

THE DIFFICULTIES AND DELIGHTS OF COMMUNICATION IN MARRIAGE
Bruce and Jodi Ware

I. Introduction: Some of the Realities We Face

1. Women, on average, talk 3x more per day than men
2. In communication, men go either for the headlines or the bottom line, but women want the full and unabridged story told with pathos and feeling; men want the facts, woman want to connect
3. We are sinners, and so we are selfish and self-serving; we tend to communicate what best serves our perceived interests and do so in the manner we personally like best
4. We are saved, and so we have a renewed heart, Scripture's teaching, and the Spirit at work to change us to servant-hearted and other-focused people
5. As "one flesh" we need to understand and love each other for our individual and mutual wellbeing, to the glory of God in Christ

II. Some Communication Principles from Scripture

1. When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise (Prov 10:19)
2. Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing (Prov 12:18)
3. He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin (Prov 13:3)
4. A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Prov 15:1)
5. A man finds joy in giving an apt reply, and how good is a timely word! (Prov 15:23)
6. Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones (Prov 16:24)
7. A man of knowledge uses words with restraint Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue (Prov 17:27-28)
8. He who answers before listening – that is his folly and his shame (Prov 18:13)
9. A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much (Prov 20:19)
10. Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife (Prov 21:9)
11. A quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping on a rainy day (Prov 27:15)
12. Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him (Prov 29:20)
13. Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks (Matt 12:34)
14. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen (Eph 4:29)
15. Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry (James 1:19)

III. Ten Principles for Healthy Communication in Marriage

1. Be a ready listener and do not answer until the other person has finished talking. Men in particular need to heed this principle! One of the biggest felt needs of many wives is the need for their husbands to listen attentively, with interest and understanding. Men can show great love and understanding by growing in attentive and caring listening. Prov 18:13; James 1:19.
2. Be slow to speak. Think first. Don't be hasty in your words. Speak in such a way that the other person can understand and accept what you say. Remember, once those words leave your lips, you cannot retrieve them! Prov 15:23, 28, 21:23; 29:20, James 1:19.
3. Speak the truth always but do it in love. Do not exaggerate. Do not use the truth as a weapon to hurt. Always use truth for the sake of love – even if the love is “tough love” Eph 4:15, 25; Col 3:9.
4. Do not use silence to frustrate the other person. Explain why you are hesitant to talk at this time.
5. Do not be quarrelsome, involving harsh words and anger. It is possible to disagree without quarreling. Prov 17:14; 20:3; Rom 13:13; Eph 4:31.
6. Do not respond in anger. Use a soft and kind response. Avoid sharp language or sarcasm that can be cutting and hurtful. In your anger, remember your deep and abiding love for your husband or wife. Prov 14:29; 15:1; 25:15; 29:11, Eph 4:26, 31.
7. When you are in the wrong, admit it and ask for forgiveness. Some of the most important words for a long and healthy marriage are, “I was wrong” and “I am sorry, will you forgive me?” James 5:16. When someone confesses to you, tell them you forgive them. Be sure it is *forgotten* and not brought up to the person. Prov 17:9, Eph 4:32; Col 3:13; 1 Peter 4:8.
8. Avoid nagging. Let your spouse know in advance that you are bringing up again a subject you've spoken to him/her about before. Prepare them for what is coming! Wait, if necessary, for a time better suited to talking again about some delicate subject. Prov 10:19; 17:9; 20:5.
9. Do not unfairly blame or criticize the other person. Instead, restore, encourage, edify. Rom 14:13; Gal 6:1; 1 Thess 5:11. Of someone verbally attacks, criticizes or blames you, do not respond in the same manner. Rom 12:17, 21; 1 Peter 2:23; 3:9.
10. Try to understand the other person's opinion. Make allowances for differences. Be concerned about their interests. Put yourselves in their position, and see things as they do. This doesn't mean their perspective is right or best, but it is what they see. When they know you understand the way they see things, then you're in a much better position to help them see things differently. Phil 2:1-4; Eph 4:2.