

# FAMILY MATTERS | We Need To Talk

## INTRO:

We're starting a brand new series today: Family Matters

- We'll be covering topics like: communication, conflict resolution, and parenting challenges.
- These are going to feel a little different than my normal sermons, but I feel the need to give you some biblical tools and counsel to strengthen your homes.
- Much of the content will come from what I share in premarital counseling.

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There's a story from 1999 about a NASA spacecraft called the Mars Climate Orbiter:

It cost \$327 million and took nearly a decade to build. The mission was simple in concept—send it to Mars, study the climate, gather data.

But as it approached the planet, something went terribly wrong.

The spacecraft entered the Martian atmosphere at the wrong angle... and within minutes, it was gone.

What's shocking is not just that it failed—but *why* it failed.

One engineering team was using imperial units—pound-force seconds. Another team was using metric units—newton seconds. The numbers looked right. The reports were submitted. Everyone was doing their job.

But they were speaking two different “languages” and didn't realize it.

No one caught the mismatch. No one clarified. Everyone assumed they understood each other.

And the official conclusion was essentially this: The problem wasn't the spacecraft—it was the communication.

Now that sounds extreme... but something much closer to home proves the same point. IKEA Furniture:

There have actually been studies showing that one of the most reliable ways to spark conflict in a relationship is assembling furniture from IKEA together.

You've got the box, the pieces, and those famous instructions—no words, just diagrams.

Two people look at the exact same picture... and see two completely different things.

One says, “No, it clearly goes this way.”

The other says, “That makes no sense—it goes this way.”

And before long, you're not just building furniture—you're building frustration.

What's ironic is this: both people want the same outcome. You're not enemies. You're working toward the same goal.

But without clear, shared communication about *how* to get there, you can end up pulling in opposite directions—completely convinced you're right... and completely misunderstanding each other.

And that's true not just for spacecraft... and not just for furniture...

It's true for marriages, friendships, and every relationship in our lives.

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*Sometimes the problem isn't what we're trying to do—it's how we're communicating along the way.*

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## 6 KEYS TO HEALTHY COMMUNICATION

Healthy, successful communication is built on a few key components. They may sound like simple, practical advice—but they're deeply rooted in biblical truth.

And it's important to remember: God designed marriage, family, and relationships. He wants us to be healthy and thriving, which means these things matter to Him.

The good news is this—these components of communication aren't just ideas... they're things that can be learned, practiced, and strengthened over time.

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### 1. Assertiveness: The Willingness To Speak And Address Important Issues

**Ephesians 4:15** *ESV*

<sup>15</sup> Rather, *speaking the truth in love*, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

- **“If you can't say something nice, don't say it at all” sound like great advice until it isn't...**
  - But you DON'T have to say truths rudely or unkindly (we'll come back to that later)
  - But you DO have to speak truth to one another... especially about issues that matter to you!
- **Silence is not always kindness; sometimes it's simply avoidance**
  - In context, when Paul is calling us to speak the truth in love, he is contrasting this with the immature response to deception—as in, children assume that loving someone means shielding them from painful truths
  - Taking this beyond addressing deception in the church—the same principle applies: maturity and being healthy requires us to find a way to speak truthfully in love about real issues.
  - And if you're asking the yourself the question is this a real issue that needs to be addressed?
    - 1, good question... some things we simply need to let go
    - 2, if we can't just be like Elsa and let it go, it matters — it needs to be addressed
    - 3, if you decide to let it go, then you must let it go and resolve its never worth bringing up... otherwise you're not playing fair
      - Notice that a referee can't call fouls on previous plays?
      - It's either enough to be a penalty right then and there... OR it never happened!
- **Healthy relationship learn to talk about issues... they don't bury them.**
  - Visualize the 'straw that broke the camel's back'
  - We'll talk about conflict resolution next week, but step 1 is clear off the camel's back routinely.
  - Don't let small things pile up.

