

Communication is more than talking

I. Building Blocks for Oneness (The Marriage Builder, Dr. Larry Crabb)

Acceptance
Commitment
Grace

- **Grace:**

Defined ... "Undeserved favor of God shown to those who deserve His wrath." Dr. Jerry Bridges

✓ **Romans 4:8 (NASB)** "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHOSE SIN THE LORD WILL NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT."

God's Grace doesn't have to be earned ... in fact it can't be.
God's Grace is not dependent on the worthiness of another.
God's Grace is boundless, unending and never in short supply.



✓ **Colossians 4:6 (NASB95)** *Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.*

What does Grace do ?

(Intimate Encounters by David & Teresa Ferguson)

Grace Initiates - "For by grace you have been saved." Eph 2:8

Grace Liberates - "It was for freedom that Christ set us free" Gal 5:1

Grace Motivates - "As good stewards of the manifold grace of God" 1 Pe 4:10

Grace Lubricates - "... be filled with the Spirit - giving thanks -submitting to one another"

Eph 5:18-21

- **Commitment:** "A deep desire to obey God by honoring the marriage commitment, a desire growing naturally out of a conviction that God is good."

"Communication problems can usually be traced to a failure in the **commitment** to ministry, or more simply, to wrong goals. This diagnosis is simple, but not simplistic. The clear teaching of Scripture is that communication problems inevitably result whenever people pursue self-centered goals. We must become convinced of the sufficiency of Christ to the point where our goals toward our spouses shift from manipulation to ministry." (Larry Crabb)

✓ **Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 (The Message)**

✓ **2 Peter 1:5-9 (NASB)**

Synonyms → Resolve ... Decide ... Determine
Promise ... Vow ... Pledge ... Guaranty ... Assurance



(Your name here) Resolve ... will never to use the term Divorce to leverage, manipulate, coerce, hurt, threaten or punish the other person in any argument we may have.

- **Acceptance**

"No matter how intimate their relationship or firm their commitment, all married people find their mates annoying or maddening at times. There is a difference between accepting your mate and enjoying your mate; the former is a requirement, the latter is a blessing. The experience of accepting your spouse depends upon the work of forgiveness, which in turn depends upon a willingness to see the offensive behavior of your spouse in biblical context." (Larry Crabb)

✓ **Romans 15:7 (NASB)**

✓ Ephesians 4:31-32 (The Message)



Points in our marriage ...

- **Make solid choices NOT to let minor annoyances ruin your whole day.** (*Focus on the Major ... rather than the Minor.*)
- **Let there be room for variations in the way things are done in your marriage which give opportunity for the expression of the differences of your spouse to emerge.** (*Don't over correct*)
- **Manage the TONE in your voice in verbal communications.** (*It is not what you say, it is exactly what you say that matters*)

II. Godly Communication Patterns ... (+ Principles to Guide Your Tongue)

Build positive ways of putting on the new Self.

➤ **Speak the “Truth” in Love**

Ephesians 4:15 (NASB)

Ephesians 4:22-25 (NASB)

- **Why ?** ... Lies and half truths serve to erode confidence, trust and respect.
- **Goal** ... Build Trust & Confidence ... Work on Deposits, lessen Withdrawals



➤ **Guard the Kinds of Words you Speak – “Uplifting & Wholesome Words”**

Ephesians 4:29-30 (NASB)

- **Why ?** ... Attacking another’s character, critical or use of harsh words de-Values the spouse.
- **Goal** ... Honor one another privately and publicly. Build a vocabulary of words which uplift, build respect, unify and Value the other person.

➤ **“Forgive” each other and permit NO unresolved Conflict to go Un-Checked**

Ephesians 4:26-27 (NASB)

Ephesians 4:31-32 (NASB)

- **Why ?** ... We are NOT perfect. Our spouse is imperfect and bound to fail at some point or from time to time. The spirit of Forgiveness offers Grace to the spouse and establishes the basis for restoration and redemption. The spirit of Bitterness has its roots in self interest and leads to destructive outcomes

Hebrews 12:15 (NASB95)

Hebrews 12:15 (NLT)

- **Goal** ... Establish a willingness to cancel the debt, overlook the offence. Do not catalog offenses for future reference.



➤ **Be Appreciative and “Thankful” to and of each other**

Ephesians 5:3-6 (NASB)

- **Why ?** Fixation on faults, failures, weaknesses or shortcomings tears the spouse down.
- **Goal** ... Build a vocabulary which elevates the positive traits of the spouse.



➤ **Align with each other “Spiritually”**

Ephesians 5:18-21 (NASB)

- **Why ?** ... God’s words and purposes bring unity, healing and Oneness. The secular world prioritizes “self’s” interest as a priority.
- **Goal** ... Prioritize your spouses spiritual life and development.



III. Communication Glitches ... when our communication has a “breakdown”

What causes husbands and wives not to understand each other? It is important to understand and accept the differences in how spouses receive and send messages to each other. Verbal and non-verbal communication signals offer a wide variety of means by which we communicate to each other ...

