



"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger"
(Proverbs 15:1).

Communication in the Home

Lesson Subject: Family members should strive to be open and honest with one another.

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Lack of real communication is a major cause for problems in the home. People who will not open their hearts and share with one another cannot live in real harmony day after day.

Failure to communicate is an expression of self-centeredness in one or both parties involved. Real communication is possible only when there is self-giving on the part of each. It is for that reason that Christian commitment is a vital part of communication in the home.

The central truth of this study is, "Family members should be open and honest with one another."

The lesson text (Ephesians 4: 17-32) deals with relationships in the church fellowship. Application must be drawn from that to one's own relationships in his home. What one is in his private home life, he will reflect in his public church life. Openness and honesty in family relations are necessary if one would enjoy fellowship in the church.

I. BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION (Ephesians 4:17-19)

A. Unwholesome thought patterns interfere with communication
(verse 17). Too many people walk "*in the vanity of their mind.*" That means they have thoughts filled with folly, vain fancies, and good-for-nothing

notions. That is true of every person whose mind is dominated with the flesh nature. He "minds" the things of the flesh (Romans 8:5), giving his best thoughts and much time to thinking of them. That is true even though no good thing dwells in the flesh (Romans 7:18). Such a person cannot be open and honest with another in the home or in the church.

B. Lack of understanding of others interferes with communication (verse 18). A person *"having the understanding darkened"* will find it impossible to communicate freely. His mind is clouded with darkness so that his powers of discernment are hindered. All that he thinks or plans is warped by the notions of sin. He cannot deal in a true spirit of love. Jesus warned, *"If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"* (Matthew 6:23).

C. Lack of sympathy interferes with communication (verse 18). Jesus warned about a "blindness" of the heart. It means a heart that is hard, insensible, obstinate, and closed. It is a heart that is turned to stone. Those who have hardened their hearts against God cannot have tender hearts toward people. The result is a life which is concerned about personal advantage and is negligent about the needs of others.

D. Impure lifestyle, marked by sensuality, interferes with communication (verse 19). These are people, *"Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."* What does that mean? It describes a person who lives a sensual life. *"Lasciviousness"* means licentiousness, wantonness, sensuality, vice. Not only do some people live that way, they do it without regret or reservation. They are "past feeling," reckless to the extent they have stifled their consciences and lost all sense of shame. Surrendered to sensuality, they greedily indulge in any form of impurity which lust suggests. There is no restraint by morals or ethics. Satisfaction of sensual desires is the great goal of such a life.

Such a person is selfish to the extreme. He is concerned with self-satisfaction, whatever it may cost another. He can never be open and honest with members of his family.

The great problem is that every person, whether he is Christian or not, is tempted to engage in that lifestyle. Most do not, praise the Lord, but some do. To the extent one lives that kind of life, he loses the power to relate to members of his own family.

II. KEYS TO COMMUNICATION (Ephesians 4:20-24)

A. Follow the standard which Christ teaches (verses 20, 21). The standard of Christian ethics requires you to *"Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"* (Mark 12:30, 31).

Love for God will set one right in attitude. Love for his neighbor will keep one right in action. The person who is so in love with himself that he lives to satisfy the desires of the flesh and mind (Ephesians 2:3) does not love God or his neighbor. That person will find it difficult (indeed, will find it impossible) to be open and honest with his family.

The lifestyle which Christ requires is so radically different from that which the flesh desires that one must *be "a new creature"* to live it (II Corinthians 5:17). That is what happens at conversion: the Holy Spirit *"borns anew"* those who are saved (John 3:1-18). The life of Christ in them (Galatians 2:20) produces the potential to live right in relation to God and man (Romans 8:3, 4).

B. Refuse to be controlled by the old "flesh" nature (verse 22). *"Put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."*

The Bible warns that there is a "flesh" nature in you which seeks to control you (Galatians 5:16-26). The flesh nature is that part of your human nature which is yet unredeemed. It is the seat of Satan's activity in your life. It must be conquered by your being filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), or you will find it conquering you.

