

# EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION & FELLOWSHIP

## INTRODUCTION

Good communication and fellowship are the fruit of a godly marriage. But too often they are seen as an end rather than a means. Communication and fellowship are gifts from God to be enjoyed for God's glory and our good.

### **A. God communicates with us.**

1. In creation:                      And God said, "Let there be..." (Gen.1:1)  
  And God blessed them. And God said to  
  them..." (Gen.1:28)
2. In redemption:                    Jesus, the eternal Word became flesh  
  "God has spoken to us by his Son..."  
  (Heb. 1:1-3)

### **B. God blessed man with the gift of words and speech in order to communicate.**

- When God brought the woman to the man, "Then the man said..." (Gen.2:22-23)

### **C. Sin corrupted communication and fellowship (Sin: desiring something other than what God has said, and disobeying what God said)**

1. Fear and hiding
2. Blame shifting and separation

### **D. God's grace redeems, restores, and makes all things new...including communication!**

# I. THE PROFOUND PRIVILEGE and BLESSING of COMMUNICATION & FELLOWSHIP!

## A. Brings glory to God (*"...do all to the glory of God."* 1 Cor. 10:31)

1. Created in the image of God
  - *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.* (Gen. 1:27)
2. Reflects the nature and character of God (speaking, self-disclosing, loving, blessing)

## B. Brings blessing because it is not good to be alone

- *Then the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.* (Gen. 2:18)
- *Members of one another, need for every part, exhort daily* (Rom. 12:5, Eph. 4:16, Heb. 3:13)
- *Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.* (Prov. 18:1)
- "God knew that even though Adam and Eve were perfect people living in perfect fellowship with him, they could not figure out life on their own. They were created to be dependent. God had to explain who they were and what they were to do with their lives. They did not need his help because they were sinners. They needed his help because they were human." (Paul Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemers Hands*, 40)

## C. Helps us to become one (Gen. 2:18-25)

- *So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.* (Gen. 2:21-25)

#### **D. Reflects Christ and the Church**

- *This mystery is profound; and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. (Eph. 5:32)*

#### **E. Serves others**

- *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Eph. 4: 29)*

#### **F. Is a vital means of conformity to the image of Christ**

- *For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers (Rom. 8 29)*
- *Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ. (Eph.4: 15)*
- “The reality of spiritual blindness has important implications for the Christian community. The Hebrews passage (3:12-13 calling us to protect one another from the deceitfulness of sin and hardness of heart) clearly teaches that personal insight is the product of community. I need you in order to really see and know myself. Otherwise, I will listen to my own arguments, believe my own lies, and buy into my own delusions. My self-perception is as accurate as a carnival mirror. If I am going to see myself clearly, I need you to hold the mirror of God’s Word in front of me.” (Paul Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemers Hands*, 54)

**God's intention for marriage is companionship, fellowship, intimacy, and growth in godliness for his glory. Pursue communication and fellowship as a means of walking in the light, growing in godliness, and helping your spouse to mature in Christ as you are becoming one.**

## II. WHERE DOES EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION and FELLOWSHIP BEGIN?

Begins with the “heart” rather than the “how” ...motive before method  
(Lk. 6:45 “...out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”)

### A. Fellowship begins with a heart amazed by grace (the gospel functions in fellowship)

- *We love because he first loved us.* (1 Jn. 4:19)
- *Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,* (Ps. 107:1-2)

### B. Fellowship requires a humble heart

1. Developing an accurate perception of who I am before a holy God leads to humility.
  - *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?* (Jer. 17:9)
  - *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* (1 Jn. 1:8)
2. Confessing sin
  - Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another... (Jas. 5:16)
3. Asking a lot of questions for clarification, instruction, evaluation and correction.
  - By insolence comes nothing but strife, but with those who take advice is wisdom. (Prov. 13:10)

### C. Fellowship requires a servant’s heart

- *Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.* (Phil. 2: 3-4)

1. Initiative
2. Availability

#### **D. Fellowship requires an understanding heart**

1. Beyond what our eyes see and our ears hear.
  - *...He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge (Is. 11: 3-4)*
  - *Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way... (1 Pet. 3:7)*
2. Understanding is not an end in itself. It must lead to action.
  - *And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment, (Phil. 1:9)*
3. Understanding is essential, in order to answer or hear correctly!
  - *If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. (Prov. 18:13)*

#### **E. Fellowship requires an honest heart**

- *If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another... (1 Jn. 1:6-7)*
- *Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Eph. 4: 25)*
- *And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Gen 2:25)*

### III. HOW DO WE FELLOWSHIP and COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY?

#### A. Hindrances to effective communication and fellowship

Discuss your practice and patterns, and identify root causes of unfruitful communication. Recognize the doctrine of sin, and its effects on communication. In addition to noting the words you use and tone with which you use them, ask yourself, what do you believe when you communicate? What do you desire when you communicate? What do you avoid?