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- That requires us to speak/communicate often... because life happens often.
- **Love requires the courage to surface what matters**
  - Flip this around for a second.
    - If you love someone and you don't know that you are doing something that hurts them... wouldn't you want to know, so that you could stop hurting them? Even if this hurt your feelings?
- **Unspoken expectations are preloaded disappointments**
  - We could go off on a tangent here, but take a quick moment.
  - Expectations HAVE to be communicated.
  - It doesn't make them less meaningful because you have to communicate them.
  - No one is a mind reader and we don't live in a fantasy world where your expectations just magically get met by perfect people fulfilling your every wish and desire.
  - That's NOT a fair expectation to place on others to meet your expectations.
  - What IS FAIR is to communicate your expectations (and go from there—whether they should be met or not... different subject)
- **Last note: TIMING IS IMPORTANT**
  - Somethings don't need to be said 'right now'
  - Healthy communication recognizes the best times to speak
  - When you're exhausted and emotional often is NOT the best time.
  - I used to tell Amanda that I can't have a serious conversation after 10 pm. My brain (not hers) can't handle it!
    - That's not an issue so much anymore because we're old and usually one of us is in bed by then!

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## 2. Gracious Delivery: The Packaging Matters

### Proverbs 12:18 NIV

<sup>18</sup> The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

### Proverbs 16:23–24 ESV

<sup>23</sup> The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips. <sup>24</sup> Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.

- **The truth is only as effective as the tone that carries it**
  - [Proverbs 12:18](#): words can wound or heal — the difference is often how, not *what*
  - We have a saying in our house: “Its not so much what you're saying, but how you're saying it!”
  - You can say the right words in absolutely the wrong way.
  - Hear the difference:
    - Sarcastic: I love you
    - Growl: I love you

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- Genuine: I love you
- **Kindness in delivery is not weakness; it's wisdom—gracious words are like a honeycomb**
  - In pastoral settings we often talk about using the sandwich or oreo method regarding discipleship (I'm sure others use this too)
  - But we have to learn to sandwich the meat of the issue with grace... or compliments.
  - Example:
    - I love that you're willing to take time to cook dinner
    - HOWEVER, the kids and I really don't like onions
    - SO, I think if you were willing to try it this way, the whole family will enjoy it.
    - NOT: Your meal sucked, we all hate it! That was bad. Don't make it like that again.
  - Real life:
    - It's awesome that you're willing to help the kids with their homework, especially the math assignment due tomorrow
    - But its clear that you're getting frustrated, and your tone isn't helping them
    - The kids really enjoy time with you and they appreciate your help. You're a great dad. (Just make sure you're using the right tone)
    - NOT: Quit yelling at the kids. You're not helping. Now we're all crying over this!
- **"I" statements: own your feelings, don't weaponize them**
  - We have a way of being overly blunt and unkind at times.
  - Most of the time, we don't need to cast the blame (everyone knows)... there's better ways to state things
  - Example:
    - I know you like to take trips to the beach for fun days, but it'd be meaningful to me if we went to the park.
    - NOT: we always do what you want!
    - Own that you're wanting something else without casting blame on the other person.

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## 3. Clarity: Say What You Mean and Speak to Be Understood

### **Ephesians 4:25** ESV

<sup>25</sup> Therefore, having *put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth* with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

### **Proverbs 8:7-8** ESV

<sup>7</sup> for my mouth will utter truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips. <sup>8</sup> All the words of my mouth are righteous; *there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.*

