

## BIBLICAL FAMILY MODERN WORLD: Keys to Communication<sup>i</sup> Ephesians 4:25-32

### OPENING:

Good morning! Thanks for joining us today. I want to invite you to grab your bibles and turn with me to Ephesians chapter 4. We are going to be in verses 25-32 this morning.

### INTRODUCTION:

We are nearing the conclusion of our teaching series we have called “A Biblical Family in a Modern Word.” We have today and then two more Sundays. We are studying the biblical principles of marriage and family. We’ve talked about God’s design for marriage, building godly homes, differing roles of husband and wife, raising godly kids, money matters, and intimacy. Today we are going to be discussing the “Keys to Communication.”

Now, remember, I am not a marriage expert, nor do I have all these principles figured out. But this teaching series has been very beneficial to me as I have learned a lot and sought to be better in my marriage and how I lead my family. I hope that has been the case for you. And when it comes to communication, Cathy can tell you that I am very much so still a work in progress.

### **OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Evolution of the Telephone<sup>ii</sup>**

You know, it is amazing to think about how far we have come with telephones, isn't it? The first phones looked something like this [\[show graphic\]](#). They were boxes that were hung on the wall. Looks kinda like someone trying to kiss you. This was first introduced in 1879.

Then around 1900, the phone got to be a little more mobile. Here's a picture of phone back then [\[show graphic\]](#). You could move that around a little bit, but you were still tied by the length of the wire.

Then came the rotary phone. [\[Show Graphic\]](#). This concept was introduced in the 1920s.

Then came these phones [\[Show Graphic\]](#). How many of you remember having a phone that looked like these? If you were a teenager in the 80s, this was your best friend. Remember the long cord extensions you could put on these phones so that you could turn the corner to get a little bit of privacy?

I can remember when cordless phones came out. [\[Show Graphic\]](#). Remember these? You would pull out the telescoping antenna. Any of you remember how you could occasionally pick up other conversations? Crazy!

Then came car phones. Look at this massive device [\[show graphic\]](#)! Anyone have parents that had one of these? It was portable, but it was like carrying luggage everywhere you went.

I can remember the Christmas when my dad got my mom one of these [\[show graphic\]](#). This was the first cell phone I can remember. But it was for emergencies only. The plan we had on this was 10 minutes a month!

Then Nokia came out with a line of cell phones that were indestructible. [\[Show Graphic\]](#). How many of you owned one of these phones? I can remember having one of these and dropping it and you never even looked at it to see if it was okay. Then came the flip phones.

The phone that really began to revolutionize the world was the blackberry. [\[Show Graphic\]](#). Anyone own one of these phones? This introduced the idea of a PDA. Not public display of affection, but a Personal Digital Assistant.

Then came the iPhone and other devices that run our world, now. It began with a few and now everyone has a cell phone. The ability to communicate has increased greatly. But, even with the advancement of technology, actual fruitful communication has decreased.

According to a study<sup>iii</sup> published recently, smart phones have had a negative impact on our communication skills. The study revealed that writing skills have suffered as texting language has developed. The study also showed that speaking and listening skills have decreased. And, of course, phones have had a major impact on social interactions. So, with all the advancements in communication devices, communicating with one another remains a challenge. And that is certainly true in marriage relationships.

According to a recent poll, “70 percent of Americans think good communication is the most important factor in a happy marriage.” The poll also found that a lack of communication is a leading cause for divorce often cited as “irreconcilable differences.”<sup>iv</sup>

For marriage to be the way God designed it, good and fulfilling, it must be something we work at. It requires effort and attention. Learning to develop good communication in our marriages will help us experience what God has gifted us in marriage. It has been my experience that good communication doesn't just happen. It takes a lifetime of growth and development. I would think that those that have been married for any length of time would echo that conclusion.

So, this morning we are going to look at the keys to good communication in marriage. We are going to look at the parts, the principles, and the practice of effective communication.

### **MESSAGE:**

I promise we're getting to our passage this morning. But I want to begin this morning talking through key aspects of communication by first looking at...