- ➔ *Non verbal ... use of eyes, looks, hands & gestures, body language*
- ➔ *Touch ... holding hands, pats, pinches*
- ➔ *Verbal ... cues, tone, loudness, reflections, secret passwords, silence*



Let’s explore 3 areas: 1) the ways we gather information, 2) the different ways we process that information into decisions, and 3) how missed cues start arguments.

• **Different Ways we Gather Information** (Communication - Key to Your Marriage, by H. Norman Wright)

People gather, understand, process and interpret information in different ways. How information is obtained and the relative importance of facts or feelings can vary greatly. When not understood these can cause confusion, disagreement, and hurt.

- ✓ **“Sensor” Approach** to information collection ...
 - Use of the 5 senses to gather information (Visual, touch, smell, hearing, taste)
 - Pay attention & notice the facts and details of the situation – enjoys the moment.
 - Perception is based on what can be physically observed – accepts statements at face value.
 - Prefers a tactical approach rather than strategic view of circumstances.

Contrasted with ...

- ✓ **“Intuitive” Approach** to understanding ...
 - The value of the 6th sense ... hunches help fill in the blanks (or do they?)
 - Probe for beneath the surface meanings ... facts are only the starting point.
 - “Big Picture”, “Possibilities” and the future is more important than the present “here & now”
 - Multi-processing – could be perceived as somewhat absentminded.

• **Different Ways we Make Decisions**

Decision-making differences in couples can be a source of frustration in communications when couples have not meshed their styles together. Below are 2 sets of indicators of decision-making styles.

James 4:1-3 (NASB) *WHAT is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.*

Contrast #1: Thinkers versus Feelers ...

- ✓ **“Thinkers”** are people who rely on facts, **objective** information for decision-making ...
 - Look for answers which are either Black or White ... absolute knowledge is essential.
 - Being RIGHT is more important than being liked
 - Approach decision-making from an objective point of view ... looking for objective data points.
 - Confusion or lack of precise information is evidence of the need to gather more data.



Contrasted with ...

- ✓ **“Feelers”** are people making decisions from a personal standpoint putting themselves into the situation
 - Personal preferences (likes, dislikes) are stronger determinates over objective factors.
 - Weigh heavily the potential impact decisions have on others
 - Value pleasing others, which may give rise to changing decisions thus appearing indecisive
 - Intimidated by the Thinkers because Thinkers use reasons (rather than feelings) to support decisions

Contrast #2: Judgers versus Perceivers ...

Another type of indicator is the difference between the Judger and the Perceiver. The judger has a strong preference for structure, while the perceiver is more freeform. This has a lot to say about what you reveal when you begin to speak.

- ✓ **“Judgers”** are people who like structure and organization ...
 - Very conscious of time and schedules.
 - List keeper, to do's
 - Orderly, neat
 - Complete projects on time, if not early



Contrasted with ...

- ✓ **“Perceivers”** love adventure, particularly when the unknown is there to explore.
 - Don't care much for planning ... that is a waste of time
 - Being organized is not as important as being creative, spontaneous and responsive.
 - Not particularly time conscious
 - Attention span is very flexible

- **Anatomy of an Argument** **(Diagnose the cause ... then stop the fuel)**

Arguments predictably have their origin one of several reasons. Learning how to recognize the early warning of an argument (the beginnings), can help short circuit the digression of a misunderstanding into a full Conflict. Develop your own way of putting the breaks on a downward spiral of emotion, frustration, and ultimately anger. Once an argument has been detected, then you are in a position to starve the fuel source and lessen the impact of a conflict.

- ✓ ***Example of a dissection of an Argument:***

1. The problem is revealed. Dissatisfaction is expressed. Hurt feelings are identified.
2. Denial of the offence, refusal to face issue, and failure to gain understanding.
3. Invalidation of feelings. (You shouldn't be upset) Emotion escalates. Hurt intensifies.

James 1:19-20 (NASB) *This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the ighteousness of God.*

4. Offender becomes defensive and blames the offended for upsetting them .Open communication breaks down – both parties are offended.
5. Resolution is sought or conflict escalates.

✓ Develop some strategies to difuse an argument in the early stages. It is hard for one person to have an argument by themselves.

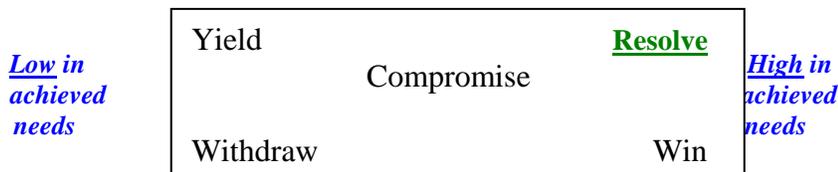
- Conflict Card (handout)



✓ There are many ways to handle a disagreement or full blown argument.

- Withdraw – leave physically or psychologically
- Win – at all costs
- Compromise – give a little, get a little
- Yield – give in to get along
- **Resolve – situation, attitude or behavior is changed by open and direct communication.**

High concern for relationship



Low concern for relationship

IV. Listening is a Gift we offer our Spouse

• Listening is more than Hearing

Proverbs 21:11 (Living) says that the wise learn by listening. One definition of hearing is to gain content or information for your own purposes. Listening, on the other hand is characterized by caring for and being empathetic toward the person who is talking

Why do we Listen?

