**MINISTERIAL SPOUSES’ CURRICULUM GUIDE: LECTURES**

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**Lesson 4**

**Communication Keys**

*This lesson is geared mainly towards marriage and family relationships. However, the principles can be applied to other interpersonal relationships as well.*

1. Communication is one of the most essential skills for successful relationships, including family living. Poor communication skills are a menace to interpersonal relationships.
2. We start communicating from the moment we are born. Yet we are so poor at it! It is a mistake to think that effective communication comes naturally. This belief prevents us from exerting the energy and effort to hone our communication skills. What is good communication? **Slide #2.** By good communication we mean that the message you want to convey is received and understood the way you intended. Not all communication is good!
3. What is involved in effective communication? Solomon, the world’s wisest man, shares some sound principles. **Slide #3.**

**Slide #4**

1. The ability to share or speak - a learned ability. Sharing is easier for some than for others. It has to be practiced and then it is learned. It helps when parents encourage their children to express their feelings. As adults, we would benefit from trying to articulate our feelings clearly.
2. The ability to listen – a practiced skill. This is very difficult. We are usually in such a hurry to get our points across, that we feel that the other person’s ideas are not very important. This leads to tuning out or interrupting.
3. The ability to settle conflicts - conflict resolution. This is the most difficult technique. This is why there is so much universal hate and hostility. Some are not willing to settle conflict. Others prefer to deny that there is conflict.
4. **Communication Needs**. **Slide #5**
5. **Mastery of speaking and listening skills**: We need not only to speak clearly and describe our ideas; but we need to make a greater effort to listen.
6. **Daily sharing of intimate feelings**: It is OK to express how we feel. Use feeling words like, “I am **sad** today,” “I have a **happy** feeling,” “I am **thankful**.” The trick is to pause a while and examine how we feel. Then say how we feel. Here’s a secret. Express more positive feelings than negative ones. Feel the difference!
7. **Dynamics of settling conflicts:** We should be uncomfortable when we are involved in unresolved conflict. Seek for a resolution quickly. That is why the Apostle Paul urged, “Be ye angry and sin not; let not the sun go down on your wrath.” Eph.4:26. Notice the implication that we need to work on resolution in a hurry! Seems like we have less than one day! There are definite steps for conflict resolution. Do not underestimate the power of the following words:

“I was wrong.” Even if you are not the offender, realize that in some measure, you may have contributed to the state of affairs.

“I am sorry.” Say with sincerity and without offering an excuse, rationale or reason.

“Please forgive me.” Express your desire for restoration of the relationship.

Do not be ruled by the reaction or attitude of the other party.

1. **Factors affecting good communication. Slide #6**
2. What is said. Remember that words don’t mean. People mean. Therefore the message intended is of more importance than the actual words.
3. What is meant. The meaning conveyed has a great influence on the words used. Often it is the meaning of the statement that causes problems.
4. What is heard. When the receiver hears the message, some concepts are formed in his/her mind. A reaction begins to be formed.
5. What is understood. This is a critical dimension. The hearer’s reaction is based greatly on his understanding. Understanding of the message influences one’s feelings.
6. Listening is a vital component of good communication. We are more prone to speak than to listen. **Slides #7 – 9.**
7. Speaking is also very important. It is unfortunate that we are not as careful as we should be with our words. The American poet, Will Carleton, underscores the importance of careful speech:

“Boys flying kites

Haul in their white-winged birds.

You can’t do that way when you’re flying words.

Careful with fire is good advice we know.

Careful with words is ten times doubly so.

Thoughts unexpressed may sometimes fall back dead;

But God Himself can’t kill them once they’re said.”

**Slide #s 10 - 16** (Speaking Keys)

The benefit of an “I” message is that the brunt of an accusatory approach is removed. The “you” approach is reduced, thereby preventing the offender from getting on the defensive.

There are three elements in an “I” message: **a feeling word**, a **statement of the offenc**e and **a request**. Suppose little Johnnie is in the habit of slamming doors. Instead of saying, “Johnnie, you are always slamming the doors. You must stop it!”

By using an “I” message you would say, “I get scared (upset, disgusted) when you slam doors like that because that could cause some damage to the house. Would you please try to close the doors more gently?”

1. **A guide for communicating**
2. Do I have to say it at all? Some things are better left unsaid.
3. Do I have to say it now? Some things seem less threatening after a good night’s rest.
4. Is this the best way to say it? It is always better to think before speaking.
5. What would I gain if I say it? If the answer is “nothing,” then do not say it.
6. **Conclusion**: What is said? Remember that words don’t mean. People mean. Therefore the message intended is of more importance than the actual words. What is meant? The meaning conveyed has a great influence on the words used. Often it is the meaning of the statement that causes problems. What is heard? When the receiver hears the message, some concepts are formed in his/her mind. A reaction begins to be formed. What is understood? The circumstances of the conversation, the tone of voice and the body language all combine to influence one’s understanding of the message.

**Slides #17 – 19.**

**ACTIVITY: Search Proverbs Chapters 15 - 18 for communication principles.**