

Improving the Quality and Quantity of Your Communication Inventory

1. What does it mean to be able to communicate with another person? Define what you think constitutes effective communication.

2. Consider the following items. Which ones do you communicate about? Rate the **quality** of your communication on each of these items as *Excellent; Good; Fair; Poor*. Rate the **quantity** of your communication on each of these items in terms of *Too Much; Just Right; Too Little; Nonexistent*.

	Quality Rating	Quantity Rating
1. Spiritual issues, church, Christian service, devotions	<hr/>	<hr/>
2. Facts, information	<hr/>	<hr/>
3. Ideas, opinions, judgments	<hr/>	<hr/>
4. Desires, concerns, interests	<hr/>	<hr/>
5. Feelings, emotions	<hr/>	<hr/>
6. Plans, goals, purposes	<hr/>	<hr/>
7. Expectations, aspirations	<hr/>	<hr/>
8. Finances	<hr/>	<hr/>
9. Work or school	<hr/>	<hr/>
10. Family matters, parenting	<hr/>	<hr/>
11. Dreams	<hr/>	<hr/>
12. Sex	<hr/>	<hr/>
13. Friends	<hr/>	<hr/>
14. Recreation, sports	<hr/>	<hr/>
15. Problems, failures, defeats	<hr/>	<hr/>

3. Summarize what you have learned about the strengths and weaknesses of your communication efforts by taking this inventory:

4. Think carefully about what you can and will do to improve the quality and quantity of your communication efforts and describe your plan to become a better communicator.

For further study: You will find helpful material on the subject of communication in Wayne Mack's book, *Your Family God's Way*.

2. Evaluate your conversation. (Perhaps you should make a tape recording of some of your ordinary family conversation. Then listen to yourself.) Answer the following questions about your conversation:

- A. Do you really show an interest in what others are saying or are you interested only in what you are talking about?
- B. Are you a know-it-all?
- C. Is your tone of voice pleasant, gentle and friendly?
- D. Do you say things clearly and simply so that others can understand? Are you lovingly honest or evasive and untrue? Are you open or secretive? Do you often send backdoor messages?
- E. Are you predominantly appreciative and affirmative or critical and negative?
- F. Do you encourage others or belittle them?
- G. How is your family better because of your involvement with them?
- H. Does your family feel free to be honest and open with you? Is it safe for them to tell you the truth about you as they see it or do they have to fear speaking the truth to you?
- I. Do you tend to dominate a conversation in which you are involved? Do you ever "whip them into silence" by your tone or reaction?
- J. Are you willing to listen to opinions that are different from yours and not be threatened by them? Are you a highly opinionated, prejudiced person?
- K. When others want to talk to you, do you give them your undivided attention or are you usually too busy?
- L. Do you consider communication with your family to be a priority matter? Is it more important to you than watching T.V.? Than reading the newspaper? Than going fishing? Than taking a nap? If you had to choose between talking to your family and doing one of the aforementioned things, which would you choose? Do you take and make time daily to share with your family?
- M. Are you often not in the mood to talk? Do you give into your moods or deny yourself and focus on the needs of others?
- N. Are you frequently sarcastic and nasty in your speech or do you usually use wholesome, gracious, considerate, and respectful speech?
- O. Are you usually cheerful and bright or overly serious and somber? Do you usually have a merry heart or a broken spirit?
- P. Do you usually think before speaking? Do you consider the issues and people involved before saying what you think?
- Q. Do you ever lie? When are you tempted to deceive others?
- R. Do you ask questions to understand the purposes or motives of others or do you assume you already know these things?
- S. Do you ever engage family members in conversation about God's Word? What do you say? What do you ask? Do you discuss how you are seeking to be a better doer of the Word?
- T. Do you yell or curse to get your way? How do you verbally express anger in other ways?
- U. When arguments begin do you seek to fight and win or to honor God in your speech? Are telling the truth and coming to a biblical conclusion more important than personal vindication?
- V. Do you ask questions for the purpose of getting to know the other person better?
- W. What are the common ways you communicate your love?
- X. Do you publicly speak of private or personal matters? Do you embarrass others?
- Y. Would others say your words are gentle? Would they say your words are spoken from a perceptive heart?
- Z. When at your best, how do your words please God?

3. Study the following verses, note what they say about communication, write down what they say and how you need to apply them in your circumstances:

Speak the Truth in Love

Husband's Name: _____

Date: _____

Consider the following texts of Scripture:

¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:15-16)

²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:25)

⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. (Colossians 4:6)

Instructions:

Work with your spouse to identify three categories of your shared conversational life that have proven to be the most difficult to talk about from the previous assignment. These should be three areas that tend to result in conflict when they are brought up. After identifying the three categories, work separately to consider how you can approach each one in a more Biblical and loving (agape) way. In other words, how can you speak the truth in love with regards to each of these areas of challenge. Use the space below to record your answers.