#### **1) The Parts of Effective Communication.**

There is a lot that goes into communicating with someone. There are different styles and elements that make communication more or less effective. And even with that in place, communication might not happen. Effective communication requires a deliverer and a hearer. Now, it is possible to deliver a message and it is not delivered well. It is also possible to hear a message and it is not received. In both of those cases, communication has not happened.

This is how that plays out in marriage. "Honey, I want to talk to you about what's going on with the kids." Which usually happens when the game is on. Am I right fellas? There is always something vying for our time. So, we respond, "Uh huh, sure," with one eye on the television and peripheral vision on our wife. And then we activate selective listening. Is it just me? Well, in that case, communication isn't happening. I see you ladies throwing elbows right now! Effective communication requires a message sent and received.

Experts tell us that there are 3 parts to communicating. The verbal, paraverbal, and nonverbal. When we try to communicate with our spouse, words are important. But according to research, words only convey 7% of the total message. Paraverbal, our tone of voice, accounts for 38% of the overall message. And then our nonverbal cues, facial expressions and posture, provide 55% of the message we are trying to send.<sup>v</sup> This is why texting and email often create what is called communication gaps.

### **ILLUSTRATION: 3 Parts of Communication in Marriage**

Let's go back to the example I just mentioned. "Honey, I want to talk to you about what is going on with the kids." Our response was, "Uh huh. Sure."

Now, if we saw this exchange just written down on paper, we would say, "That's an appropriate response. Good communication is taking place." But when we add the way in which it was said, and what we were doing with our eyes, we would see that communication is not happening. There is distraction.

In addition to the 3 parts to communicating, there are differing levels of communication.<sup>vi</sup> From surface conversations to deep conversations. I want to show you **the 5 levels of communication** according to John Powell who wrote the book, *"Why I am Afraid To Tell You Who I Am."* Level 1 is cliché conversations. It's really not sharing anything and has no transparency. These are conversations you have with everyone. "How are you today? I'm fine."

Level 2 is reporting facts. This is where we share what we know. It requires very little transparency, and we share this information with many people. "Have you heard about the weather today? No. Well it is going to be an amazing day."

Level 3 is sharing ideas and opinions. There's a little more risk here because you are sharing what you think about things that might not be viewed the same by the other person. "What did you think about that message last week in church? What do you think we ought to do about our finances? What do you think about the current political climate?" There is some transparency, and you share this information with a smaller group.

Level 4 is sharing our feelings and emotions. This is where we lay ourselves on the line because there is a higher level of transparency required. We typically only share this level with very few people, what I refer to as "the trust tree." "I feel hurt. I'm struggling. I was really offended when..."

The deepest level, level 5, is open communication. This is where we share who we really are, and it requires absolute transparency. We typically reserve this level of communication for 1 person in our lives. Total honesty, mutual understanding, and vulnerability.

Now, when it comes to our marriage, all 5 of those levels are necessary. There are times we want to have informal conversations. Times that we need to have

administrative discussions. But we also need to be able to share our dreams, challenges, and our fears and even mistakes with one another.<sup>vii</sup>

The challenge in marriage comes when you only get to level 3, sometimes 4, but never level 5. So, the question is, “How do we increase the level of communication in our marriage?” That brings us to point number two today...

## 2) The Principles of Effective Communication

Ephesians chapter 4 lays a foundation that while it pertains to Christian relationships in general, they're principles for communicating with our spouse. These principles will help us get to the deepest level of communication with our spouse. The first principle is to...

### A) Speak truth in love.

A healthy marriage creates a culture of honesty. Look with me at Ephesians 4, verse 25. ***25Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.*** A couple of key points that I want to talk through regarding this verse.

First, the idea of falsehood. The word translated “falsehood” comes from the word that means to willfully misrepresent, to lie.<sup>viii</sup> This word is used in two different ways in the New Testament. 1) There is lying by what we say. But 2) we can lie by what we don't say. In other words, falsehood means speaking and presenting dishonest things. You can be dishonest by withholding truth when truth should be spoken. This is common in marriage, isn't it?

