



# Family Foundation Series COMMUNICATION Forest Park Church

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“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”—Bernard Shaw

1 If you’ve been in a relationship for more than 10 minutes you already know that poor communication makes everything more difficult!

- Solving problems,
- Discussing finances,
- Parenting,
- Resolving conflict,
- Even just deciding where to eat for dinner is difficult when you can’t communicate with your significant other.

In fact, the #1 presenting problem that couples express when seeking counseling is...you guessed it...Communication!

In my experience, our attempts at resolving communication problems usually involve focusing in on personality differences, gender differences, or family of origin differences as we try to find some meet-in-the-middle solution to the differences in how we prefer to communicate.

**This approach may lead to small steps of progress but rarely resolve the communication issues that are most pervasive.**

- The reality is that we won’t actually see a lot of change in natural communication styles no matter how much energy we put into closing the gap in this area.
- I have found that couples can make great strides in the area of communication by simply evaluating and eliminating the communication habits they have that actually hinder healthy conversation in their relationship.
- And deciding to employ the communication techniques of the master Communicator Jesus Christ.

## 2 I. COMMUNICATION KILLERS.

### 3

## KILLER #1: MINIMIZING

If your partner feels strongly about something or believes something to be significant, whatever you do...don't Minimize it! Minimizing something that your significant other brings to you will only ensure they stop bringing things to you in the future. We minimize with phrases such as:

- “Oh, it’s not that bad”
- “That’s not as bad as \_\_\_\_\_”
- “I’ve had worse”
- “I think you’re overreacting”

Hearing any of those phrases will kill any hope the other person had that you may actually care about and understand them.

- Minimizing can often be unintentional which makes this subtle communication killer even more dangerous.
- You may desire to ease another’s pain or help them to see the situation as less serious so it is not as distressing to them.
- No matter how pure your intentions may be, minimizing will hinder communication.

Even if you don't feel like the other person's issue is a big deal, that's not important in the moment. The issue is big to them, which is why they have decided to communicate with you about it.

If you want continued access to your partner's heart, you have to connect with how they are feeling in the moment.

### 4

## KILLER #2: DEFENSIVENESS

Now before you get defensive and tell me how you're not defensive, listen for just a minute!

Defensiveness is simply anything you do to Fight Off feeling bad.

We all have different strategies for defending ourselves but here are a few you may recognize in yourself or others:

- -anger
- -attacking
- -pouting
- -silent treatment
- -excuses
- -justifications
- -explanations

Some defensive strategies are more damaging than others, but all of them will shut down communication in a relationship.

- Defensiveness communicates to the other person that you are closed off to their feedback or input and aren't willing to hear anything about your behavior.
- Defensiveness does not necessarily stem from the belief that the person is not wrong, but often shows up because the person already feels badly about themselves or their behavior, and receiving more confirmation of their inability to measure up can be overwhelming.
- Rather than feeling worse about this area of themselves, they would rather defend and deflect so they don't have to continue feeling bad.

The long term problem with defensiveness is that other people will stop bringing issues to the defensive person because it just isn't worth the energy it takes or pushback they receive.

- When the defensive person stops getting critical feedback from others they will wrongly assume the absence of feedback is due to their growth or improvement,
- the reality is that they have just made it too painful for people to bother challenging them any longer.
- Communication is now relegated to only surface areas and the relationship will suffer the depth and intimacy everyone desires.
- Or others will feel alienated because people simply don't want to talk with them anymore.

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## KILLER #3: SARCASM

Since this is a safe place...in full disclosure...this is my biggest issue in relationships in my life.

I have been fluent in sarcasm from the moment I entered this world.

I've always got some comeback or witty interjection on the tip of my tongue.

**Not everybody else thinks my sarcasm is as wonderful as I do.**

- In fact, my wife has been a victim of my sarcasm
- She never knows if something she shares with me will become the butt of one of my jokes later on down the road.

As fun and light-hearted as sarcasm may seem, to others it often communicates disdain and disrespect.

- The things another person may communicate and feel passionate about should not become the foundation of another's jokes.
- Sarcasm hurts people, closes people's hearts and takes healthy conversations in a painful direction many times.

For many people the use of sarcasm can often be a passive-aggressive way to confront others.

- Because I don't love confrontation I will often "clothe" my frustrations and concerns in sarcasm towards others so that if they get angry with me I can always just chalk it up to joking with them.
- The right thing for me to do is just be honest and direct with them, but instead I turn it into a joke and attack the person wrapped in humor.
- Sarcasm will cause those in relationship with you to guard their words and will prevent honest, vulnerable conversation.

## 6

### **KILLER #4: UNIVERSAL STATEMENTS**

If always and never show up in your conversations then you understand Universal Statements.

One of the problems with universal statements is they don't actually communicate reality so your message is already lost before you've started.

