

Title: Marital Communication

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Ask almost anyone what the most important aspect in a marital relationship is and they will likely say "communication." But what is communication and how does it work? What are the nuts and bolts of good communication patterns? When we think of communication, we automatically think of the spoken word. But according to Dr. Elbert Moravian there are at least three parts to communication. All of which apply to marriage.

1) Content. Content refers to the actual words that are spoken. 2) Tone of voice. I often ask people "If the words a person speaks and their tone of voice do not match up, which one do you pay attention to?" Without exception they will say they pay more attention to tone of voice than words. 3) Non-verbals. Non-verbals consist of such things as body language, hand motions and facial expressions. Some people are very expressive. We have all probably teased someone like this about not being able to talk if their hands were tied. But have you ever noticed how much better we understand a person who is very expressive? They are really getting their point across. They are communicating.

Dr. Moravian says that content accounts for only 7% of the message received by the person to whom you speak. A person's tone of voice accounts for 38% of the message received. And non-verbals account for 55%. How did we ever get the idea that communication is spoken words? We must add to this that communication is a two-way street. Along with the person delivering the message there must also be someone to receive the message. Listening is the second part of the communication equation. This means that communication is active on both sides.

So what does this have to do with communication in marriage? This points out to us that we must be tuned in to the person to whom we are communicating. Simply hearing the words is not enough. We must tune in to the full message being delivered. This requires more attention than we sometimes give. The husband who reads the paper and says "uh-huh" occasionally while his wife talks cannot possibly get the full message. The wife who is too busy in the kitchen to look up when her husband enters the room and begins talking is missing the mark if she desires to hear what is important to her husband. And that is really what is expressed if we do not communicate well. You are saying to your spouse "What you are saying is not important enough to me to give my full attention to or to participate in by active listening or communicating back." This is not a message you want to give to the one to whom you have devoted your life. If we really practice God's Word, we will be as "one." A person doesn't have a communication problem with himself because he is only one. Likewise, a couple that is "one" will not have a communication problem either. A couple that is "one" will be of one mind and one spirit. This does not take place without good communication.

One of the biggest hindrances to good communication is when one partner is emotionally closed. That is, they communicate on a topical level or even their thoughts. However, they fail to communicate on an emotional or feeling level. Of course this may apply to women also but it most often occurs with men. It is difficult to be "one" with a person who doesn't allow their spouse to know how they are feeling. Unfortunately, we live in a society where many men grow up with the idea that it isn't OK to have emotions and certainly not OK to express them. This restriction of emotion makes it difficult for husband and wife to be

"one" as God intended. How can you be "one" when your spouse doesn't know how you are feeling?

Many men were taught that the only acceptable emotion is anger. All the other emotions are left submerged. This suppression of emotion only tends to make the anger worse which, in turn, makes communication and oneness even more difficult. If this description fits you I encourage you to get help with breaking this falsehood of our society so you can experience the marital communication and unity with your spouse that God desires for you. Let me encourage you to make a commitment to actively communicate with your spouse today.

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