You can identify the flesh nature easily. It is *"the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"* (I John 2:16). It wants what it wants because it feels good, or because it is beautiful, or because it would make one feel important. The flesh nature insists, "I want what I want when I want it." It takes the attitude, "You are here to please me." It lives by the principle, "If it feels good, do it."

No wonder those who live by the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:8). No wonder those who live by the flesh cannot live in full harmony with members of their families. The flesh-life is a selfish and sensual life.

C. Be constantly renewed by the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit (verse 23). *"Be renewed in the spirit of your mind."*

Remember that the Holy Spirit moved into your human spirit and took up a permanent residence there the very instant you were saved. In fact, it is His presence within you which bring assurance of salvation.

The Spirit is within you to work, not to rest. He is not idle. God gave Him to us that we might be *"conformed to the image of his Son"* (Romans

8:29). He is there to make us more and more like Jesus! That change is made in practical areas of life as we are renewed in the spirit of our minds (Ephesians 4:23; Romans 12:2; Titus 3:5).

See what happens as the Spirit of God renews us: *"We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"* (II Corinthians 3:18). He who is made like Jesus will have no problem with communication in his family.

D. Cultivate a likeness to God who has remade you (verse 24). That means the Christian must *"put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."*

To *"put on"* the new man means to be in behavior what we have become in spirit. It means to act according to what we are. It means to express in deed what we have become in heart. It means we will exhibit the practical nature of our new life in Christ.

As we *"put on the new man"* we will be self-giving, loving, and ready to share ourselves with any person, particularly those of our own church and family. Being faithful Christians is the key to communication in our homes.

III. WAYS OF COMMUNICATION (Ephesians 4:25-32)

A. Speak truthfully: *"Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another"* (verse 25). Be no more untruthful to a member of your family than you would be to God. The husband and wife are one (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6). To deal falsely with one's partner is to deal falsely with oneself. Speak the truth.

B. Control temper: *"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath"* (verse 26). Anger might arise, but one must not sin by nursing a feeling of resentment toward the other. Never go to bed angry! The problems of each day must be settled before the day is ended. Unresolved problems in the family will grow with time and fester like a sore. That gives the devil a base of operation in one's life (verse 27). He will take advantage of every chance he gets. How tragic it would be for a person to provide an opportunity for the devil to work against his own spirit and his own family.

Do not be deceived that someone can *"make"* you mad. Never! A person might provide opportunity for anger already in you to explode, but no one can put the anger in you. Blessed is the person who is in control of his own spirit.

C. Give, rather than get: *"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather*

let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (verse 28). Theft is taking something and giving nothing in return. There can be theft of more than goods — affection, time, or willingness to serve. The spirit of Jesus is to give in order to bless others, rather than to receive in order to satisfy self.

D. Discipline speech: *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers"* (verse 29). All that is said must be helpful, not hurtful. It must build up rather than tear down. It must purify rather than defile. It must bless rather than blight. It must pass the approval of God before it reaches the ears of men. What a difference that would make in family relationships!

E. Submit to the Spirit: *"Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption"* (verse 30). Whatever grieves (offends, hurts, distresses or causes sorrow to) the Holy Spirit will be harmful to people about us. The only guarantee is to be filled with the Spirit in our family relations. He will control what happens.

F. Overcome bitterness: *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice"* (verse 31). Abusive or insulting language must be banished. That will solve most of the problems in family relations.

G. Be forgiving: *"Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"* (verse 32). How did God forgive you? He forgave you immediately, totally, graciously, unconditionally, and eternally. Such forgiveness solves problems! Communication in the home is a full-time job. It is enjoyed only when it is cultivated. There can be no full joy or full peace without full communication. Work at it. Ask God to help. He wants your home to be blessed and a blessing. He will enable you to make it so.

QUESTIONS

1. What is "communication" as used in this lesson?
2. What do you see as a major barrier to communication in the home?
3. How can that problem be overcome?
4. How does Mark 12:30, 31 relate to this study?
5. How does the "flesh" produce family problems?
6. What does Romans 8:29 say God seeks to do in us?
7. How can you "put on the new man" of verse 24?
8. How can you communicate better with your family?
9. How does home life influence your church life?

10. What have you learned which helped you most in this study?