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- **Vague communication forces your spouse to guess, and they will guess wrong**
  - Every couple experiences this when trying to pick a restaurant for dinner
    - Just say what you want, don't force them to guess right. (They won't)
  - Serious Note: Intentionally being ambiguous (about real matters) isn't honesty.
    - Often times, one will speak ambiguously to 'muddy the waters' in order to deceive so that they can get what they want.
    - Another word for that is manipulation. This isn't healthy. You need to repent if you're doing this on purpose.
    - Other times ambiguity is just poor communication. You don't need to repent, you need to clarify.
- **Say what you mean AND mean what you say**
  - Anything other than this is dishonest
  - Relationships are built on trust... and dishonest speech dissolves trust and ultimately relationships.
  - "A man is only as good as his word."
  - Be truthful.
- **Speak to be understood, not just to be heard**
  - What I mean by this is we have to speak in the language of the recipient (the breakdown is often comical).
  - Guys VS Girls — Blue VS Pink
    - "I have nothing to wear"
      - guys mean: they mean nothing is clean!
      - girls mean: they mean they need to go shopping!
    - "I'll be ready in 5 minutes"
      - guys mean: 5 literal minutes—300 seconds on the dot
      - girls mean: somewhere between 5 and 45 minutes
    - "the house looks clean"
      - guys mean: I have visually scanned the living room and it looks good
      - girls mean: Did you look in literally any other room
    - "We should have people over sometime."
      - guys: A vague and pleasant idea with no timeline attached
      - girls: I am now mentally planning a dinner party for six weeks from Saturday
    - "I'm fine"
      - guys: he's probably fine
      - girls: she's definitely not. You should probably run, buy her some chocolate, tell her she's pretty, get all of the kids and run.
  - **Communication needs to be clear, honest, and understandable.**
    - Speak in the way that will be BEST received by your recipient.

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- This takes being intentional with your words
- Otherwise, we're just making noise—just to be heard (that's more about us as the individual, rather than what's best for 'us the couple')

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## 4. The Right Motive: Check Your Heart

### 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 ESV

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. *It does not insist on its own way*; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup> Love never ends.

### 1 Thessalonians 5:11 ESV

<sup>11</sup> Therefore *encourage one another and build one another up*, just as you are doing.

- The right words from the wrong spirit still do damage
- [1 Corinthians 13](#): love is the only motive that keeps communication from becoming a weapon
- Before you speak, ask: am I trying to win, or am I trying to connect?
  - Am I communicating something that NEEDS to be said?
  - Am I communicating it the RIGHT way with the RIGHT spirit—because I want them & us to be better?
  - OR am I saying it this way because it makes me feel better?

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## 5. Active Listening: Listening to Understand

### James 1:19 NIV

<sup>19</sup> My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be *quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry*,

- **Quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry.**
  - Listen completely—try not to interrupt or jump to defend yourself (honestly this is so hard—but important)
  - Most people listen to respond or argue, not to comprehend
  - Slow down and try to understand what is being stated and felt.
- **Try to restate what you heard to see if you understood correctly before responding.**
  - Often times, we mis-hear OR hear beyond what was being communicated.
  - Don't add or subtract from what was being said. Just restate it—make sure you got it right.
  - Restating what your spouse said before you reply changes everything

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## 6. More Grace: No One Communicates Perfectly

**Ephesians 4:2 NLT**

<sup>2</sup> Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, *making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.*

- **No one communicates perfectly; grace creates the safety to try again**
  - We've all said stuff—and—as it comes out, we think “OH NO” that's not what I want to say!
  - So we have to give each other grace to correct ourselves.
- **This works best by correcting yourself, rephrasing, and clarifying**
  - Especially when you catch words/phrases coming out and sounding different than what you meant
  - OR when your spouse restates what they heard you say... and you need to clarify with better wording
- **Grace here, means releasing your spouse from the prison of their worst word choice**
  - We're making room for one another's faults... because of our love!
  - NOTE: how the verse begins:
    - always be humble AND gentle
      - You're not going to always get it right either
      - Be kind in your making allowance
    - be patient with each other
      - Keep working towards each other
      - Keep working towards healthier communication

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## RESPONSE:

The Mars Climate Orbiter didn't fail because nobody cared. Everyone cared. Everyone was working hard. Everyone thought they were doing their job. But somewhere between the sending and the receiving, the signal got lost — and nobody stopped to check.

That's the danger in a marriage too. You can love each other deeply, work hard, mean well — and still be operating in completely different languages without realizing it.

So here's the assignment this week — just one thing. Pick one of these six areas where you know you're weakest. Not your spouse's weakest area. Yours. And begin there.

Because the goal isn't perfect communication. The goal is two people who love each other enough to keep trying — and extend enough grace to keep going when they don't get it right.

**Some final scripture:**

**Psalm 141:3 ESV**

<sup>3</sup> Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!

**Ephesians 4:29 ESV**

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<sup>29</sup> 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.