

He Said, She Said – Keys to Communication and Fighting Fair – James 1:19-20

Skit – Keys to Twisting Effective Communication; Turn to **James 1:19-20**

Got in my car the other day, put my **key** in the ignition, and it wouldn't go

Tried again – wouldn't go; Turned the steering wheel – wouldn't go

Made sure it was the right key – wouldn't go

Inspected it closer – found that it was bent

Good thing I did, because had I continued to jam it in the ignition, it would have ruined the ignition and I'd still be sitting in the parking lot

That's a lot like the twisted keys we just saw in the skit

If you keep on trying to use them to communicate in your marriage, you're going to ruin your relationship

Which is why it's necessary to constantly evaluate your communication and confrontation methods

No doubt things were great in this area, early on in marriage

You used to talk well into the night about anything and everything

Now, you may feel like your conversations are laced with dynamite . . .

Because every time you talk, it explodes into a fight

So you don't even go near an in depth conversation

Everyone has experienced that to one degree or another

Every couple could stand to inspect their communication habits, and turn in their twisted keys for new ones

And the first one is to . . .

The “Right” Keys to Communication/Confrontation:

1. Listen first (v19)

Be quick to hear – You want to talk? Listen *first*

Don't just wait your turn to talk – listen

Listen to understand them; Don't just listen to their words, listen to their *heart*

Can't play the lawyer game in marriage, scrutinizing their words for an advantage

You must listen to their thoughts; You must hear their heart

When you actively/intentionally do so, it helps you see their perspective

Maybe even learn something you don't know – there's a thought

In the best of times, that's no problem; It's during worst of times that obstacles pop up . . .

Defensiveness – you're so busy being offended and thinking of a rebuttal, you miss the pt

Inner Turmoil – your own issues prevent you from hearing what your spouse is saying

Husband walks in the door with work heavy on his mind and wife starts in on her day

She's been with the kids, and her word count with adults is severely low

The husband has so much on his mind and heart that everything she says goes in one ear and out the other (Some of you would argue that there's another reason for that)

Impatience – they're not getting to point fast enough, or you have something *you* want to say, so you interrupt them

Fatigue – when you're tired, mentally or physically, it's hard to listen

Example – guy who's morning person; wife a late night person

He thinks bedtime is for sleeping; She thinks it's for talking

Fatigue makes it pretty difficult to talk about anything serious

Either wait for a better time, or drink some coffee

Those are some common obstacles to being a good listener

Whatever yours is, the key is to listen, and listen first

The 2nd “right” key to comm/confr is to . . .

2. Think it through (v19)

Slow to speak – as in, think it through

Prov 29:20 – *Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

Before you confront your wife/husband; Before you sit down and have that big talk

Before you ever open your mouth – Think it through

- Make sure it's a big deal

Ask yourself – Does anything *need* to be said?

Get with God in prayer – “God, would it be better to be patient and let you work *apart* from me? Or do you want to use me to speak up?”

Do you know how many conversations I've *never* had with people because I pray . . .

“Lord, if I'm thinking about this right, will you give them the same perspective?

“If I'm thinking wrong, will you change mine?”

Make sure it's a big deal before you speak

- Consider the risks –

Of speaking – Turn to **James 3:6-10**

Put together with Prov 10:19 – *When words are many, transgression is not lacking* . .

You come to the conclusion that an abundance of words with an unbridled tongue, leads to sin, especially in the midst of a difficult situation

Of silence – If you don't say anything at all, it could leave the conflict unresolved, and allow bitterness to take root in your heart

Consider the risks of speaking *or* remaining quiet, as you think it through

- Check your motive

Is it the desire of your heart to restore, reconcile, and build up your spouse?

Do you want to make things better?

Or do you want to drive them in ground; Make them feel like a worm?

Inflict as much pain on them as they inflicted on you?

Check your motive, and zip the lip until it's pure

Then, after you've done all that . . .

- Choose your words carefully

Prov 15:1 – *A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*

Mt 12:36 – *I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak*

Choose your words carefully – words that build up and bless your spouse

Not words that stir up and pronounce judgment

We used to listen to a song with our girls when they were younger

Can't help but think of it

Song – Shut My Mouth (Nan Gurley) – Want you to hear it

Think it through

The third key to comm/confr is . . .

3. Take the initiative (v19)

Let (must); Quick; Slow; Slow

These are action words that convey initiative

Let doesn't mean allow – it means should

When it comes to being *slow to speak*, it doesn't mean don't speak at all
It means once you've listened and thought it through, take the initiative and act

If you've blown it, and you know it – take the initiative and go to them
If they've blown it – take the initiative and go to them

In either case, take the initiative and . . .

