

Four Rules of Communication

Lesson 19

Memorize (Select One) –

- ✓ Proverbs 25:11 – Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances.
- ✓ James 1:19 – This you know, my beloved brethren but everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger.

“You must be more brilliant than Einstein,” said the student to his professor one day after class. Amazed and flattered, the professor inquired, “Why do you say that?” “Well,” the student explained, “They say only eight people in the world could understand Einstein. But nobody can understand you!”

Clarity is essential to communication. Talking is not necessarily communicating. Good and growing relationships require effective communication. Problems are not solved, goals are not clarified and people are not helped apart from skill in communication. Conflict and confusion reign where communication is absent.

The foremost problem in marriage is not money or mother-in-Laws, it is an inability or refusal to learn to communicate in order to solve problems. Good marriages grow, not by an absence of problems, but with growth in problem solving that is based upon skilled communication. Healthy family relationships are built upon encouragement expressed, listening, honesty, clear rules, sanctified speech that gives hope and help – all which are characteristics of good communication.

In Ephesians 4:22-32, you are given four vital rules that are tremendous help for all relationships. These rules are to be learned and lived. Every Christian has room for growth in solving problems God’s way and God commands it!

Begin by reading Ephesians 4:22-23. Note how you are told to put off and put on. The following biblical rules are taken from God’s instruction on communication that is characteristic of the new man (verse 24).

I. Rule #1 – BE HONEST (verse 25)

Wayne Mack, in Marriage Relationships, rightly says that one of the most basic requirements of good communication is mutual openness and honesty! There must be **honest listening and speaking** if problems are to be solved.

A. *Thoughts of the Mind are Only Known to Oneself*

To see why this is true, read I Corinthians 2:11. After reading this verse, write down why a person has to verbalize his thoughts to another.

B. *Non-Verbal Data is Helpful, but can Never be Conclusive.*

We can never know each other by second guessing. Non-verbal indications may cause us to question, and we should be alert to smiles, frowns, voice tones, body language, touches, etc. However, facts can only really be known, and problems dealt with, through openness and honesty.

Read I Samuel 1:9-15. How was the non-verbal data misunderstood by Eli the Priest?

C. *Honesty is More than Not Lying.*

1. According to Ephesians 4:25, honesty and openness is more than avoiding a lie. It means _____

2. People can often be rude and insensitive with the truth. Therefore, it is not enough to speak the truth. God says the truth must be spoken in _____ (Ephesians 4:15).
3. Give an example of how a person can speak the truth but without love _____
_____.
4. Using the same example, state how the truth would be spoken in a loving manner _____
_____.

D. According to the following passages, what happens when you fail to listen and talk honestly?

- Proverbs 18:13 _____
- I Cor. 14:8 & 9 _____

Rule #1, A Summary

To be honest is to _____ the truth in _____. This means I choose my words carefully so that the things I say will _____ rather than _____ others.

II. Rule #2 – KEEP CURRENT (verses 26 & 27)

There is an anger that is righteous, a Christian should be indignant over evil, blasphemous statements, abuse of the innocent, etc. The energy called “anger” must be controlled and directed at solving problems rather than attacking people.

Example: As you drive to your home you notice that people have thrown trash along the road. Some of the trash has been blowing along the front of your home and even on to your lawn. How can your anger over what you see be used and directed toward righteous behavior?

A. To be angry and yet avoid sinning means there are times I must say little or nothing. Paraphrase the following passages:

- Proverbs 10:19 _____

- Proverbs 29:20 _____

- James 1:19 _____

B. There are times when it is wrong to be silent.

1. When your anger causes you to clam up, get back at others by giving them the “silent treatment” or just refusing to discuss a problem, whom are you hurting? _____
2. When problems remain unsolved day after day, to whom are we giving a foothold? _____ (Eph. 4:27)

C. Keeping current means that problems must be addressed. The following questions will save you much hurt and embarrassment when considered before tackling a sticky problem.

1. Do I have the facts right? Prov. 18:17
(Often we don't!)
2. Should love bear it? I cor. 13:7
(Mountain or molehill?)
3. Is my attitude right? II Tim. 2:24 & 25
(Do a pride check)
4. Is the timing right? Prov. 15:23b
(Be tactful)
5. Are my words loving? Eph. 4:15
(Watch your tone)
6. Have I prayed about it? Prov. 3:5b
(Sought grace in the matter?)

Rule #2, A Summary

To keep current requires a commitment in doing your best in resolving each day's conflict with others. Simply put, to keep current is to not go to bed _____ at others. (Please note how it is possible to keep current without total resolution of a problem).

III. Rule #3 – ATTACK THE PROBLEM, NOT THE PERSON (verse 29)

Words can and do hurt people. All of us know of things we have said or heard that has brought pain and tears.

- A.** Read James 3:5-8, then comment on the saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never harm me.”

- B.** In your own words, summarize what Jesus was emphasizing about angry words in Matthew 5:22.

- C.** What are some words, voice inflections and tones, non-verbal actions that convey to others, “What you are saying is not worth my listening to you.”

- D.** Note the put off and put on in Eph. 4:29. Words to avoid are called _____. Words to use should seek to _____. According to the end of this passage, what is the goal of our words? _____

- E.** Colossians 4:6 instructs you to, “Let your speech always be with grace.” For gracious, encouraging, helpful speech I must make it my goal to always _____ before I speak.

Rule #3, A Summary

In order to attack the problem, not the person, I must carefully choose my words so that what I say will give _____ to the hearer.

IV. Rule #4 – ACT, DON'T REACT (verses 31 & 32)

- A.** We all have a tendency to react, be defensive, and upset at problems and people. Look at the various words in verse 31 that describe sinful reactions. What does this verse counsel you to do with these reactions?

- B.** New habits must be learned and practiced. List the new life actions set forth in verse 32 _____

- C.** Which of these two verses describes the feeling oriented lifestyle?

- D.** According to verse 32, why is forgiveness always possible?

- E.** When sinfully reacting, my focus is upon self or others?

- F.** When I am kind and forgiving, my concern is for self or others?

Rule #4, A Summary

To act and not react is to choose to be obedient to God and not live being ruled by my _____.

Think it Through:

- 1. Which of the four rules presents your greatest struggle and need for change?***
- 2. Have someone who knows you well choose the rule where change is most needed.***
- 3. Make it your goal to memorize all four rules.***

Review:

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| <i>Rule #1</i> | <i>Be honest.</i> |
| <i>Rule #2</i> | <i>Keep current.</i> |
| <i>Rule #3</i> | <i>Attack the problem, not the person.</i> |
| <i>Rule #4</i> | <i>Act, don't react.</i> |