

Chapter 3

MINISTRIES

Ministering to women in matters of Christian marriage, apologetics, and faith

10 Guidelines for Good Communication in Marriage

by Sharon Lareau

Good communication is beneficial for all types of relationships. In marriage, it's essential! Figuring out how to communicate well with your husband can sometimes take months or even years, but the rewards are worth the effort. I pray that the following list might help in some way.

Below is a list of 10 guidelines for good communication that my husband and I try to live by. Some of them I brought into my marriage, some my husband taught me, and some we figured out together. When we first got married, we did not have all the skills or knowledge of each other that we needed to communicate well from day one. We had our share of arguments and frustrations. But since we both shared a dislike for the separation that we felt when things were not "right" between us, we found ways to work things out. In time, our communication improved. This, together with a biblical structure of headship and submission, led to a deeper harmony between us. We give God all the glory for creating that in our marriage.



1. Pray – Prayer is a good place to start for a lot of things, and communication is no exception. Depending on the issue at hand, we may find ourselves in need of wisdom and patience in order to communicate effectively and lovingly. Taking time to pray can also help to move our hearts towards a greater desire for God's will to be done and away from simply focusing on winning an argument or getting our way. It is also good to pray for our husbands. We can pray for them to have wisdom and that they are calm and open to hearing us.

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer." [Psalms 19:14](#)

2. Don't expect your husband to read your mind – This was something I needed to work on. My husband helped me see that I sometimes expected him to know what I needed without me telling him. There were many times that I thought what I needed or how my husband should act was "obvious". I would have expectations that were not shared and then be hurt if things did not work out the way I

wanted. I know that other wives also experience this. I have had wives share their sadness with me about an issue; and when I asked them if their husband knew how they felt, oftentimes they would say no. I'm not sure why we do this, but it really isn't fair for us to be upset with our husbands for something they know nothing about. We shouldn't expect them to automatically know what we need. There's a good chance we process things differently. Something incredibly obvious to us might never even occur to them. It is ok to tell them. Be honest and open. It's a good way to help them love us better, and many husbands want to do that for their wives.

3. Timing. Timing, Timing – This is the communication guideline equivalent to the real estate mantra “Location, location, location.” Picking the right time to talk can be the deciding factor in whether the conversation is successful or not. Times to avoid: when he or you first get home, when either of you are under a lot of stress, and when either is very hungry. (Yes, an empty stomach matters sometimes. A rumbling stomach can cause irritability. Better to take a break and eat!) Another time to avoid is when you are feeling hormonal. Let's be honest. When the hormones are raging, it's very easy to make a mountain out of a molehill. I know what you're feeling seems real, but finding the discipline to wait until you feel better can help avoid a lot of unnecessary drama.

Also, if you find yourself in a rather long conversation it may be good to take a break. Some topics are emotionally draining. Setting a time limit can help keep you or him from getting worn out. This even applies at night. I know the Bible says “...do not let the sun go down on your anger.” ([Ephesians 4:26b](#)), but arguing into the night to work things out so you can go to bed without anger can be counterproductive. We learned that the hard way. We discovered that trying to talk things out at 2:00 a.m. was too difficult because we were both too tired to think straight. Agreeing to lay down any anger and finish in the morning worked much better. It's amazing how much smaller the problems were when the sun came up!

4. Be respectful – This is huge. Setting the right tone with your voice, words, and attitude can make a ton of difference in the outcome. Ask yourself, if you were going to talk to your mom or pastor or boss or best friend, how would you approach them? Would there be name-calling, criticism, impatience, foul language, or a harsh attitude? Would you continuously talk over them instead of listen attentively? Probably not. Why should our husbands suffer these things? Are they not the ones we loved enough to marry and live our lives with?

I know some may feel their husbands do not deserve respect, but that is not the right way to judge whether we extend it to them or not. That comes from the Scriptures. There is a very clear command for wives at the end of [Ephesians 5:33](#). It states “...and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.” This respect is not contingent upon his behavior or who is right or wrong. This does not mean that we should suffer under any sinful behavior, but it does mean that we should strive to handle every conversation we have with our husbands with grace. Showing them respect can go a long way in building them up, and it keeps us in step with God's word. It is important to be respectful going into the conversation, during it, and afterwards. This means regardless of the outcome, whether it pleases us or not, we must still be respectful.

“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.” [Ephesians 4:29](#)

5. Highlight something positive before presenting the problem – If you need to talk with your husband or are upset with him and aggressively head straight to the problem, it may turn the atmosphere darker than it needs to be. Instead, saying something positive before you present the problem can help things get off to a good start. It could be words that show appreciation or love or kindness. This is a gentler way to enter into the discussion. For example, let’s say your husband knocked over your flower pots when the cord to the leaf blower stretched past them, yet he didn’t notice. You could thank him for the work he does around the yard before mentioning what happened. This will promote better communication than if you had started in on him with “Are you kidding me? I can’t believe you knocked over my pots! You broke them!”

“A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but perversion in it crushes the spirit.” [Proverbs 15:4](#)

“Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.” [Proverbs 16:24](#)

6. Take responsibility for your mistakes quickly and forgive his – In situations when you know you are in the wrong, admit it right away. Try to resist making excuses or shifting the blame. Humbly and sincerely apologize up front. Both of you will feel better sooner; and you will avoid tiring, long-drawn-out conversations. On the flip side, if your husband is in the wrong, make it easy for him to apologize. If you have a habit of jumping down his throat when he makes a mistake, you’ll make it harder for him to admit mistakes in the future. Remember that, like you, your husband is a sinner; and that he will fail from time to time. Understand that he is probably trying to do the best he can. He needs your forgiveness and understanding as much as you need his. Forgive as you wish to be forgiven.

7. Work for the common good, not just for what you want – I know it’s easy to get caught up in your own agenda; but as part of a couple, it is important to work towards an outcome that is best for both of you. Consider your husband’s feelings and wants and needs as more important than your own. We are called to nothing short of this.

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.” [Philippians 2:3-4](#)

8. Help your husband by learning how he communicates – This one takes time and observation. To do this, you need to listen and look for patterns. Since you are two different people, you may approach communication differently. One of you may need to talk things out a lot longer than the other. There may be patterns leftover from a previous relationship or from childhood. If your husband always had to defend against an abrasive sibling or lived in a house where problems were swept under the rug, you will need to find a way to respond to any communication habits he developed. It’s a matter of tuning in

to the nuances of his style of communicating. You have to listen carefully. However, don't fall into the trap of putting him in a box. Always leave room for growth.

"This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger;" [James 1:19](#)

9. Present a solution – My husband showed me the value of this. I've learned that presenting a solution helps to facilitate communication and problem solving. He has asked me to let him know what he can do to solve whatever issue is at hand. If I just list grievances, it does not help us move forward. Presenting a solution is a great way for me to help him help me. This is different from those times when I just need to vent. We've both gotten better at identifying those times.

10. Give your husband time to work out a solution and request a follow-up discussion – Not every matter can be solved with one conversation. When this happened with us, it was sometimes difficult for me to leave things open ended. Not wanting to nag my husband for a resolution, I learned to ask when would be a good time for me to come back and bring it up again if I had not gotten a reply by then. This helps him too because I am not pestering him; and if he accidentally forgets, I can respectfully remind him. Depending on the matter, it may be hours or days before I return. I have found that this is a great way to experience peace while we are working something out.

I pray you and your husband have many peaceful and fruitful conversations!

"Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God." ([1 Peter 3:3-4](#))