For example, when your spouse comes to you and says, “Is everything okay?” And you are upset about something, and you say, “I'm fine.” That is presenting an untruth. But the idea of speaking the truth is that it is a constant and continual action, to be authentic. We have to be authentic with one another.

Now, there is a condition to speaking truth. Some of you are a little too excited and eager about speaking truth. Earlier in chapter 4, verse 15, Paul says, ***15Instead, speaking the truth in love...*** While we are to speak truth, it has to be in love and not in spite. I heard a pastor say, “Loveless truth and truthless love are equal wrongs.”<sup>ix</sup> The key is honest communication done in love.

So, speak truth in love. The second principle of effective communication is to...

### B) Deal with anger appropriately.

Anyone here ever get angry with your spouse? Don't answer that! We want you to get home safely today. But when it comes to our marriage, we must deal with anger appropriately. Verse 26 says, ***26Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27and give no opportunity to the devil.*** The command is to be angry, but don't sin in your anger. You'll get angry, but just don't let it lead to sin.

At first glance, it looks like Paul is contradicting himself. But the words “angry”, and “anger” are two different words with different meanings. The first word, “Be angry,” means to be provoked.<sup>x</sup> The second word, “anger,” means a slowly built up anger that leads to a seething response.<sup>xi</sup> This tells us there will be times that you get angry, but we are to deal with it in a way that our response is not sinful. Don't allow your anger to become a seething response.

We must be careful in how we deal with our anger. The urging here is to not let the sun go down on your anger. In other words, you cannot keep suppressing feelings of frustration. Why? Well, eventually we will erupt and when we erupt, we are sure to not handle anger well. This is why Paul says that we can't give opportunity to the devil.

What happens when we are angry and frustrated and we just stuff it down inside? Our minds begin to take over. You rehearse in your mind every wrong your spouse has ever done. You start blame shifting.<sup>xii</sup> Before you know it, your spouse is a monster in your mind. Have you ever experienced that? No? Just me? Listen, our mind is the devil's playground. Don't give him opportunity here.

So, we are to speak the truth in love and deal with anger appropriately. The third principle of effective communication is to...

### C) Make communication a priority.

The one thing I have come to know is that communication doesn't just naturally happen. We don't drift toward good communication. We must work at it. I think that is what Paul is getting at in verse 28. ***28Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.***

What does steal and share have to do with communication in marriage? Well, stealing is a mindset of selfishness and sharing is a mindset of selflessness.

The key between the two is doing work. In other words, we are to work at communicating with our spouse by making it a priority. Often, we are selfish by not wanting to make the time to do that.

You know, no one looks forward to having conversations that are potentially risky. We might see things differently. There might be a little conflict. They are going to share something that is going to be critical of me. So, what do we do? We avoid communicating. Then it comes to a point where we have to talk, and it is an unload session. Listen, you can avoid the unload session by making communication, sharing with one another, a regular priority in your marriage.

#### **ILLUSTRATION: Family Meetings**

From time to time, we have what we have “Family Meetings.” Now, when we first started having these family meetings it was to share with our kids big changes, like moving to a new ministry assignment. So, when we announced a family meeting, our kids responded, “Uh oh! We are moving!” Family meetings had become the only time we communicated big things. Now, I think, we have been able to change that a little bit by having more frequent meetings.

We need to speak the truth in love, deal with anger appropriately, and make communication a priority. The fourth principle is to...

#### **D) Be careful with your words.**

It is vitally important that we are careful with our words with one another. Whoever said, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me,” lied. Words matter. Paul says in verses 29 and 30, “<sup>29</sup>**Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. <sup>30</sup>**And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**”**

When a word comes out of our mouth, there is no taking it back. There is no redacting it. We damage our relationship with our spouse when we say hurtful things. Paul says we must choose our words carefully. Proverbs 18:21 says, “**Death and life are in the power of the tongue.**” Which is why Paul urges us to speak only what is good for building one another up and to give grace.

We are to speak the truth in love, deal with anger appropriately, make communication a priority, and be careful with your words. The final principle of effective communication is to...

