

7 Meaningful Ways God Speaks That Can Help Your Marriage

When we asked couples what they struggle with, communication was No. 1. It can feel as though you and your spouse are speaking different languages, and attempts to talk seem to only make things worse. Since we are made in God's image, looking at God's communication with us should teach us a lot about healthy communication in marriage.

God is always communicating. The Bible is basically a record of and means of God's communication with us. "God, who at various times and in diverse ways spoke long ago to the fathers through the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, and through whom He made the world" (Heb. 1:1-2).

Imagine God trying to communicate with us. He knows everything, has all the answers, and loves us with a heart that is infinite, passionate, strong, and wise. But we struggle to hear and understand Him. Jesus described it like this: "In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which says: 'By hearing, you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing, you will see and shall not perceive; for this people's heart has grown dull. Their ears have become hard of hearing, and they have closed their eyes, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their hearts, and turn, and I should heal them'" (Matt. 13:14-15).

Talk about a closed heart! Does that sound like your spouse when you try to communicate?

And perhaps it describes you sometimes as well.

But God doesn't give up, and neither should you.

Here are some aspects of God's communication with us that can help you in communicating with your spouse.

1. **He goes first.**

God doesn't wait for us to be good enough or willing to listen before communicating. He makes the first move. We are decidedly unworthy, but He speaks anyway. Everything in the Bible, including Jesus coming in person, were at God's initiative. And He continues to take the initiative in communicating with us now.

So don't wait for your spouse to do it; you step up and work on communication first. You invest the time to learn the necessary skills, to discover how your spouse hears best, to broach the difficult subjects, to communicate when your spouse doesn't seem interested. You make the first move.

2. **He seeks our understanding instead of forcing our obedience.**

God could have forced us to obey Him, but He values our freely-given love and worship too much. Because He's God, He doesn't have to work hard to understand us, but He does work hard at helping us understand Him in any way we as humans can.

Trying to get your way in your marriage will be a very short-lived victory. If you want a real relationship you will have to work toward understanding, not compliance. It's understanding that fosters connection and intimacy. Seek understanding first.

3. **He lets us talk, and He listens.**

God encourages us to communicate with Him. "Come now, let us reason together" (Is. 1:18a). "Let us then come with confidence to the throne of grace" (Heb. 4:16). And He assures us that He hears us (see 1 John 5:14). It's not one-sided. He invites us to pour out everything in our hearts to Him.

Be an eager, attentive listener to your spouse. Concentrate on listening not only with your ears, but with your eyes and heart. Listen to their words and also to what's underneath the words such as their wounds, dreams, emotions, needs and more.

4. He is always after strengthening the relationship.

God's communication with us is always about encouraging relationship. When He corrects us, it's with the message "I don't want you to be hurt! Come back to Me!" He promises good things to make us desire relationship with Him. He is the ultimate example of communicating from an open heart.

In communicating with your spouse, always make your goal strengthening the relationship between you. If you have something negative to say, attack the problem, not the person. Demonstrate by your words and actions that you desire the relationship to be not only preserved but deepened.

5. He speaks in a language we can understand.

The few times God used His own voice to speak to humans, they cowered in fear. (see Ex. 20:18-19). So God uses our language. He has inspired human beings to speak His message to us. His letter to us—the Bible—is a collection of stories, poems and letters. He became one with us in the person of Jesus, showing us what He is like in a demonstration we'd have to be blind to miss. Still we often don't "get it," but He keeps speaking our language.

Make an effort to listen to yourself with your spouse's ears. Pay attention to what they are hearing, not just what you are saying. Invest in framing and delivering your words in the way your spouse can best hear and understand.

6. He risks Himself in communicating with us.

How many times have human beings misunderstood what God is saying? God risks His reputation by communicating with us. And

His biggest communication of all—coming Himself in the person of Jesus—was riskiest of all when we as humans rejected Him and crucified Him.

Communicating with your spouse makes you vulnerable. You might be—probably will be—misunderstood, rejected or hurt either occasionally or frequently. But the consequences of not communicating are too great, and the potential benefits of understanding and intimacy too valuable. So just do it, even if it's hard, frustrating, scary and risky.

7. He never gives up.

God doesn't close His heart to us when we misunderstand Him, get angry or walk away. He respects our choices and communicates again and again. He keeps on seeking to find ways to help us respond to Him. He never gives up.

Don't close your heart to your spouse. Even if you must protect it at times, keep it open. Keep communicating, seeking to understand. Keep seeking to win your spouse's heart. Keep searching for how your spouse can best hear you.

Communicating with your spouse like God communicates with us does not happen naturally. It takes intentional effort and God's work in your heart and in your relationship. This would be one of the most important things to pray about—that God open your heart and your spouse's heart, and that He fill you with the grace to communicate with your spouse in the same ways He communicates with us.

*Reprinted with permission from Dr. Carol Ministries. **Dr. Carol Peters-Tanksley** is an author, speaker, minister and OB-GYN.*