

# Life Coach: Marriage

## Communication, Part 3

Introduction: Communication is so important that God has given very specific instruction as to its use—and warnings against its misuse. While no one can claim perfection in regard to consistently right communication (James 3), developing Biblical habits with regard to one's speech heightens communication and deepens relationships. The closest human relationship, marriage, suffers the most when familiarity brings communication contempt.

### II. Elements of Biblical Communication, continued (Eph. 4:21-32)

#### F. Spirit-approved Speech (30)

1. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer (Rom. 8:9). When a person comes to Christ, the Spirit of God makes his body a “temple,” dwelling within—witnessing every action, hearing every conversation.
2. Christians have a definite relationship with the Holy Spirit.
  - a. We may grieve Him by words of bitterness and hate (Eph. 4:30).
  - b. We may quench Him by disobedience (I Thess. 5:19). To “quench” to “suppress” or “ignore” His voice and influence in our lives.
3. Speech that pleases the Holy Spirit avoids maliciousness, gossip, moral uncleanness, etc. Speech that pleases the Holy Spirit flows out of His fruit in our lives: Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Gal. 5:22, 23). Remember, you don't just hurt your spouse with unkind words; you hurt the Holy Spirit!
4. When unbiblical speech patterns dominate marriage communication, the relationship suffers spiritually. I Peter 3:7 admonishes husbands to give “honor unto the wife.” A consequence of not honoring one's wife is “hindered” prayer. Since the Holy Spirit “makes intercession for us” when we pray (Rom. 8:26), His ministry of intercession may be hampered by our grieving Him with caustic and bitter speech.
5. James 3:8-10 admonishes concerning the inconsistency of unbiblical speech practices. How can believers “bless” God and then use the same mouth to “curse” men? The inconsistency grieves God's Spirit!

### III. Elements of Ungodly Communication (31)

#### A. Bitterness

1. Bitterness may be defined as a deep-seated distaste for another person. It always manifests through negative and critical speech.
2. Because bitterness is always verbalized, it has the potential of infecting others (Heb. 12:15).
3. Bitterness often disguises itself as simply “warning others” of a potential threat or problem. Bitterness may be blatant or subtle.
4. Steps toward Bitterness:

- a. Interpersonal conflict that breaks a relationship. This is typically how bitterness starts.
- b. Refusal to forgive and reconcile the relationship—reconciliation requires two willing parties. As long as one desires reconciliation (even if the other does not), he protects himself against bitterness.
- c. Replaying the negative situation (the offense) repeatedly in one’s mind. Remember, Biblical forgiveness releases the debt—refusing to dwell upon it. The more one replays the negatives, the deeper the root of bitterness grows—and the more difficult it becomes to remove it.
- d. Sharing the negative situation with others. Humans are social creatures. We share both our joys and sorrows with each other. When bitterness takes root in the heart, it always manifests in the speech. The motivation for “sharing” is usually a combination of things—seeking sympathy, getting others on our “side,” and turning others against the person with whom we remain offended.

#### B. Wrath

- 1. Wrath is bitterness on steroids. It moves from negative feelings to a desire for harm to come to the object of one’s bitterness.
- 2. Sometimes wrath manifests in harmful or even violent behavior. Most of the time, however, it is the secret hope that something bad will happen to the offender. Wrath rejoices in the misfortunes of others.
- 3. Interestingly, in Christian circles wrath in the heart manifests in verbal appraisals that the misfortunes of others could be divine judgment or chastisement for their sins. Christians should be very careful about vocalizing such opinions because we cannot know for certainty the counsels of God. (Remember, Job’s three friends attributed his troubles to God’s wrath when, in reality, Satan brought about Job’s calamities.)

#### C. Anger

- 1. As previously mentioned, anger within proper boundaries is not a sin. Unchecked anger directed at individuals, however, crosses clearly established lines. Controlled anger expresses passion without abuse.
- 2. Symptoms of Unholy Anger
  - a. Uncontrolled volume
  - b. Uncontrolled expression—cutting, hurtful words; name calling, etc.
  - c. Uncontrolled physical actions—for example, punching a wall
- 3. Holy anger is always temperate—in control. People who have “short tempers” and frequently “fly off the handle” are not practicing the Biblical command to be “temperate in all things” (I Cor. 9:25).
- 4. Some people (even Christians) justify a quick temper as merely part of their personality—the way God made them. Such, however, is no justification at all because God commands us to yield to the Holy Spirit. “The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace” (James 3:18).