#### **E) Extend forgiveness often.**

You and your spouse are not perfect. You will make mistakes. Forgive often. This is an important principle in communication. Verses 31 and 32 say, “<sup>31</sup>**Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup>**Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.**”**

The word translated as “forgiving” here means to show favor freely.<sup>xiii</sup> It is a word that communicates that forgiveness is not merited, but generously given.<sup>xiv</sup> It is important to forgive one another so that bitterness doesn’t set in. See, we often want revenge, don’t we? You have to pay for this. We say things in our mind like, “You can’t just get away with that.” But to have good communication in your marriage, you need to extend forgiveness often.

Speak the truth in love, deal with anger appropriately, make communication a priority, be careful with your words, and extend forgiveness often. These are the principles of good communication in marriage. We’ve looked at the parts and the principles of communication. Now, in the time we have left this morning, I want to share with you...

### **3) The Practice of Effective Communication**

I want to share with you 3 practical things to help you and your spouse communicate better. First, establish...

#### **A) Regular Rhythms**

Quality conversation is found in the presence of quantity conversation. Quantity conversations require regular rhythms of communicating with one another. You need to schedule times to be together. And the point of this would be to communicate face to face, heart to heart, kneecap to kneecap. This is our heart behind the Trinity Date Night Challenge. Set weekly rhythms to go on a date and just talk over dinner or lunch. Maybe you talk about the family calendar for the upcoming week. Or you share your thoughts with one another.

Here are some questions to help spur conversation. What are you dreaming about? What are you concerned about?<sup>xv</sup> What’s been the high of your week? The low? Level 5 conversations happen in the context of regular rhythms. Second, ...

#### **B) Avoid Superlatives**

You guys know what superlatives are, right? It's exaggerated hyperbole. In high school superlatives are "The most likely to succeed." Superlatives in communication begin with the words, "always" and "never." The way we can be careful with our words is to avoid saying things that begin with always and never. For example, "You never say I love you anymore." Or, "You always choose work over our family."

The reason you need to avoid superlatives is because they are automatically false statements. He never says I love you? Really? Or She always chooses her friends over time with you? Really? Always? Now, you might tend to not say I love you as often or tend to work long hours, but you see how using words like always and never are false. Plus, it causes your spouse to immediately be defensive.

Instead, use "I feel" statements. For example. I feel [blank] when you [blank].<sup>xvi</sup> I feel neglected when you work long hours. I feel hurt when you don't say I love you when you leave in the morning. These statements communicate your feelings in a way that can be received by your spouse.

Create regular rhythms, avoid superlatives. Thirdly, ...

### C) Resolve Conflict

You will have conflict in your marriage. It is inevitable. But Scripture encourages us to be generous in forgiving saying, "I'm sorry." For some of us, saying I'm sorry is tough. You're thinking, it's hard to be sorry when I'm right! But it's not about winning, it about relating. If you are out to win, you'll never have a relationship.

The way you can extend forgiveness and say I'm sorry is to follow the rhythm of breathing. We breathe in and we breathe out. We breathe in forgiveness so that we can breathe out forgiveness.

Remember verse 32 in our text this morning? *<sup>32</sup>Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.* When we breathe in God's forgiveness by remembering how we have been forgiven, it is easier to extend forgiveness to our spouse.

A husband might think, "You don't know what she's like – how she frustrates me." But do you deserve God's unconditional love any more than her? Breathe

in God's grace. Breathe out God's grace. A wife might say, "You don't understand how he treats me and takes me for granted." Do you deserve God's compassion more than him? Breathe in God's mercy. Breathe out God's mercy.<sup>xvii</sup>

You can resolve conflict in your marriage by realizing how have benefited from forgiveness. Jesus said, "He who has been forgiven much, loves much." That's the idea here. Remember God's forgiveness toward you so that you can extend that toward your spouse. This is allowing the gospel to guide your family.

There's a bunch more we can say on this topic, but I hope this has served for beginning foundations for helping communication in your marriage and family.

### CONCLUSION

I'm going to ask Micah and the band come up and lead us in a time of response. We want to give people an opportunity to come to Christ or to come for prayer.