1. Ignorance
  - a. Of the purpose and objective of communication
  - b. Of the condition and need of our own hearts
  - c. Of what fellowship includes
  - d. Of God's provision in this means of grace
2. Selfishness (a lack of love in the stewardship of your marriage)
  - a. Laziness (no communication)
    - (1) Arrogant refusal to do more, believing there's no need to do more
    - (2) Love of self and ease more than love of God and spouse
  - b. Self-centeredness (focus on self interest when you do communicate)
3. Fear (is often another form of selfishness...it's still about me!)
  - *The fear of man lays a snare...*(Prov. 29:25)
  - a. Of rejection (disapproval, correction or indifference)
  - b. Of a disagreement or argument
  - c. Of how it will effect your spouse
4. Pride
  - a. Unwilling to acknowledge need (for God and his means of grace!)
    - There is nothing about us that is perfect and can't be improved, so everything about us should be open to evaluation.
  - b. Unwilling to be corrected, instructed, informed, or reminded
    - (1) anger
    - (2) withdrawal
    - (3) blame shifting

- c. Unwilling to be known
  - (1) sinfully judging others
  - (2) believing lies about self
- d. Unwilling to really hear before you answer
  - (1) assuming you know...
  - (2) interrupting
  - (3) completing sentences

## **B. Helps to effective communication and fellowship**

(Again, we must begin with our hearts...godly motives! Technique alone will not last!)

1. Ask questions...specific, personal, sincere questions.
  - a. With a desire to learn and understand
  - b. With a desire to learn and grow
  - c. With an awareness of the need of the moment
  - d. Without demanding
  - e. Without assuming you know the answer
2. Answer questions....specifically, humbly and honestly.
  - a. Providing the requested or necessary information or details
  - b. Repeating the question for clarity ("Is this what you mean, or are asking?")
  - c. Looking for opportunities to serve or walk in humility
3. Listen.
  - a. Attentively
  - b. Respectfully
  - c. With eyes and heart as well as ears
4. Begin to talk....about anything!
  - a. Facts and feelings
  - b. Ideas and dreams
  - c. Concerns and doubts
  - d. Temptations and sin

## **IV. WHAT SHOULD FELLOWSHIP INCLUDE?**

**A. The content and condition of our hearts** (thoughts, feelings, joys, fears, conviction)

**B. Our relationship with God and our pursuit of godliness**

1. A growing knowledge of God and love for the Lord
  - a. His attributes
  - b. Our experience
2. Evidences of grace, conviction of sin, and confession of sin
  - a. Fruit, change and growth
  - b. Struggles with sin

**C. Encouragement, evidences of God's grace, counsel, correction**

**D. Our life together** (ask each other what topics are most important to talk about)

1. Marriage (every aspect!)
2. Children
  - a. Evidences of God's work and grace
  - b. Goals for growth in godliness
3. The Church
  - a. Commitment to fellowship
  - b. Hospitality
  - c. Areas of service and ministry
4. Schedules
5. Families
6. Friendship evangelism
7. Finances
8. Relationship with others
9. Responsibilities

## 10. The future

### **V. WHEN DO WE FELLOWSHIP?**

(A few suggestions. Application looks like something!)

#### **A. As a way of life! You are one flesh! Seize opportunities! Today!**

- *Know well the condition of your flocks...(Prov. 27: 23)*
  - *Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. (1 Pet. 3:7)*
  - *Let each of you look...to the interests of others. (Phil. 2:4)*
  - *...As fits the occasion (Eph. 4:29)*
1. Early morning, wake up together
  2. Meals, or cleaning up afterwards
  3. Phone calls during the day
  4. Go for a walk when you get home
  5. At night, go to bed at the same time

#### **B. As a planned part of becoming one**

1. Regularly
  - a. Daily and weekly
  - b. A day or weekend away
2. Well planned with dates, times, topics and goals
  - a. Alone and uninterrupted
  - b. Without distractions

#### **C. In community...in spontaneous and planned contexts for sharing our life in Christ.**

(Care Group, other friends and couples, meet with your pastor, hospitality)

## **VI. SO WHAT IS EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION and FELLOWSHIP?**

- *Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Eph. 4:29)*
- *The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips. Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. (Prov.16:23-24)*
- *....Admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. (1 Thes. 5:14)*
- *To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is! (Prov. 15:23)*

**A. It edifies and encourages**

**B. It is suitable for the moment, which may mean correction**

**C. It ministers grace**

**D. It leads to change...understanding, intimacy, and godliness...for the glory of God!**

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION, EVALUATION and APPLICATION

1. How has God communicated with us, and what affect should that have on our pursuit of communication and fellowship?
2. Why should couples communicate? What are other benefits consistent communication?
3. What are some heart attitudes that are essential to effective communication? In which of these qualities do you most need to improve at this time?
4. What are some reasons for infrequent or poor communication? Which of these reasons might at times affect your own communication?
5. As you consider patterns of fruitful communication, in which area would you like to improve?
6. What topics are difficult for you to talk about? Please explain.
7. Evaluate yourself and then one another in the following aspects of communication:  
(Husbands lead by example)
  - a. Initiative and frequency
  - b. Substantive or superficial
  - c. Involved until conclusion of the topic
  - d. Listens attentively, respectfully, humbly and with self-control
  - e. Responds receptively to spontaneous conversation (assuming a sensitivity to timing)
  - f. Keeps commitment when communication is planned
  - g. Takes genuine interest in topics initiated by others
  - h. Walks in the light; willing to be known; transparent
  - i. Confesses sin and humbly acknowledges need, and requests your input and correction
  - j. Uses accurate, biblical terms and language when discussing sin
  - k. Regularly communicates love, gratitude and passion toward God

Which areas are strong, providing opportunities to celebrate God's goodness and grace?

Which area is weakest at this time? What one or two specific steps can you take to change?

Who else will you involve in the process?