- There are certainly situations where others accidentally got it right or didn't get it wrong, so when you use statements like Always and Never it simply isn't true.
- The other person will then ignore and discount everything else you are trying to communicate because they don't agree that "they always" or "they never" do that thing you're bringing up.

The other problem with universal statements is they cause the

person to feel hopeless.

- You are likely bringing up the issue because you desire change in this area.
- When you use always and never it communicates total failure. \The other person is thinking to themselves, “If I never get it right or always get it wrong then what’s the point of even trying?”
- Rather than being receptive to your feedback and trying to improve in this area they will just give up.

### **It’s probably not true that your partner**

- “Never loves you” or “Always forgets what’s important to you.”
- It’s more likely that you desire some specific actions from them you are not currently getting and that is hurtful.
- **Stick with the specific issue(s) you want to address and avoid the use of Universal Statements.**

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## **KILLER #5: SHUTDOWN STATEMENTS**

Shutdown statements show up when we are hurt, overwhelmed or just plain angry.

**They are the verbal equivalent of slamming a door in someone’s face. It’s your way of ending the conversation but leaves the other person without resolution and feeling bad about the conversation. Some examples of shutdown statements are:**

- “It’s fine” (when it’s not fine with you)
- “Nothing” (when it is something)
- “I can’t do anything right”
- “It doesn’t matter” (when it does matter to you)
- “You’re right” (when you don’t believe they are right)

All of these shutdown statements will immediately kill the conversation and leave the other person feeling devalued. The issue is not resolved and usually the couple doesn’t return to the issue at a later time to discuss again. This pattern will leave a whole pile of issues that continue to be swept under the rug. Resentment builds, resolution takes a back seat and people learn to stop trying to discuss and resolve the issues in the relationship.

**Now there are times when one or both partners in a relationship get emotionally overwhelmed or flooded and it**

**makes sense to discontinue the current conversation before someone says or does something that will further damage the relationship.**

- In this case it is okay to end the current conversation.
- Instead of just using a shutdown statement to end the conversation, try communicating both a need to pause the current conversation and a desire to come back to it later.

(Something like, “I’m getting too heated to properly discuss this any further. Let’s take a break from this conversation and discuss again tomorrow after work.” This will still provide the immediate relief that a shutdown statement does but also communicate you value the other person and desire to resolve the issue.)

If you’re like me, you see a little of yourself in all five of the communication killers at times in your relationship.

The hope is that you can identify one specific killer that you will commit to work on in your relationship.

- If you make even small improvements in just one area, the communication in your relationship will grow.
- Over time these small steps of growth will begin to close the communication gap in your relationship and will foster healthier communication.
- If both partners are working on reducing or eliminating a specific communication killer, you can imagine how much your communication will improve.

Another way to enhance communication is rather than trying to make your partner communicate the way you do which is unique to your personality, gender or upbringing decide to communicate with the world like Jesus did.

## 8 II. COMMUNICATE LIKE CHRIST

Paul sets us up in his letter to the Church in Ephesus.

### **Eph 4:20**

*But that is not the way you learned Christ!— <sup>21</sup> assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, <sup>22</sup> to put off your old self,<sup>[1]</sup> which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, <sup>23</sup> and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

### **Ephesians 4:25**

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

A good listener makes you feel like you are the most important person in the whole world!

- You know they care
- you know they want to REALLY know what's going on, not just a quick fix.
- Encourages

## **9** 1. LISTEN-

### **A: Listen to God**

#### **Through His Word**

#### **Hebrews 4:12**

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

#### **Through His Spirit**

#### **Galatians 5:16-18**

*16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to*

*do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

## **B. Listen to Others**

[Dale Carnegie says that you can make more friends in two weeks by becoming a good listener than you can in two years trying to get other people interested in you

**Too many of us are good talkers, but we have little or no desire to listen.**

- Yet one of the keys to a successful marriage is wanting to hear your spouse out. This will help to build your spouse's self-esteem. (A person's self-esteem is his overall judgement of himself - how much he likes his particular person).
- When a spouse's self-esteem is high, he/she will feel important, wanted and loved and as a result will be a better marriage partner..

## **C. Be a mirror**

reflect back to the person what they are saying.

- "What are you looking for?" (John 1:38)
- The Good Samaritan is (Luke 10:25-37). Jesus was asked a question of what is needed for eternal life. He knows what's on the heart of the lawyer who asked this question so he tells a story and asks this question: Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"
- Do you see anything? (Mark 8:23) – Said to a blind man.
- Do you see this woman? (Luke 7:44) – Said to a woman right beside him.
- Is there no one to condemn you? (John 8:10) – Said to a woman after everyone left.
- Does the Law allow healing on the Sabbath or not? (Luke 14:3) – Said to the religious leaders.
- And my favorite that Jesus asked a paralyzed man: Do you want to get well? (John 5:6)



Ask questions for clarification but don't interrupt. ( what do you mean by saying.....?)