- Go in humility
Humility is prerequisite for any successful communication/confrontation
Admit your own faults; Be ready to have something pointed out in *your* life
James 4:6 – *God opposes the proud but gives grace [favor] to the humble*
You *need* God's favor to successfully communicate in a tense situation
And you're not going to get it if pride reigns in your life
When you take the initiative to speak, humble yourself
- Speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15)
Don't embellish/exaggerate to support your case – that's not a pure motive
But don't withhold information either – that's the fear of man
Avoid saying "never" or "always" unless it can objectively be proven true
Stay away from sarcasm – sarcasm in midst of conflict is like being punched with smile
Smile – "I didn't mean to break your nose or hurt your feelings"
Be straight, be honest, and speak the truth in love
- Be gentle
Realize the power of your words
Though you could deliver a death blow to your spouse for what they've done . . .
Purpose to be gentle; purpose to be tender; no matter what their reaction
Be kind to one another, tenderhearted (Eph 4:32)
Husbands – you must be very careful in this respect, otherwise your anger and lack of gentleness will crush the spirit of your wife
Wives – you too must be careful, otherwise the sharpness of your tongue will diminish your husband and cause him to check out
Be soft/tender/gentle in your approach; because your relationship is *always* more important than the content of the conversation

4. Stay cool (v20)

Be slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness . . . (20)

Anger produces a closed mind and a loss of control

Both of which are far from God's standard of righteousness that he requires

You know the feeling – when you're angry, could care less what your spouse thinks/says

Key #1 (listening) is out the door; Key #2 (thinking it through) is no where to be found

Key #3 with humility, truth, and gentleness is locked away

When you get angry during a discussion, it suddenly becomes all about you, and communication is over – Stay cool

That's easier for some than it is for others, because everyone tends to react differently
Some people react to conflict by . . .

Fighting to win – It's a competition; I win, you lose; I'm right, you're wrong

Withdrawing – You avoid conflict at all cost; "I'm uncomfortable, so I'm outta here"

Giving up – I don't care anymore; Not worth the hassle/pain; Do what want; I give up
None of those reactions are healthy

Which is why it's important in the midst of conflict to . . .

Ask clarifying questions or make summarizing statements

Are you say this? I hear you saying that

What did you mean when you said you were fed up?

Of all that you just said, here's what I heard . . .

Ask clarifying questions or make summarizing statements in the midst of conflict

Don't fight to win, withdraw, or give up

When all else fails . . . *Ask for a time out*

Stop before things get out of control; Purpose ahead of time to do so

You don't have to solve every problem on the spot

Agree to table it and set a time to address it later

Whatever you do, don't walk away

- If you do lose your cool and get angry, don't go to bed that way
Ephesians 4:26 – *Do not let the sun go down on your anger*
Don't go to bed angry; There are absolutely no benefits
"Ya, but maybe we'll get some perspective and it won't be an issue in the morning"
Not worth the risk of *giving the devil an opportunity* to influence your life (Eph 4:26)
Not worth the risk of waking up angry

"What if my wife's mad, but I'm not? Can I go to sleep then? NO."

You're one flesh – if she's hurting, you're hurting; whether you want to be or not

If that means you'll be up all night every night, so be it

I guarantee it – if you draw the line and don't go to bed angry, you'll begin to deal with your issues when you should, instead of pouting/sweeping them under the rug

If we took this command more seriously and literally, we'd see our marriages improve literally, overnight

Listen first; Think it through; Take the initiative; Stay cool; and last . . .

5. Choose the right time (Eccl 3:1,7)

Have you ever been around a couple who bickers in public?

You know, if they disagree (and they do a lot), they air it out right then and there

Doesn't matter who's around; What's going on; Who it makes terribly uncomfortable

It's gotta be one of the most self-centered things a couple can do

I'm surprised Becky and I still have friends from our early years of marriage

It's certainly not because we were a joy to be around

We bickered constantly; *Any* time was the right time as far as we were concerned

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7 – *For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven . . . a time to keep silence, and a time to speak*

How true this is, especially in marriage

There's a time to speak and a time to be quiet

Choose them wisely – not just for the sake of other adults, but for your kid's sake

When you put kids in the mix, the stakes increase a hundred-fold

Their emotional well-being is at risk, and the damage can be long-term/significant

Never forget when first married – babysitting little boy; 4 years old
The nicest, meekest, kindest, sweetest little boy you’ve ever met
With parents to match – they were kind, meek, gentle, sweet
Just so happened that Becky bought a vacuum cleaner from a door-to-door salesman
that afternoon
There’s nothing wrong with door-to-door salesman
Nothing wrong with that vacuum cleaner – except the price
With little Elliot in the living room, we exchanged words in the dining room
Don’t know how long we were at it, but suddenly Elliot appeared in the doorway, and
we stopped and stared at him
After a pause he walked over to us with two green army men in his fingers
And said in a little, high-pitched voice – “The army men want you to stop fighting”

You *will* have conflict in your marriage
The key is, choosing the right time to resolve it – Timing is everything
Listen first; Think it through; Take the initiative; Stay cool; Choose the right time
Those are the *right* keys to comm/confr; as opposed to the twisted ones

Close

What about our assignment?!

- Not going to tell you to go out and have a fight in order to apply these principles
- Write James 1:19-20 on index card; put it in a prominent place this week

Next week (for singles) – What to look for in a spouse