

God's Communication Tools

✖ As a Christian counselor I have listened

to many married couples express feelings of frustration and hurt because of their inability to effectively communicate with one another. Studies prove that communication breakdown is a major source of conflict, one that can eventually lead to other problems in the marriage, such as a lack of intimacy and divorce. Statistics prove the truth of what the Bible says in Proverbs 18:21: "The tongue has the power of life and death" (NIV).

However, there is a remedy. Many of the struggles married couples face, in fact, can be avoided with the use of some simple communication tools. Learning to use these tools to express ourselves in more effective ways fosters better understanding, which results in greater emotional intimacy.

One tool couples can use to help ensure clear communication is "reflective listening." With this method, the partner being spoken to (listener) repeats the message he received back to the one speaking (sender). The sender then has the opportunity to restate her thoughts until she is assured the message was received correctly by the listener.

Another tool that contributes to understanding is using language that makes a definite distinction between what we THINK and what we FEEL. If you begin a sentence with an "I feel" message, be sure to complete the sentence with the emotion you are experiencing and not with what you think. For example, say "I feel disappointed," not "I feel as if my husband doesn't want to talk to me." Beginning a sentence with a feeling helps to validate your emotions, speak the condition of your heart and increase the likelihood that the receiver will grasp what you are saying.

A communication tool called the "I message" tells the receiver what you think about a situation without attacking

him personally. For example, saying “I think we should consider making a budget” is less potentially volatile than “You spend too much money; we need a budget.” The “I message” reduces the potential for the receiver to become defensive and helps to circumvent an argument. If your husband is avoiding talking to you because your discussions turn into arguments (see Prov. 21:9 and 19:13), you may find this tool extremely helpful.

Some couple’s communication issues are not with WHAT is said but with HOW the words are expressed. The largest part of communication—93 percent—is comprised of our voice tone and body language. This aspect is called style.

The Bible speaks about communication style in both the Old and the New Testaments, giving us an example in Song of Songs of how two lovers ought to relate, and telling us in Ephesians 4:15 that the mature believer is one who has learned to speak the truth “in love.” In Songs, the Lover says to His Beloved, “Show me your face. Let me hear your voice. Your VOICE is SWEET and your FACE is LOVELY” (2:14, emphasis added). Obviously, the woman referred to in this verse had the right style!

What does your voice sound like when you speak to your husband? Is it sweet or harsh? What does your face look like when you are communicating with him? Is it lovely, or are you scowling? Do you look into his eyes when he speaks, or are you busy with another activity?

If you desire to not only get through to your husband when you are speaking to him but also experience the kind of intimacy described in Song of Songs, stop allowing your method of communication to get in the way. Start today to put into practice some or all of these proven techniques. Learn to say what you mean—in love—with a sweet voice, a lovely face and a sincere desire to connect with him.

And don’t

reserve these techniques for only your spouse. They are equally as effective with children, friends, co-workers and anyone else you relate to. All of us can stand to improve our method of communicating with others, and as we do, we can look forward to the rewards of speaking life and growing in unity with the rest of the body of Christ.