

## Nampa Bible Church Home Groups - Marital Methods Applied Part 1: Communication

Our previous lessons have shown us that we are created in God's image and that our lives and our marriages exist for the purpose of bringing Him glory. It is our duty to patiently help our spouse to become more Christlike. Since God is the motivation for godly communication let's look into what godly communication looks like.

- 1) **How important is the art of listening in being a godly communicator?** Throughout the Proverbs there are dozens of verses all about listening. In fact, according to God's Word, listening is just as important as speaking. The truth is that we must listen first in order to follow up with an effective and godly response. Verses like Proverbs 18:13 tell us that it is foolish to answer before hearing. Why is it foolish? Because, we will only consistently understand the speaker if we let them speak openly first. Listening does not mean simply not talking, but instead means listening *with the intent to learn*. It means not planning our next statement while the other person is still speaking. This requires much humility and considering the speaker to be more important than ourselves. (Phil 2:3-4)
- 2) **Give some examples of ways you "sinfully communicate". What usually drives you to sinful communication?** Examples of sinful communication include gossip, white lies, anger, harsh words, unwholesome words, cutting sarcasm, body language, not listening, fake listening, feigning interest, avoiding confrontation and even *not* talking or engaging in the conversation. What drives us to these types of sinful communication is, at its root, self-idolatry. We consider ourselves and our interests more important than others. Matthew 12:34-35 tells us that "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks" or in other words "*What is in the well of the heart will come up through the bucket of the mouth*". Essentially we say what we feel to be true in our hearts but the problem is that most of us have hearts rooted in weak faith, self-idolatry and laziness. We hate being inconvenienced, challenged, or questioned.
- 3) **The world tells us that cutting sarcasm, negativity and harsh speech are great forms of humor. After reading thru the verses on communication on the other handout, how do you think God views negativity and harsh speech? What are some examples of negative speech, harsh words or harmful sarcasm? What are the Biblical opposites of these examples?** God is completely intolerant of speech or action that tears others down in any way but he loves speech which builds up. Negative speech can be seen in our tone of voice (irritation, anger, and condescension), negative words (pointing out the bad, complaining, calling names) harsh words ("I already told you...", "I told you so", "You always do this..."), and negative joking (essentially joking with the intent of communicating a frustration). Society may tell us that this is good humor, but tearing down a fellow image bearer of the LORD is not funny. We must be aware of the subtle onslaught with which television, movies, and radio confronts us. Biblical opposites include I Cor 14:1, 16:18, Pro 25:11, James 1:19, 3:17-18, Ecc. 10:12, Ro 12:18, Heb 12:14, and Matt 5:19.
- 4) **What does negativity, cutting sarcasm or harsh speech really communicate about your view of the person you're talking to? How about your view of God? On the other hand what are the benefits (fruits) of godly communication?** This kind of speech implies to the other person, and anyone else who is observing our conversation, that they are worthless, not worth the effort and that we are immensely more important. This attitude is truly the antithesis to Philippians 2:3-4. In addition to insulting the person with whom we're talking, these actions say that God is not influential on our behavior and that we don't truly fear Him. We slap Him in the face by idolizing ourselves, tearing down those made in His image and complaining about His gracious gifts.
- 5) **Based on James 1:26, Eph 4:29 and Col 4:6, how much harsh speech is too much? Is snapping at your spouse okay? Is having an irritated tone of voice okay? Where do you draw the line? Is negative, bitter or harsh speech okay *sometimes*?** There is virtually no way to ever justify any of these actions. The only time Christ was ever negative or sarcastic was in dealing with unrepentant rebels who were dragging God's name through the mud. Even in these situations His speech was laced with sorrow. It is doubtful that we, as sinful people, will be

able to consistently achieve this righteous balance between sarcasm and love. It is important to note that, since this kind of speech is never acceptable, we have a responsibility to confront our brothers and sisters in Christ when we see this in their lives.

- 6) **What should godly behavior look like during a conflict? What should godly behavior look like after a conflict? Try to think some verses as examples.** During a conflict we should be listening intently, calm, humble, kind and prayerful. We should be displaying the fruit of the spirit (I Cor 13, Gal 5:22-23) and should strive to be more Christlike at this moment than at any other! We should be quick to apologize and willing to admit our wrongs and not just so the other person will stop talking about it! After a conflict we should be respectful, humble, harmonious, acting as if we were never sinned against (keep no record of wrongs - I Cor 13:5) and we should make sure the other person is okay with us as well (be sure resolution is mutual).

Poor Listeners	Good Listeners
Assumes the subject is uninteresting	Finds something interesting in what is said and asks questions
Focuses on the speaker's manner of expression (word choice)	Finds the message more important than grammar, sentence structure or wording.
Becomes over stimulated; makes snap judgments	Listens rationally; evaluates but suspends judgment
Listens only for the facts	Listens for the feelings too
Tries to outline the information	Notes patterns, traits, principles and basic ideas
Fakes attention to the person	Shows disciplined attention through brief comments and reactions
Is distracted by surroundings	Concentrates by focusing eyes and mind
Evades grappling with difficult information	Welcomes expression of difficult ideas or problems
Satisfied with only hearing what is first said	Probes for the idea, assumption, problem behind the surface words
Lets emotional words or situations block information flow	Maintains emotional control and is unshockable
Thinks about own response to what is being said	Thinks about what is being said, and if advice is sought, uses biblical principles

The goal of our marriages should be to honor God *and* to honor our spouse so that *they* can honor God. We should strive to enhance our spouse's glory so they can live out the glory of God.