



TALKING SENSE

TIM & JULIE CLINTON

(1 Peter 3:1-9)

Tim stood in the foyer of a crowded restaurant watching the lunch crowd pour in—no sign of Julie. In a restaurant several miles away, Julie stood in the crowded foyer peering at the door—waiting for Tim. We had planned lunch the night before and discussed it again that morning. Somehow we blew it. Fortunately a phone call solved the problem.

Miscommunicating lunch plans is a minor incident. But how, during serious discussions or heartfelt talks, do couples completely confuse each other? Quite often, according to some marital experts. Up to 90 percent of couples seeking counseling say communication and “talk” issues are at the root of their problems.

No wonder so many couples feel out of touch with each other in the absence of effective and encouraging communication—nothing holds more potential for enriching intimacy.

THE QUALITY OF COMMUNICATION

The interactive process of communication can be understood and analyzed in a five-part manner. Human communication is (1) a message by one person or group that is (2) sent in verbal or written form to (3) another person or group who (4) receives the message and (5) understands its meaning in a certain way. Perfect communication is when the intent of the message sent is understood fully and exactly by the receiver. Again, perfection is rarely, if ever, attained.

Imperfect communication occurs because of static, distractions, and misunderstandings all along the process. The message constructed may not exactly represent the intention of the sender. The way it is sent may be poor or incomplete. The receiver may not be listening well. The understanding of the received message is affected by the historical, emotional, gender, and values filters of the hearer.

How can we improve the quality of our communication? Genuineness, empathy, and respect on the part of both the speaker and the listener are vital to improving communication between spouses.

Consider the amount of time you and your spouse spend together as a couple. Many couples spend an average of only four minutes a day in meaningful conversation.

Couples cite lack of time as their primary communication roadblock for three reasons:

1. Some spouses are overloaded with responsibilities and commitments. They need to examine their commitments and determine what their priorities are and should be.
2. Other couples don't make time. They *have* the time to talk with their spouse, but they instead fill that time with phone calls, television, shopping trips, sports, friends, and other activities.
3. Still others are angry or bitter. Whatever the situation, if they shut out their partners, they do themselves and their marriage a great disservice.

Although couples may not actually be *choosing* not to spend time in conversation, they still communicate. They constantly send messages—positive or negative, verbal or nonverbal. Therefore, they must work effectively to *control* their communication.

For instance, a casual shrug of the

shoulders may be a way of saying, "I'm not sure," but a spouse may interpret it as, "I'm not really concerned about that." Married couples must make every attempt to keep their intentions and their language clear. Because most people are under pressure, there can be an abundance of anger and tension in relationships. Evidence of this is hard-hitting, such as nagging, criticism, badgering, and yelling. James 3 tells of the tremendous damage the tongue can cause.

Even during conflict, discussions with one's partner should be honest, respectful, and spoken in love. Communication should be purposeful, goal-oriented, and free of hidden agendas. Sensitivity to timing is helpful (for example, not bringing up a difficult situation at the dinner table).

In volatile situations, this can be difficult. Scripture points out how shameful and foolish it is to answer a matter before it's fully heard and understood: "He who answers a matter before he hears it; it is folly and shame to him" (Prov. 18:13). Communication involves both sending and receiving messages. Of these two, listening is the most important.

QUALITY

COMMUNICATION

Consider these other Scripture-based principles of communication:

Be a good listener.

"Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19).

Reflect on and think through what is being spoken.

"He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, but he who heeds rebuke gets understanding" (Prov. 15:32).

Be sensitive to and respectful of your partner.

"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice" (Eph. 4:31).

"Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Pet. 3:7).

Speak the truth—but always in love.

"Speaking the truth in love . . . grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ" (Eph. 4:15).

"Do not lie to one another" (Col. 3:9).

Don't fight or respond in anger.

"Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath" (Eph. 4:26).

"The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts" (Prov. 17:14).

Confess and forgive when necessary.

"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another" (James 5:16).

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32).

We firmly believe in spiritual intimacy. True growth as a couple is impossible apart from God. Reading a devotional together and praying together and for each other draws couples closer to God and each other.

FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of marital communication include:

- Proverbs 12:17, 18; 15:23; 17:4, 7
- Matthew 12:33-37
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-7
- Ephesians 4:15, 29-32
- James 3:1-12

To Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on marital communication at 1 Peter 3:8 on page 1663. See also the personality profile of Aquila and Priscilla on page 1448.

God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

CHRIST'S SUFFERING AND OURS

¹⁸For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us^a to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, ¹⁹by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, ²⁰who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited^a in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. ²¹There is also an antitype

which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us^a in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the

3:18 ^aNU-Text and M-Text read *you*. **3:20** ^aNU-Text and M-Text read *when the longsuffering of God waited patiently*. **4:1** ^aNU-Text omits *for us*.

KEY PASSAGE



Marital Communication

LET'S TALK

(3:8)

This verse gives a recipe for building unity among believers. While these ingredients apply to believers in general, they go double for building unity in a marriage.