- ✓ To understand the other person
- ✓ To enjoy the other person
- ✓ To learn something from the one talking
- ✓ To give help, assistance, or comfort to the other person.



Hints on how to be a better listener.

- ✓ Concentrate on what is being said, not on your response
- ✓ Accept what your spouse is saying – that doesn't mean agree. It means knowledgement and understanding.
- ✓ Be able to repeat what your spouse said and express what you think he or she was feeling while speaking.

Barriers to Listening - Subjectivity.

- ✓ Accumulating negative information and discounting positive information. It tends to show itself in communication by “hearing” negatives when a comment could be interpreted as positive or totally neutral. Or, it may show up by interpreting a “neutral” observation as being a personal attack.

- ✓ The subjective person hears a positive comment and it will never register as positive or true.

- **Accepting or Rejecting Feelings**

There are basically two categories of response to our spouses' feelings. We can accept them or reject them. Although they are not the central part of our personality, feelings are perhaps the most delicate. When your partner tells you how he or she feels, you must treat that feeling with care, just as you would gently caress a new born baby handed to you by its beaming mother.

Ways we demonstrate Rejection:

- Defending/explaining
- Apologies offered too quickly before letting your spouse know that you understand their feelings.
- Attack
- Immediate advice – shows you don't respect
- Telling someone not to feel "that way" often comes across as a put down. It is How they feel.
- To tell the person what the problem "really is" and what he or she should be feeling does not communicate acceptance. (At some point it may be necessary to suggest an accurate perception of events, but to do so immediately after a feeling is expressed conveys rejection.)



Ways to Accept feelings:

- Reflect – "It sounds as if you feel"... "Guess you really felt...when..."
- Clarify – "Are you saying that...?" "I wonder if you feel...?"
- Explore – "I'm not sure what you mean..." "When else do you feel like that? I don't quite understand how you feel about..."
- Extend – "You really felt..." "Did you also feel...?" "I can see that you feel...If I were in your shoes, I might also feel..." "Do you feel like that?"

V. Lessons from James on our Speech

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|--|---------------|
| 1. Need wisdom ... ask God | James 1:5 |
| 2. Blessed when bear up on trials | James 1:12 |
| 3. Quick to Listen ... slow to speak | James 1:19 |
| 4. Anger does not accomplish purpose of God | James 1:20 |
| 5. Rid your conversation of evil | James 1:21 |
| 6. Restrain the tongue | James 1:26 |
| 7. Speak & act godly | James 2:12 |
| 8. Speaking without corresponding action | James 2:15-16 |
| 9. Restrain the tongue to keep from error | James 3:1-4 |
| 10. Tongue described a small organ | James 3:5-6 |
| 11. Wrong use of tongue – curse men, bless God | James 3:7-10 |
| 12. Proper use of tongue - wisdom | James 3:13 |
| 13. Tongue used properly is a peacemaker | James 3:17 |
| 14. Identification of conflicts & quarrels | James 4:1-3 |
| 15. Do not complain against one another | James 5:9 |
| 16. Do not swear – let your Yes simply be Yes | James 5:12 |
| 17. Confess sins to one another & Pray | James 5:16 |

Couples-Communication Strengths Finder

It is the rare couple that periodically articulates what they do well as a team. Think about it. Most couples are more prone to complain about their pitfalls than they are to praise themselves for their successes. If we aren't careful, there's something about the nature of relationships that causes us to exchange pep rallies for gripes sessions. Don't fall into this temptation – especially as it relates to your ability to communicate.

Begin this exercise by scanning the list below and marking things you do well and things your partner does well. Once you have done that, review your column of check marks and note which items you both well and which items neither of you do particularly well. Feel free to add to this list any communication abilities that are missing for you. And, as always, the more honest you are, the more helpful this exercise will be to you.

Who does this well...	You	Spouse	Both	Neither
Listening without interruption	-	-	-	-
Staying on topic	-	-	-	-
Being ready to apologize	-	-	-	-
Controlling emotions appropriately	-	-	-	-
Giving full attention	-	-	-	-
Identifying and expressing feelings	-	-	-	-
Thinking clearly before speaking	-	-	-	-
Reserving opinion until the right time	-	-	-	-
Maintaining eye contact while talking	-	-	-	-
Being appropriately vulnerable	-	-	-	-
Permitting productive conflict	-	-	-	-
Speaking with clarity	-	-	-	-
Inviting and receiving feedback	-	-	-	-
Appropriately using humor	-	-	-	-
Coming across as personally warm	-	-	-	-
Expressing more genuine interest	-	-	-	-
Being assertive with needs	-	-	-	-
Knowing when to talk and when to not	-	-	-	-
_____	-	-	-	-
_____	-	-	-	-

The items that you checked “both” are what you perceive as your current couple-communication strengths. Those which you think neither of you do particularly well are your current couple-communication deficits.

Now, compare notes with each other as your mentors facilitate a conversation to help you see which items you both agree are your current communication strengths. If you don't have any at this point, relax.