotionally “closed off” to your spouse.
4. As was mentioned earlier, nonverbal communication plays a large role in communication. Therefore, becoming aware of the nonverbal messages you send is very wise. Underneath nonverbal communication are personal qualities that play a large role in determining the effectiveness and success of your communication and thus your marriage. Put another way, nonverbal communication can reveal your character qualities. Developing the three following qualities is as important as learning communication skills.¹⁴
 - a. Warmth: Demonstrating to your spouse you accept him or her.
 - b. Genuineness and authenticity: Revealing your true self and not putting up a “front.”
 - c. Empathy: Understanding things from your spouse’s perspective; seeking to understand both the thoughts and feelings he or she is experiencing.

H. Honor your spouse in public and be discrete about what issues you share with others.

1. Complimenting your spouse in public and sharing genuine praise can be a way to encourage, honor, and bless your spouse.
2. You must not criticize or tear down your spouse in public. Even if your intent may be to “poke fun,” public criticism can cause deep hurts.
3. You should avoid sharing private personal information about your marriage or your spouse with others (e.g., talking about your sexual relationship, etc.). This can cause embarrassment and lead to difficulty with trust in your marriage.

Communication in Marriage

III. COUPLE QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES.

A. Questions and issues for you to discuss.

1. What are some similarities and differences in our communication styles? Are you a “Condenser” or an “Expander”? How might these similarities and differences impact our relationship with one another?
2. How did your parents communicate with each other? What were some of the communication rules and styles you learned growing up? For example, these may involve rules about raising your voice, interrupting, expressing emotion, disclosure of thoughts and feelings, etc.
3. Maintaining a balance between fact-giving, problem-solving communication and intimate communication that expresses our feelings is important in all marriages. How can we make sure that one type does not occur more at the expense of the other?
4. Which of the “Questions to ask yourself before you speak” (section II-F-5) will each of us need to be reminded of most often? How can we gently keep one another accountable in our communication to each other and to other people?
5. How can I best demonstrate to you that I am listening to what you are saying? What are some clear clues that give evidence I am not listening?
6. If we were having trouble in our communication, at what point would you think we should seek out counsel from someone else (elder, counselor, etc.)? To whom would you most likely go for help?
7. Can you promise me that you would agree to go to marital counseling with me if we needed it?

Communication in Marriage

B. Couple exercises.

1. Identify some examples of each level of communication (section II-C-1). When does each level of communication occur in our relationship? At which level does communication occur when you are communicating with family members, friends, acquaintances, or people you've never met? What level of communication do you typically have in your conversations with others? At church on Sunday? With friends? When we have visitors into our home? To what degree are your conversations meaningful? Shallow?
2. Practice using the Speaker-Listener Technique (section II-B) with topics of interest to you. After you have used it a few times on easy topics, you can try it on an area of disagreement.
3. Individually, list out topics that are important to communicate about in your relationship. Next to each topic, note how often you would like to talk about the topic (daily, weekly, as needed). These topics could include: day-to-day events, emotions, future planning, family issues, health, job, finances, personal growth, spiritual matters, etc. Compare your lists and discuss any differences.
4. Rate how easily or with what difficulty you, as a couple, communicate about each of the following topics. Use the following scale: Green = Easy; Yellow = Caution; Red = Difficult. When topics rated Yellow and Red come up, consider using the Speaker-Listener Technique.
 - Money
 - Conflict
 - Affection
 - Sex
 - Wife's family
 - Husband's family
 - Career
 - Spirituality
 - Church
 - Friends
 - Our goals
 - Children
 - Health/medical issues
 - Feelings
 - Other: _____

Communication in Marriage

References:

Referencing of these materials is not meant to imply an endorsement by the Apostolic Christian Church of America of the author, publisher, or organization that created the materials.

-
1. Scott Stanley et al., *A Lasting Promise: A Christian Guide to Fighting for your Marriage* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998), 91.
 2. Ibid., 50-59.
 3. John Townsend, *Who's Pushing Your Buttons* (Nashville: Integrity Publishers, 2004), 122-123.
 4. H. Norman Wright, *Communication: Key to Your Marriage* (Ventura: Regal, 2000), 96-98.
 5. Stanley et al., *A Lasting Promise*, 61-62.
 6. Ibid., 58-69.
 7. Wright, *Communication*, 33-35.
 8. Catrin Finkenauer et al., "Disclosure and Relationship Satisfaction in Families," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66, no. 1 (2004): 195-209.
 9. Wright, *Communication*, 86.
 10. Ibid., 87-88.
 11. H. Dale Burke, *Different by Design* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2000), 124-125.
 12. Les Parrott and Leslie Parrot, *Saving Your Marriage Before it Starts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 77-83.
 13. J. McNulty, and B. Karney, "Positive Expectations in the Early Years of Marriage: Should Couples Expect the Best or Brace for the Worst?" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86, no. 5 (2004): 729-743.
 14. Parrot, *Saving Your Marriage Before it Starts*, 83-86.