## 10 2. Speak Honestly(vs. 25)

(vs. 25)

*Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.*

### A: Speak

The word "speak" is an imperative. In other words, this is something that God **commands** us to do: "You speak!" People cannot **read** our minds. Therefore, clamming up is out for the Christian!

### B: Speak Truth

The phrase "speak truthfully" is in the *present tense*, which in the original language of the New Testament involves continuous action. We are **always** to speak truth! Violating this principle is easier than you might think. Here are some examples of *failing to speak the truth*:

- Outright **lies** or deception.
- Back door communication: Masking the *real* message through *indirect hinting or insinuations*.
- Not **really** meaning what you say.

### Are You Guilty of Insincere Communication?

- Do you ever answer the question, "What's wrong?" with "Nothing!", even when you know that something is wrong?
- Is what you say contradicted by your facial expressions or body language-which often reveals your real intentions?
- Do you ever flatter people on the outside (to avoid conflict) while you fume on the inside about an offense against you?

### C: In Love.

## 11 **Eph 4:15**

*Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.*

**We can be devastating in the way we use even the truth!**

**Proverbs 12:18:**

*Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*

Therefore, we must take great *care* to speak the truth with the other person's best interest in mind. We must be sensitive not only to **what** we are saying, but also **how** we are saying it (i.e. tone of voice, volume, facial expressions, eye contact, and posture).

IF there is unresolved anger or frustration with a parent Child or Spouse it won't just go away it must be honestly dealt with.

## 12 **3. SPEAK THOUGHTFULLY**

**James 1:19**

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

"Men have two ears, and but one tongue, that they should hear more than they speak." "The ears are always open, ever ready to receive instruction; but the tongue is surrounded with a double row of teeth, to hedge it in, and to keep it within proper bounds."

**Prov 13:3**

*The one who guards his mouth preserves his life;  
The one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.*

**"Thinketh before you speaketh"**

## **Eccl 5:2**

*Do not be hasty in word or impulsive in thought to bring up a matter in the presence of God. For God is in heaven and you are on the earth; therefore let your words be few.*

Shooting from the hip is not accurate. Know what you are going to say before you say it. Then ask yourself the question,

- Do I really want to say that?
- Do I really mean that?
- If what you want to say will not contribute to the conversation, don't say it.
- If you are speaking to intentionally hurt, then don't talk.

13

## **Col 3:8**

*8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.*

A guy came to his preacher and said, "sir, I only have one talent."

The preacher asked, "What's your talent?"

The man said, "I have the gift of criticism."

The preacher was wise and replied, "The Bible says that the guy who had only one talent went out and buried it. Maybe that's what you ought to do with yours."

Ask yourself this question before you speak: Would I be embarrassed or ashamed if God or anyone else heard me say this?

## **Eph 5:3-4**

*and there must be no filthiness and **silly talk**, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.*

The Greek word for silly talk is a compound word.

- It is the combination of **moros and lego**.
- Lego is speaking or laying forth in words and
- moros is where we get our English word MORON.

In other words, Am I going to sound like a moron if I say this?

Coarse jesting is referring to vulgar or "Adult Humor."

## 14 4. Speak Redemptively.

### 15 Col 4:6

*Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.*

Sometimes we have to invest in a bigger camel. (The straw that broke the camel's back)

- You need a camel that will hold more straw.
- Make your list of show-stoppers very short.

[I once read something that said if you wanted to trace anger back to its source, just use AHEN.

I don't mean a chicken, **but the acronym A-H-E-N**

When you see

**Anger** (the "A") it is usually covering a  
Hurt (the "H") If you peek under that Hurt,

**you'll see you had an Expectation** (the "E")

And if you look under that expectation,

**Expectation** (the "E")

And if you look under that expectation,  
you'll find a

**Need** – the "N"]

You cannot control what others say or do, but you can always control how you respond.

### Get off the escalator.

- When things get heated, commit yourself to never escalate.
- Finish the conversation when you can speak calmly.  
[Thomas Jefferson once said that when you get angry

count to ten before you respond. He said if you get really angry, count to 100 before you respond.]

## 1 Conclusion:

One outburst of anger can have permanent consequences.

- Moses lost his temper at Meribah in Numbers 20 and because of that, God did not allow him to enter the promised land. (Num. 20:12.)
- Instead of speaking to the rock as God instructed him He struck the rock out of anger.
- God told him that his little tantrum showed his unbelief and failure to treat God as holy in front of the people.

President Abraham Lincoln once summoned an Army surgeon to the White House. The major assumed that he was to be commended for some exceptional work. During the conversation Mr. Lincoln asked the major about his widowed mother. “She is doing fine,” he responded.

“How do you know?” asked Lincoln. “You haven’t written her, but she has written me.” Lincoln continued, “She thinks that you are dead, and she is asking that a special effort be made to return your body.”

At that, the Commander-in-Chief placed a pen in the young doctor’s hand and ordered him to write a letter letting his mother know that he was alive and well.