**Biblical communication**

1. Overview of communication
   * Words are powerful (Prov 11:9; 12:18; 15:4; 18:21; Matt 12:37; James 3:1-8)
   * Words are valuable (Prov 20:15; 25:11-14)
   * Words reflect our heart (Prov 6:12; 15:28; 16:23,24; Matt 12:34)
2. Guidelines of communication
   * Set a guard over our lips (Ps 141:3)
   * May our lips offer up a sacrifice of praise (Heb 13:15)
   * Let me speak encouragingly (Eph 4:29)
   * Bridle my tongue (James 1:26)

**Four rules of communication**

1. Be honest (Eph 4:25)
   * Speak
   * Speak truth
     + Speak the truth continuously
     + Avoid exaggeration
     + Avoid evasion
     + Avoid half -truths
   * Speak the truth lovingly (Eph 4:15)
     + Be concerned with what you say
     + Be concerned with how you say it
     + Be concerned with how much you say
     + Be concerned with when you say it (Eph 4:29)
     + Become a skilled listener
2. Keep current (Eph 4:26-27)
   * Solve each day’s problems quickly
   * Failure to do so:
     + Opens way to resentment, hatred and bitterness
     + Distorts subsequent problems
     + Among married couples, it endangers the sexual relationship
     + Sets the stage for spiritual discouragement
   * Questions to ask before bringing up an issue:
     + Do I have all the facts right? (Prov 18:13, 15)
     + What is my reason for bringing this up? (Prov 27:6; Matt 12:34b)
     + Have I dealt with my responsibility? (Matt 7:1-5)
     + Am I loving (Eph 4:15; Prov 15:1)
     + Is it timely (Prov 15:23)
     + Have I asked the Lord for understanding? (Prov 3:5; Phil 4:6-7; 1 Thess 5:17)
3. Attack problems – not people (Eph 4:29-30)
   * Avoid harmful words
     + Words that tear down
     + Words that bypass the conflict
     + Words that grieve the Holy Spirit
   * Use edifying words
     + Words that edify or build up
     + Words that deal with what the person says or does
     + Words that help reach a solution
4. Act don’t react (Eph 4:31-32)
   * Reactions (v. 31)
   * Actions (v. 32)