1. Typical Area of Conflict: _____

How can you speak the truth in love (agape) in a more biblical way in this area of conflict?

2. Typical Area of Conflict: _____

How can you speak the truth in love (agape) in a more biblical way in this area of conflict?

3. Typical Area of Conflict: _____

How can you speak the truth in love (agape) in a more biblical way in this area of conflict?

Speak the Truth in Love

Wife's Name: _____

Date: _____

Consider the following texts of Scripture:

¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:15-16)

²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:25)

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The final step is to be done using the Conference Table methodology. Come together and compare and refine your answers until, together, you reach a point of understanding on how you can more effectively and biblically communicate through these historical points of conflict. Be specific in your answers. Include Scripture to support your answers as much as possible and implement these new ways of speaking the truth in love as soon as possible.

1. Typical Area of Conflict: _____

How can you speak the truth in love (agape) in a more biblical way in this area of conflict?

2. Typical Area of Conflict: _____

How can you speak the truth in love (agape) in a more biblical way in this area of conflict?

3. Typical Area of Conflict: _____

How can you speak the truth in love (agape) in a more biblical way in this area of conflict?

Please note that your counselor will not only be looking at your answers but the manner in which you arrived at your answers. Once again, these have historically been challenging topics so be sure to approach this exercise with prayer and humility. Be willing to change for the sake of your marriage and never forget that your words are always a reflection of the desires of your heart. That means that you must desire to glorify God in your marriage and communication more than anything else.

Keeping Current in Conflict:

One of the keys to effective Biblical communication is being intentional to keep the conversation focused on the current issue rather than allowing it to fall back into old patterns, arguments, or idolatrous priorities. If you are working on this assignment, it means that you have already navigated the tough waters of forgiveness and repentance together. That should allow you to leave the past in the past and to move forward unencumbered by those historical failures and offense. This assignment is designed to allow you to intentionally consider what it means to avoid sinful anger while effectively resolving the one and only conflict that is in front of you at any particular moment in time.

Consider the following:

²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. (Ephesians 4:26-27)

Is anger only the result of the fall of mankind into sin or does it have a godly element to it?

Yes ☐ or No ☐

Explain you answer:

Work together to come up with a Biblical and practical definition of anger. It should include both the potential positive and negative aspects of anger.

How has anger typically shown itself in your marriage relationship? Have the consequences of that anger been historically positive or negative and why?

How has your anger hurt your spouse?

Husband's answer (be specific):

Wife's answer (be specific):

List in the space below five Biblical texts that speak to the dangers of and warning against unrighteous anger:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

According to your mutual understanding, how can the regular practice of Biblical confession, repentance, and forgiveness help you avoid refighting old fights? Be as thorough and Biblical in answer as you can be.

What does it mean to you that Satan, who hates your marriage, loves to sow anger, discord, and relational distance between you and your spouse?

In what areas have you historically allowed Satan to pull the strings in your marriage?

God tells us that He is often angry (Psalm 7:11 for instance). What does godly and Christ-like anger look like and what are its goals?

What practical things can you each do in a moment of conflict when you sense unrighteous anger rising within you so that you don't, ultimately, sin against one another?

Attack the Problem, not the Person

Ephesians 4:29-30

²⁹ 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. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:29-30)

The apostle Paul begins a prohibition against “corrupting talk.” Work together to define what you think corrupting talk is.

How does corrupting talk show up in the way you communicate through conflict? Be specific.
Husband:

Wife:

What does the temptation to give in to corrupting talk reveal about the desires or idols of your heart? In other words, what do sinful patterns of communication reveal about what you want and even love in your heart?
Husband:

Wife:

If you haven’t asked for forgiveness and repented for these things, take the time to do so now. Please note, this needs to happen whenever sin of this sort has occurred.

To “edify” means to build up or strengthen. What are you trying to build up or strengthen in the midst of a conflict? How can the way you communicate help you to achieve that?

What part does, should, or could the Holy Spirit play in the way you communicate to one another as spouses? What needs to change in order to give Him greater control over your mouths?

Why do you think grief is the Spirit’s response to sinning with one’s words? What does this say about the importance that God puts on our speech, our relationships, and unity?

Put together past learnings to answer the following - what practical questions can you ask of yourself and one another to identify the real problem more biblically in a time of conflict? Have you given one another permission to ask such questions in a conflict? Yes or No

Consider the following text of Scripture:

¹ Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ² For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³ If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴ Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵ So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹ Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹² Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water. (James 3:1-12)

Why, according to James, is the tongue and the way we communicate with one another (even when we're in conflict) such an accurate measure of real spiritual maturity?

James says that no human being can tame the tongue. Where does that leave us?

To summarize – what are the problematic behaviors **currently** hindering the biblical intimacy in your marriage and how can you repent of those things for the sake of your mutual joy and the glory of God? Be specific in responses.