If you are here today and you have never trusted Jesus as Lord and Savior, I want to invite you to do that today. The Bible teaches that we all have sinned and that has brought about a separation between us and God. But God loved us, even in our sin, that He provided a solution to our sin problem. That solution is His son, Jesus.

Jesus came from heaven, lived a perfect life, and died on the cross for our sin. Jesus took your place and mine on the cross. And the Bible says that by faith in Him, we can be saved. That is forgiven of our sin. When our sin is forgiven we have a right relationship with God restored. Doesn't mean you'll be perfect. But you can be forgiven and saved today.

If you would like to visit with someone about that, or maybe you have questions about your salvation, we would love to visit with you as well.

Maybe you just have another prayer need that you would like for us to pray for, you come as well.

We are going to stand and sing, but let's all respond to the prompting of the Lord on our hearts [Pray].

## ENDNOTES:

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<sup>i</sup> Works consulted in preparation for this message: Connor Bales and Todd Kaunitz, *Gospel in the Home: Turning Chaos Back into Order*, Houston: Lucid Books, 2016; Jerry Pipes, *Building A Successful Family*, published by Jerry F. Pipes, 2002; Gary Smalley, *Secrets to Lasting Love: Uncovering the Keys to Life-long Intimacy*, Simon & Schuster: New York, 2000; Al Janssen, *The Marriage Masterpiece: A Bold New Vision for Your Marriage*, Tyndale: Wheaton, 2001; Michael Youssef, *Crafted: Marriage God's Way: Conversation*, published by Leading The Way, accessed online: <https://www.ltw.org/listen/teaching/series/crafted-marriage-gods-way/part-3>; Chip Ingram, *Real Love In Real Life: How to Find it, Grow it, and Keep it Forever: Sharing Hearts Not Just Words*, published by Living On The Edge, accessed online: <https://livingontheedge.org/broadcast/communication-sharing-hearts-not-just-words/>.

<sup>ii</sup> Taken from an CBS News article by Chenda Ngak, *The Evolution of Telephones*, September 26, 2011, accessed online: <https://www.cbsnews.com/pictures/the-evolution-of-telephones/2/>.

<sup>iii</sup> Study, *How Cellphones Affect Communication Skills*, published by Grand Canyon University, June 29, 2022, accessed online: <https://www.gcu.edu/blog/gcu-experience/how-cellphones-affect-communication-skills#:~:text=The%20study%20participants%20were%20collegiate,skills%20suffered%20as%20a%20result.&text=It%27s%20possible%20that%20cellphones%20have.listening%20communication%20skills%20as%20well.>

<sup>iv</sup> Gabrielle Frank, *What American Marriages are Really Like in 2017*, article published by The Today Show, June 26, 2017, accessed online: <https://www.today.com/health/what-it-s-be-married-2017-t112961>.

<sup>v</sup> Pointed out by Chip Ingram, *Communication: Sharing Hearts Not Just Words*, accessed online: <https://livingontheedge.org/broadcast/communication-sharing-hearts-not-just-words>.

<sup>vi</sup> John Powell, *Why Am I Afraid To Tell You Who I Am?*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999. Examples of communication at each level taken from Chip Ingram.

<sup>vii</sup> Types of conversations taken from Greg Smalley, *Four Types of Communication to Strengthen Your Marriage*, published by Focus on the Family, July 14, 2017, accessed online: <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/four-types-of-communication-to-strengthen-your-marriage/>.

<sup>viii</sup> Strong's Concordance, 5574, pseudomai.

<sup>ix</sup> Adrian Rogers.

<sup>x</sup> Strong's Concordance, 3710, orgizó.

<sup>xi</sup> Strong's Concordance, 3950, parorgismos.

<sup>xii</sup> Example taken from Chip Ingram.

<sup>xiii</sup> Strong's Concordance, 5483, charizomai.

<sup>xiv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xv</sup> Questions taken from Chip Ingram.

<sup>xvi</sup> Chip Ingram.

<sup>xvii</sup> Connor Bales and Todd Kaunitz, *Gospel in the Home: Turning Chaos Back into Order*, Houston: Lucid Books, 2016, pages 27-28.