1. **Be of one mind.** Spouses will not agree on everything, but they should work toward having "one mind." One may have to give in to the other so the two can be united, especially in important decisions.
2. **Have compassion.** Knowing that the other person truly cares enables spouses to share their deepest thoughts and feelings with each other.
3. **Love.** While it seems obvious, love can be the most difficult thing to maintain. Spouses should show the kind of love described in 1 Corinthians 13.
4. **Be tenderhearted and courteous.** This means having an attitude that puts the other person's needs ahead of one's own.
5. **Blessing one's spouse.** This means always wanting the best for him or her.

Spouses who follow this recipe of honor will find vitality and will communicate effectively.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about marital communication on pages 1660, 1661. See also the personality profile of Aquila and Priscilla on page 1448.

SOUL NOTE



Word Watch (3:10) These words are for all Christians facing trials. Despite outward circumstances, believers can still "love life and see good days" because of their relationship with God. Verses 10–12 quote from Psalm 34, a psalm for people in trouble. The first recommendation is for us to watch what we say.

Speaking "evil" can refer to any type of speech that displeases God; "deceit" refers to deliberately misleading by lying. A believer's communication should instead be comforting, encouraging, and uplifting. Positive communication pleases God and helps others.

Topic: Communication

with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. ³So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. ⁴And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

⁵When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. ⁶But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I

am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." ⁷And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus,^a one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. ⁸Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.

⁹Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; ¹⁰for I am with you, and no

18:7 ^aNU-Text reads *Titius Justus*.

Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."

ACTS 18:9, 10

PERSONALITY PROFILE

THE TEAMWORK OF AQUILA AND PRISCILLA

(ACTS 18:2)



Marital
Communi-
cation

Aquila and Priscilla were united both in marriage and in ministry. Their ability to communicate enabled them to minister effectively. Never mentioned separately in Scripture, these two became close friends of the apostle Paul. They met the traveling apostle when he was in Corinth on his second missionary journey. Aquila and Priscilla had moved from Rome after the emperor Claudius had issued a decree expelling all Jews from the city. They had moved to Corinth and taken up their tentmaking business. When Paul, a fellow tentmaker, also arrived in the city, they worked together and doubtless learned much from Paul.

Later, when a young orator named Apollos began to preach what he had heard from John the Baptist's followers, Aquila and Priscilla brought him home and told him the whole story. When Apollos went back to preaching, he had the full gospel message and had great impact in Corinth and beyond (1 Cor. 1:12). Aquila and Priscilla's quiet ministry in their home surely influenced many. Later, upon their return to Rome, one of the house churches met in their home (Rom. 16:3-5).

Couples who are united in Christ can have a great impact together for His kingdom. God can work mightily through a couple who are devoted to Christ and willing to use their time, efforts, and resources to build God's kingdom. A Christ-centered home can be a haven for many who need to hear the gospel message. A devoted couple can minister together to both men and women. As they seek God together, their united front and solid faith can be a positive example to many. But they will only be as effective as their ability to communicate with each other. Often married couples are busy serving separately in churches. While their various gifts are needed in different places, they should not ignore the impact they can have together.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about marital communication on pages 1660, 1661. See also the key passage note at 1 Peter 3:8 on page 1663.

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Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried among the cities of Gilead.

IBZAN, ELON, AND ABDON

⁸After him, Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel. ⁹He had thirty sons. And he gave away thirty daughters in marriage, and brought in thirty daughters from elsewhere for his sons. He judged Israel seven years. ¹⁰Then Ibzan died and was buried at Bethlehem.

¹¹After him, Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel. He judged Israel ten years. ¹²And Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried at Aijalon in the country of Zebulun.

¹³After him, Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel. ¹⁴He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy young donkeys. He judged Israel eight years. ¹⁵Then Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried in Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the mountains of the Amalekites.

THE BIRTH OF SAMSON

13 Again the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.

¹Now there was a certain man from Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children. ²And the Angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. ³Now therefore, please be careful not to drink wine or similar drink, and not to eat anything unclean. ⁴For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

⁶So the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A Man of God came to me, and His countenance was like the countenance of the Angel of God, very awesome; but I did not ask Him where He was from, and He did not tell me His name. ⁷And He said to me, 'Behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. Now drink no wine or similar drink, nor eat anything unclean, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death.'"

⁸Then Manoah prayed to the LORD, and said, "O my Lord, please let the Man of God whom You sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born."

⁹And God listened to the voice of Manoah, and the Angel of God came to the woman again as she was sitting in the field; but Manoah her husband was not with her. ¹⁰Then the woman ran in haste and told her husband, and said to him, "Look, the Man who came to me the other day has just now appeared to me!"

¹¹So Manoah arose and followed his wife. When he came to the Man, he said to Him, "Are You the Man who spoke to this woman?"

And He said, "I am."

