

Communication In The Family

Everybody knows that communication is important in any relationship. Or do they? Did you know that, in order to achieve and maintain harmony and oneness, husbands and wives need to communicate well? Did you know that children need to learn how to communicate in a proper and godly way with their parents and with their siblings? Parents need to know how to communicate with their kids. Communications have a lot to do with "getting along." Ephesians 5 is an important chapter on marriage. Ephesians 4 is a good chapter about Christians getting along. In it we can find five vital principles for Christian communication and harmony. Let's apply all five to our families!

1. "Put On The New Man."

Ephesians 1-3 is about our salvation. It is the doctrinal half of this important Bible book. Ephesians 4-6 is about Christian living based on Bible doctrine. It is the practical half of the book. Admonitions for Christian humility and unity are made at the beginning of this section, Ephesians 4:1-16. Then Ephesians 4:17 begins an important passage that gives the secret to victorious Christian living. It is substituting the "old man" (v. 22) with the "new man" (v. 24). There are two of you, if you are a Christian. One of you is "old," the person that was born on your physical birthday, the one descended from Adam, your flesh, you as a natural man. He is evil. He was born in sin. He is "corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (v. 22). If you live life in his control, you will be carnal, and sinful, and unChristian in your actions and words. But there is a "new" you, too. He is the one that was born when you were "born again." By God he was "created in righteousness and true holiness" (v. 24). When you live life in his control, you live a truly Christian life. Your actions and words are determined by which "you" is in control. Jesus taught, and the rest of the New Testament says, that a believer can, by a decision of his will, put the old man out of control, and put the new man in control. Read Luke 9:23-24 and Galatians 5:16. The key to right family harmony and right family communication is for the saved members to live "in the Spirit."

2. "Speak Every Man Truth."

The first thing Ephesians 4 says to do when we have put on the new man is to replace our lying with truth-telling (v. 25). Ephesians 4:15 also talks about telling the truth. It says that we should be "speaking the truth in love." Christians in the same church need to be honest with one another. People in the same Christian home also should be honest with each other! Husbands should know what is happening in the minds, emotions, and the lives of their spouses. Wives should hear the honest opinions and ideas of their husbands. Some people are not particularly talkative (and this is good), but everybody should learn to talk to the one they married! Lying or even just not talking about important things can hurt a marriage and a family. Don't lie. Lies break down trust, and marriage depends upon trust. Don't ever lie to your spouse, to your child, to your parents. Tell the truth. Find a way to say what needs to be said, but always "in love." When there is a problem, a good way to communicate with the family-member who needs to hear from you is to ask for an appointment. Say, "Honey [or Dad, or Son, etc.], could I talk with you for about fifteen minutes sometime this evening?" When an "appointment" (even with a wife or husband) is set up, both individuals know that the matter to be discussed is important, both will give their undivided attention, and both will be listening. Don't let problems slide. Talk about them, tell the truth, and do it in a loving, respectful way. Don't try to slip important questions or complaints into ordinary conversation. Don't try to say what you need to say during an argument. Set an appointment or order to speak the truth in love. Pray about such appointments, and have them as often as they may be needed. You may need to set up an appointment today with your husband, your wife, your child, or your parents. Lack of communication is bad. Be sure that you talk with the ones you love. Family devotions are a good setting sometimes for this "speaking the truth" to one another. This is especially true before children come along, when husband and wife are alone. Regular "appointments" for discussion of family matters and for prayer may be a good idea for some couples. Think about it, and do something about it. You must talk!

3. "Let Not the Sun Go Down Upon Your Wrath."

The next element in communication handled in this passage about the "new" life is anger. "Be ye angry, and sin not." Anger is not always sinful. Righteous indignation against evil is justified. Anger that upholds God's name and honor and is for His sake is not bad. But anger that is selfish and vengeful is evil and leads to sin. The rule God gives us for the control of our anger is simply, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (vs. 26-27). No anger should last more than 24 hours.

Prolonged anger becomes bitterness (v. 31) and opens the door for the devil (v. 27). Don't hold a grudge. Speak the truth in love, and seek a reconciliation before the day is over. Study Matthew 5:23-25 and 18:15. Don't stay "mad"!

4. "Let No Corrupt Communication Proceed Out of Your Mouth."

Read Ephesians 4:29 carefully. Watch what you say! Words hurt and even destroy. Don't let it come out of your mouth if you are thinking something bad. Ask yourself, and God, if it will help ("minister grace") before you say it. Keep your mouth shut unless you can say something constructive ("edifying"). Actually Ephesians 4:25 is a good verse to memorize for recall during an argument! The way to cool a fuss is for somebody to start saying helpful things. Watch what you say! Ask, "Will this help?" and "Is this really true?" Even if it is true, it may not be helpful to say it right now. Let your new man take control when you feel like giving your old man the controls! Don't say things that will hurt people, or break down your relationship, or put wrong ideas into other minds. Just don't do it!

5. "Be Ye Kind...Tenderhearted, Forgiving."

One thing every family member should learn to say is "I'm sorry. Will you forgive me?" Another thing we should all know how to say is, "Yes, I will forgive you." When two people get married, two sinners get married. When they have children, they have little sinners! A sinner will sin most often against the ones he lives with. If a family is to be happy, the members must learn to ask and to grant forgiveness verbally. More than this, they must learn to be "kind" and "tenderhearted" at all times, doing good things for one another and feeling the feelings of the other ones. You will love your loved ones more if you will do kind things for them. You will treat them better if you will deliberately think about what they must be feeling. And ultimately, you must be willing to admit wrong and to forgive wrong. Without forgiveness, there will be all the bad things listed in verse 31. What is your home like? Is it verse 31 or verse 32? Use verse 32 to change verse 31, and begin today. Some say they cannot forgive another. Look again at verse 32. We are to forgive as God for Christ's sake forgave us. God forgave us absolutely and permanently when we came to Him in repentance. It cost God much to grant our forgiveness (His own Son). If you are willing to do the will of God, then be willing to sacrifice in order to grant that person full and permanent forgiveness. Be sure to say it, too. God doesn't mind telling us we are forgiven (I John 1:9). Say, "I forgive you." The Spirit-controlled heart that chooses to do God's will by forgiving another will find real victory in saying that forgiveness is granted.

Decision: I will help my family by speaking the truth in love, by controlling my anger, by watching what I say, and by learning to forgive with God's help.
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