

# Life Coach: Marriage

## Communication, Part 1

Introduction: Marriage is the single most important of human relationships. From the very beginning, God established the marriage relationship as foundational to society. Successful marriage, however, requires more than mutual love and commitment. It requires good communication skills throughout all stages of life. The Bible encourages the development of communication skills and also sets boundaries for interaction with one's spouse.

- I. Prerequisites to Biblical Communication (Ephesians 4:22-24)
  - A. Put off the old man (22)
    1. The old man refers to the sinful nature—the realm in which all human beings naturally function prior to salvation.
    2. Salvation does not eradicate the sin nature; rather, salvation provides the tools necessary for change—the putting “off” of the sin nature.
    3. Putting off the sin nature is a matter of volitional yielding to the Spirit of God. The human side requires conscious yielding to the mandates of the Spirit of God as revealed in Scripture. It assumes complete dependence upon the Holy Spirit's power to do so (Romans 6:11-13).
  - B. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind (23)
    1. The renewed “spirit” addresses the issue of attitude. It describes a new and different attitude infused by the Holy Spirit and enacted through conscious yielding to Him.
    2. Romans 12:1-2 describe the renewed mind as nothing short of complete transformation. Such transformation happens when we present our “bodies a living sacrifice”—complete yielding to God's will above our natural inclinations.
    3. A renewed mind brings about life transformation—including the matter of communication. Words come from the heart. If the heart is right, the communication will be as well (Mt. 12:34-36).
  - C. Put on the new man (23)
    1. Yielding to the indwelling Spirit of God is the key to putting on the new man. The new man is the spiritual man, present through the Holy Spirit's indwelling of the believer.
    2. The new man (in contrast to the old) is “created in righteousness and true holiness.” Those who consciously yield to the Spirit of God on a daily and consistent basis will of necessity reflect righteousness and true holiness in all areas of life, including conversation.
    3. Proper communication, then, is not merely a matter of changed habits and rigorous self-discipline. It is a conscious yielding to the Spirit of God—His mandates and leading.

- II. Elements of Biblical Communication (Ephesians 4:25-32)
  - A. Truth and Transparency (25)
    - 1. Meaningful relationships can neither be built nor maintained in an atmosphere of deception and secrecy. Any level of deception in marriage significantly undermines the marriage and eventually erodes trust.
    - 2. Lying itself is insidious. It takes on many forms—some overt and obvious, others deceptive enough as to be practiced subconsciously. Fundamentally, all deception misleads away from truth, giving a false impression.
    - 3. When true feelings remain unexpressed, expectations and hopes remain unstated, and personal desires remain hidden under the guise of “everything’s OK,” the inherent deception undermines the possibility of a growing, vibrant relationship.
    - 4. In marriage, everything about each partner’s life should be open to the other. Everything should be on the table for discussion and consideration.
    - 5. Transparency requires absolute trust between two people.
      - a. Trust that revealing true feelings will not result in anger, rejection, or frustration.
      - b. Trust that true feelings will not be shared with outsiders.
      - c. Trust that the relationship is permanent and the issues are secondary.
  - B. Restraint (26)
    - 1. God created man as an emotional being. All human emotion, therefore, is acceptable within prescribed limits. God does not demand of us a passionless existence.
    - 2. Anger is a legitimate emotion, but must be expressed within careful boundaries.
      - a. We must not permit anger to degenerate into sinful actions—verbal and physical abuse, uncontrolled outbursts, etc. Such actions take the legitimate emotion of anger into the realm of sin.
      - b. Like all emotional responses, anger must be temporary in nature. In the case of anger, the Bible restricts its duration to a single day. In other words, resolution of anger must take place in a given day and cannot carry over into the next day.
      - c. Unresolved anger all too easily degenerates into ongoing bitterness. Though the initial passion has subsided, the underlying issue remains, and—left unresolved—slowly poisons the soul, undermining the marriage.
      - d. When one spouse (or both) live in fear of out-of-control, angry responses, genuine communication is impossible. In such cases the relationship may continue, but it becomes “surface” only. Surface relationships never meet emotional needs, and eventually the marriage disintegrates.