**Conflict resolution**

1. The nature of conflict
   * Literally means to strike or fight against
   * Generally, conflict is when both parties sin against one another (in their communication and/or their actions) and are then in opposition to one another.
2. God’s view of conflict
   * It is grievous (Matt 5:21-22)
   * He wants His children to pursue peace (Rom 12:18; 14:19; Eph 4:1, 3)
   * He wants His children to avoid needlessly or sinfully offending someone (1 Cor 10:31-32)
   * He wants His children to love, pray for and do good to those who sin against them (Matt 5:44-45; Rom 12:21)
3. Origin of conflict
   * Differences
   * Offenses
   * Pride and the flesh (Gal 5:19-21; James 4:1-3)
4. Some benefits of differences and disagreements
   * They can encourage us to search the Scriptures (Ps 119:71-72)
   * They can help us think carefully about how and what we think or what we believe (Prov 15:28; 1 Cor 11:19)
   * They can help us work harder at communicating effectively (Eph 4:25)
   * They can produce maturity and endurance (James 1:2-5)
   * They can help us sharpen one another (Prov 27:17)
   * They can strengthen our faith in the truth that God is working all things together for good (Rom 8:28-29)
   * They give us opportunity to practice servanthood and preferring one another (Phil 2:2-3)
   * They give us opportunity to love and glorify God (1 Cor 10:31-32)
5. Avoiding conflict
   * Some sinful ways to avoid conflict
     + Just keep quiet (cf. Eccl 3:7b; Eph 4:29-31; Col 3:19)
     + Stay away from one another (cf. John 15:12; 1 Pet 4:8)
     + Change the subject (cf. Prov 12:22; Prov 24:28)
     + Hide information, sins, or bitterness (cf. Prov 24:8)
   * Some God-honoring ways to avoid conflict
     + Seek to know your spouse well, appreciate him/her and understand his/her perspective (1 Pet 3:7)
     + Gather plenty of data before speaking (Prov 18:13, 17)
     + Pray study and think about the issue before speaking, if possible (Prov 15:28)
     + Demonstrate and/or communicate your love and care at the time of disagreement (Rom 12:9-10)
     + Listen more than you speak but do speak
     + In matters of sin approach your spouse in love (Eph 4:15)
     + In matters of preference, prefer your spouse (Rom 12:10)
     + In matters of wisdom and conscience, suggest searching the Scriptures and getting godly counsel (Prov 11:14; 2 Tim 2:15)
     + Refuse to sin in your communication (Prov 8:6-8)
     + Be more interested in God’s glory and the other’s good, rather than having your own way, or being right (Josh 22:5; Rom 15:2)
     + Give a gentle and caring answer to their angry words (Prov 15:1)
6. Resolving conflict
   * Some sinful ways to resolve conflicts
     + Let time heal it (cf. Matt 5:23-24; Eph 4:26)
     + Try to bury it
     + Pretend it never happened (cf. Phil 4:8a)
     + Wait for the other person to initiate the resolution process (cf. Matt 5:23-24)
     + Punish the other person until they change and take all the blame (cf. Gal 6:1; Rom 12:9-20)
   * A biblical way to resolve conflict
     + Confess any sin that you are aware of to God (Ps 139:23-24; 1 John 1:9-10)
     + Go to your spouse, ask forgiveness for each thing you did specifically and discuss your plan not to do those things again (Eph 4:32; James 5:16)
     + Express a desire to resolve the conflict fully and decide together when the best time to do that would be (Prov 15:28)
     + Come together at the appointed time
     + Pray together for God’s wisdom, self-control and speech (Prov16:32; James 1:5)
     + Review God’s rules of communication (Eph 4:15, 26-32)
     + Each one should take a turn to confess any sin that has not been confessed (to God and spouse), and ask forgiveness (Eph 4:32; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9)
     + Begin discussing the issues that precipitated the conflict
     + Decide what you can agree upon (each takes a turn)
     + Decide what you do not agree upon (each takes a turn)
     + Decide what kind of issue(s) you are dealing with (each offers input)
     + Decide on specific steps to resolve the issue (each offers input)
     + Together, begin carrying out the appropriate steps to resolve the issue
     + Decide if and when you need to discuss the issue again
     + End your time together with prayer and an expression of love

**Conference Table Guidelines**

Place

Agree upon an area in which daily conferences may be held without interruption. Choose a table, preferably one that is not used frequently for other purposes. Hold all conferences there. If problems arise elsewhere, when possible, wait until you reach home to discuss them – at the conference table, of course. The first week read Ephesians 4:17-32 each night before meeting.

Place \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Purpose

The conference table is a place to confer, not to argue. Begin by talking about yourself – your sins and failures – and settle all such matters first by asking forgiveness. Ask also for help (cf. Matthew 7:4-5).

Speak *all* the truth in love. Do not allow any concern to be carried over into the next day. Not all problems can be solved at one sitting. You may find it necessary to make up an agenda and schedule out the work over a period of time according to priorities. Direct all your energies toward defeating the problem, not toward the other person. Your goal is to reach biblical solutions to the problems presented, so always have Bibles on the table and use them. It helps to record the results of your work on paper. Open and close all conferences with prayer. When you need help, reread Ephesians 4:25-32.

Procedures

If either party argues, “clams up” or does anything other than confer at the table, the others must rise and stand quietly. This prearranged signal means, “In my opinion we’ve stopped conferring.” Whether he was right or wrong in this judgment does not matter and ought not to be discussed at the moment. The person seated should then indicate this willingness to confer, and invite others to be seated again.