

GROWING IN FAMILY TOGETHER (GIFT)

Letter for Husband and Wife



SIXTH LETTER TO THE FAMILY- THIS IS COMMUNICATION

by Pastor Thomas and Ma'am Pamela Teh

Dear Family,

This was the first thing God did. He spoke. He created. He brought light into the world. Three things took place in just that one verse.

God spoke and light came out of darkness. It is interesting that the first thing He created was light. Light has a symbolic meaning in the Bible:

- a. Light is life: Jesus said, "I am the light of the world... the light of life." John 8:12
- b. Light overcomes darkness: "And the light shineth in darkness ..." John 1:5
- c. Light illumines and gives direction: "Let your light so shine before men... and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Matthew 5:16

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1.COMMUNICATE TO SHINE: Let our communication be one that brings light and life to our spouse and loved ones. This happens when our words give them encouragement and hope and in so doing, draws them closer to the Lord. James 1:19 explains how we should respond when we face unpleasant situations:

a. **BE SWIFT TO LISTEN:** Getting upset and angry is a common occurrence in many households. The person who errs is quickly chastised without being given an opportunity to explain (Proverbs 29:20). It is always prudent to allow the person to explain the situation. Be quick to hear them out. James advises us to listen first and listen well to understand the situation, before jumping to any conclusion. Our purpose to hear the person out is not to gather reasons to justify our rebuke. Our desire instead should be to help, guide, teach and develop the person.

b. **BE SLOW TO SPEAK:** The idea behind this is to think carefully before expressing ourselves. We have a tendency, because of our sinful nature, to use words to hurt and harm. A wise man/woman would use words to encourage and heal a hurt. Our communication should hold no corruption, evil intent nor deception but instead edify (help, improve, enlighten) our spouse (Eph 4:29, 5:26). Use communication to strengthen and rebuild a marriage. My choice of words reveals who I really am.

c. **BE SLOW TO ANGER:** After hearing an explanation, we may realize it was indeed a moment of carelessness or an oversight that resulted in the mistake. What should be my response then when it is clear that it is my spouse's error? Words in themselves can be quite harmless but sometimes we string them together in the form of a harsh rebuke to our spouse, "I am sick of your mistake. Now I have to clean up your mess." These words can hurt and wound. Arguments can arise from our anger and unkind words (Proverbs 15:1, 4).

If my desire is to help and be a blessing to my spouse, I would have gracious thoughts like:

- a. "My spouse must have had a difficult day, which resulted in this mistake.
- b. "Am I being selfish? Am I angry because I do not like to do extra cleaning?"
- c. "This can be another opportunity to show my spouse that I love her."

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Having a Christlike perspective creates loving thoughts. Loving thoughts will lead to gracious and kind responses.

2. COMMUNICATE TO CREATE: The creation that took place after God spoke was one of great significance. Only light is able to overcome darkness. The book of Genesis introduced the presence of opposing forces (eg. darkness vs light, good vs evil, right vs wrong, humility vs pride, contentment vs greed etc.) which is an inextricable part of human existence. Let's fill our conversations with grace, love and blessings with the goal of erasing past hurts, grudges and pain.

Communicate to create opportunities for:

- a. **Transparency:** Tell your spouse your pains, concerns, hope and joy so your spouse can truly know you. Ask what you do not really know about your spouse so you can really know him/her. In the process of telling and asking, you build TRUST through your transparency.
- b. **Understanding:** If we want to understand someone, we need to better know the person, and good communication is essential to achieving that. However, there can be many reasons for wanting to understand our partners. We may use that understanding to ridicule our spouse's way of reasoning, use it to embarrass our partner for certain personal preferences or take advantage of our spouse's fears. We can also desire to understand our spouse, simply because we want to be more effective in helping, encouraging and expressing our love and care.
- c. **Unity:** This is only possible when a good relationship exists, otherwise it can easily be torn apart by aggravation, disagreement or stress. Instead of commanding or dictating, we should invite our husband/wife into our life by sharing:
 - i. our concerns instead of complaining about our spouse's failures
 - ii. our hopes instead of faulting our spouse for shirking from responsibilities
 - iii. our struggles instead of our spouse's lack of ability

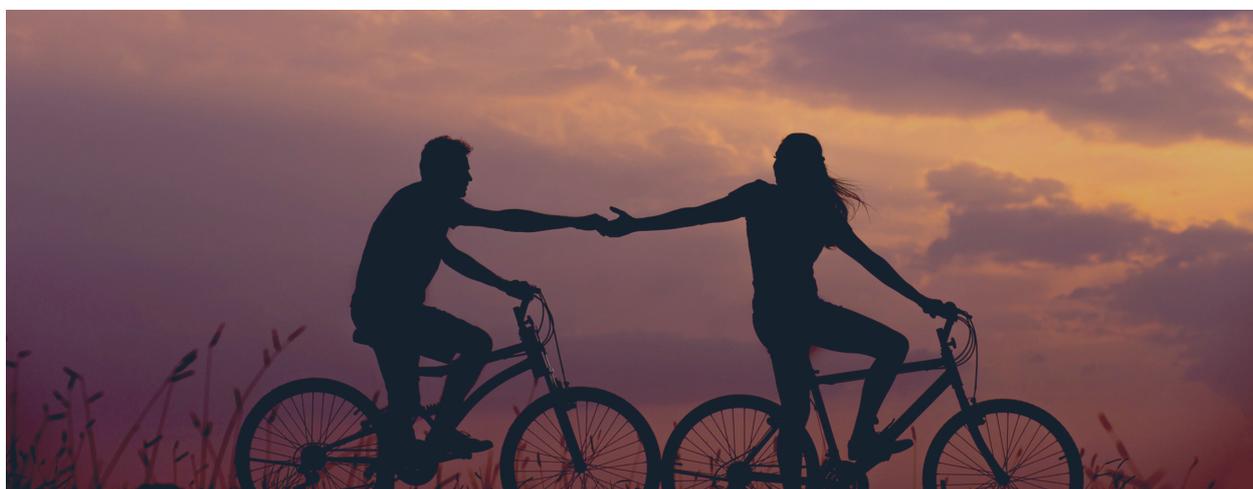
When we communicate in a caring and gentle manner, we draw our spouse closer to us. Christ tells us to love even our enemies. How can we then say that we cannot love our spouse?

Jesus frequently spoke with his Father no matter how busy or troubled he was. He rose early in the morning to pray, broke away from crowds to pray, and when he knew he was about to face challenges and suffer great pain on the cross, he prayed. His submission and love for his Father resulted in a strong unity of purpose—our salvation.

SUMMARY: Communicate with your spouse with the purpose of uniting both your hearts.

HELP EACH OTHER: Share the following with a few families (audio or video call).

1. Meditate on Eph 4:31-32. How have these verses influenced or changed the way you communicate with your spouse?
2. With humility and genuine love, ask your husband/wife, what are two things your spouse wants to see more of and less of in you? Forgiveness allows us to put the past behind us. Communication helps us rebuild our marriage and ground it on the truths of God's Word.



*By His Grace,
Pastor Thomas & Ma'am Pamela Teh*