¹²Manoah said, "Now let Your words come to pass! What will be the boy's rule of life, and his work?"

¹³So the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Of all that I said to the woman let her be careful. ¹⁴She may not eat anything that comes from the vine, nor may she drink wine or similar drink, nor eat anything unclean. All that I commanded her let her observe."

¹⁵Then Manoah said to the Angel of the LORD, "Please let us detain You, and we will prepare a young goat for You."

¹⁶And the Angel of the LORD said to Manoah, "Though you detain Me, I will not eat

SOUL NOTE



Good Insights (13:2-24) Manoah's wife is not named, but her faith shines through this passage. She was childless, but one day the Angel of the Lord appeared and promised a son. She and Manoah sought God's guidance, listened to God's rules for them and their son, and brought an offering in thanks. Manoah became afraid when he realized that they had "seen God," but his wife's good insight revealed her trust in God (13:22, 23). At times, one spouse may have insights that the other does not. Manoah's wife trusted God and helped Manoah do the same.

Topic: Marital Communication

⁹So the king's scribes were called at that time, in the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on the twenty-third day; and it was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded, to the Jews, the satraps, the governors, and the princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces *in all*, to every province in its own script, to every people in their own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language. ¹⁰And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, sealed it with the king's signet ring, and sent letters by couriers on horseback, riding on royal horses bred from swift steeds.^a

¹¹By these letters the king permitted the Jews who were in every city to gather together and protect their lives—to destroy, kill, and annihilate all the forces of any people or province that would assault them, *both* little children and women, and to plunder their possessions, ¹²on one day in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.^a ¹³A copy of the document was to be issued as a decree in every province and published for all people, so that the Jews would be

ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies. ¹⁴The couriers who rode on royal horses went out, hastened and pressed on by the king's command. And the decree was issued in Shushan the citadel.

¹⁵So Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, with a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. ¹⁶The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor. ¹⁷And in every province and city, wherever the king's command and decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a holiday. Then many of the people of the land became Jews, because fear of the Jews fell upon them.

THE JEWS DESTROY THEIR TORMENTORS

9 Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month of Adar, on the thirteenth day, the time came for the king's command and his decree to be executed. On the day that the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, the opposite occurred, in that the Jews

8:10 ^aLiterally *sons of the swift horses*

8:12 ^aSeptuagint adds the text of the letter here.



SOUL NOTE

Communication Is Key (8:3–8) Esther pled with her husband, the king, on behalf of the Jewish people, all the while knowing she had very little status even though she was the king's wife. Their marriage was very different from marriages today, but Esther's attitude provides an excellent example of marital communication. She never presumed upon the king; she approached him with respect and courtesy. We can show the same courtesy toward a spouse by listening intently and speaking with respect and courtesy. Respectful, honest communication is important to a happy marriage.

Topic: Marital Communication



SOUL NOTE

Crisis Intervention (8:11) At times we must take responsibility for our own protection and the protection of others. Esther prayed for God's guidance, and then risked her life on behalf of her people. The king's agreement still needed to have a new law to put it into practice. So Ahasuerus granted Mordecai the use of his signet ring to issue a new edict. Crisis was averted through the intervention of individuals who cared enough to get involved. We must trust in God's guidance and protection, but then we may have to work and take risks in order to intervene in a difficult situation.

Topic: Crises

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as they by the Holy Spirit for Christ in love." He, yet able to help others, we

⁹(Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first^a descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

¹¹And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in

the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

THE NEW MAN

¹⁷This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of^a the Gentiles walk, in the futility of

4:9 ^aNU-Text omits *first*. 4:17 ^aNU-Text omits *the rest of*.

KEY PASSAGE



Communi-
cation

WORDS' WORTH

(4:15)

Without communication, human beings would be isolated. God gave us language to allow us to talk, express ideas and opinions, provide information, and share feelings. Some people communicate in hurtful ways, saying words that cause pain to the hearer. Believers, however, are to communicate differently. Paul wrote that Christians' words should always be truthful and spoken in love. He added that no corrupt words should come out of believers' mouths; instead, they should speak only "what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Eph. 4:29).

Think about how many times a day we open our mouths to talk. What if every word first had to be passed through a sieve of truthfulness, love, and edification? Would we be left speechless? We would do well to consider what we have to say before we say it. Then we would have time to apply Paul's test to our words.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about communication on pages 1442, 1443. See also the personality profile of Paul and Barnabas on page 1441.

SOUL NOTE



Even at Home (4:15) Sometimes it is most difficult to be a Christian at home. Believers may work hard at speaking carefully in the world; at home, however, they may not try so hard. While home is a place where we can be ourselves, those "selves" should still show Christlike character. Marriage partners should speak as carefully to each other as they would to a friend or an unbeliever. To speak the truth in love means honesty and openness with the seasoning of love that always respects the other person, seeking his or her best interests. Christian couples who follow Paul's advice to "speak the truth in love" have healthy communication.

Topic: Marital Communication