

GROWING IN FAMILY TOGETHER (GIFT)

Letter for Husband and Wife



FIFTH LETTER TO THE FAMILY- WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

by Pastor Thomas and Ma'am Pamela Teh

Dear Family,

In my previous letters, I listed 4 areas that are prerequisites to rebuilding our relationship with each other.

Point 1: DESIRING A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Point 2: FORGIVING OR ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS

Point 3: BEING THE FIRST TO CHANGE

Point 4: DISCERNING BETWEEN "TRUTHS" AND "LIES"

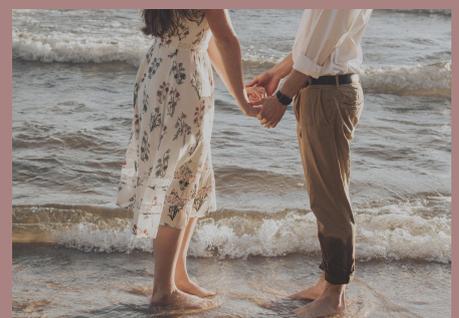
These are principles I can easily teach others but oftentimes find challenging to execute in my personal life. Even after applying them, it takes a long time before I see clear results. In the process, I also have to constantly remind myself that I have to be alert and not be easily distracted by lies and my own pride.

The Bible teaches us several important things we can do to strengthen our relationship. Men are specifically told to love their wives and women to respect their husbands. This is often reflected in our COMMUNICATION.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Three aspects of
communication

Differences
between a man and
a woman



The lack of communication and faulty communication has affected many relationships, especially marital relationships. A marital relationship is different from other relationships. It is a covenant relationship. We cannot change our spouses like how we may, for example, change our jobs, simply because it is not working out. God has instituted marriage to be a Covenant (Matthew 19:6) - a binding oath, which greatly emphasizes the responsibilities and relationship between the parties involved. Breaking them or keeping them will have their consequences and rewards (Leviticus 26:15-39).

God shows us the importance of communication in a relationship. Some examples are:

1. God gave Adam a help meet (Eve) so that he would not be alone and would have someone to meet his needs and be his companion. (Genesis 2:18)
2. God communicated with His people, for example, Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, prophets and priests.
3. God continues to speak to us through Scripture, prayers (2 Timothy 3:16, John 6:63) and dreams (Acts 2:17).

Effective communication has these 3 aspects:

1. CLARITY OF COMMUNICATION: What I say may not be what she hears

Example:

I point to a slice of cake and ask, "Can this be eaten?"

She replies, "Yes".

I take it and eat it.

She says, "Why did you eat the last piece of cake? I wanted to keep it for our son."

In my mind when I asked the question, "Can this be eaten," I meant "Can I eat it?"

Unfortunately, my wife thought that I was asking if the piece of cake was still edible or had turned bad. I had inadvertently created a misunderstanding by not making myself clear. Without adequate clarity, misunderstandings can occur and result in arguments and displeasure towards each other. This will put a bigger wedge, especially in an "already faulty" relationship.

2. LEVEL OF COMMUNICATION: What we discuss is different when we are talking to a stranger, a friend, or a family member. We can dwell on more personal things when the person is closer to us. There is also a difference between speaking with a man or a woman.



Example:

My wife asks, "How was your day at work?"

I reply, "Ok. How was your day at home?"

My wife says, "I had a rather busy day. The children were very good today. Both of them helped in the cleaning of the house and even wanted to help in the cooking. They showed a great sense of responsibility by completing their homework and keeping their room clean. I am so proud and happy with their behavior. Oh, our neighbor Mey, dropped by to give us a big bowl of 'ikan pedas' that she made. It smells very good, I did not know she is such a good cook. The conversation I had with her also helped me understand her better. You remember that I told you she was proud and a show-off? I could not have been more wrong. I realized she is actually very gentle and kind. I think she and I will get along really well. When she appeared at the door, I was wondering what we could speak about. Guess how long we chatted? About 3 hours! Can you believe that? You will be surprised to hear what I told her before she left. I asked her to come by again tomorrow. She was so happy when she heard my invitation. You should have seen her face. I have never seen a sweeter smile. She says that she will make some 'kue' tomorrow."

See the difference between a man and a woman's reply to the same question?

Men: If you want to communicate with your wife effectively, you cannot sum up your whole day in one word "OK". Neither can you just tell her the basic facts like, "I had lots to do today. Many people called and we had to process all the orders before we left the office". This won't work. A woman needs to know what you think, how you feel, why are you feeling this way, why and what upset you, why you think differently etc. Men, we need to speak from our heart and reveal our feelings. In short, we must be more vulnerable to our spouses. When you asked her, "How is your day?", she took 20 minutes to answer, leaving you wondering what had happened. She was in fact pouring out her thoughts and emotions.

Women: Show grace to your husbands. Men usually prefer to speak less and will not share so many details. From your experience you know that men can condense 8 hours in the office to less than 30 seconds, but women may take 30 minutes and still not be done.

A husband will be on his motorcycle within 2-4 minutes after a seminar. He will still be sitting there for another 20 minutes waiting for his wife to appear. A woman usually has to make at least 3-5 stops along the way to chat with her friends. As your husband has shown patience to you on many occasions, do exercise patience when he tries to communicate with you. He will need time to be able to speak like you. When your husband asks you something, you can also shorten your reply and not leave him standing there for 20 minutes wondering if he did the right thing by asking you the question.

I have often been asked, "Can I tell my spouse my feelings and struggles? Should I open up to my spouse and be so vulnerable?" It depends on how you see your family and your home. If you believe that your home is a battlefield and your family members are your enemies then you will have great difficulty letting them know the "true" you. This lie has been put into our minds and we have unknowingly watered and fertilized it for years. Today, it may have grown into a huge tree that stands in the way of communication. Let us uproot this lie and replace it with God's truth-that we are of one flesh. (Gen 2:21-24). It took me many years of marriage before I realized this truth. The correct perspective freed me and I'd like to share this truth with you.

The home is our training ground and God has placed great trainers there-our family. A training ground is different from a battlefield. Many safety measures are found in a training ground. So it is a safe place while a battlefield has no boundaries and is filled with great dangers and uncertainties. Trainers develop our skills, protect us when we fail, motivate us when we need encouragement, help to remove our weaknesses, guide us to safer ground and counsel us when we are confronted with tough situations. Trainers may put us through tough tests and hard challenges which will bring out the best in us. The more our trainers know our weaknesses, the better they can train us. God has put these trainers in our lives. Through them, we can develop a stronger faith, deeper prayer life and a closer relationship with God. Trainers are unlike enemies who are simply out to destroy us.

3. LISTENING, THE HIDDEN GEM IN COMMUNICATION

Most of the time when we refer to communication, we think of it as the ability to project thoughts clearly and accurately to others. We have just discussed that communicating across genders requires a different skill from communicating with the same gender. Another aspect that most of us would not think of is "listening" with an understanding heart. That was what King Solomon asked of God (1 Kings 3:9) and God was pleased that Solomon requested this instead of riches (1 Kings 3:11-12). Listening with an understanding heart seeks to meet needs and demonstrates respect for the person talking to us. We are telling the person that he is worthy of our attention. Furthermore, the likelihood of making mistakes is greatly reduced if we have good listening skills.

SUMMARY:

1. Remember to communicate with your spouse regularly.
2. Communicate clearly.
3. Confidently tell each other what is in your heart.
4. Listen well when your spouse is talking to you.

Humbly in Christ,

Pastor Thomas & Ma'am Pamela Teh