



Marriage Growth-Track

Week 4 - Day 2

Steps to Communication

By Doug and Cheryll Duffie

"Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry."

James 1:19

If someone told you that you and your spouse could have tremendously better communication if all you did was three things, would you do it?

Most people would answer with a resounding 'YES!'

"Three little things?" you think. "Surely we can handle three little tasks if it will improve our marriage."

So here's what we see in this verse:

- We are to be quick to listen;
- We are to be slow to speak;
- We are to be slow to get angry

Sounds simple enough doesn't it? Maybe you're up for trying to listen better. Or work on that anger issue. But 'slow to talk'? Now, there's the real challenge.

"You mean I can't assume I'm always right and my spouse is always wrong? I can't make sure that I drive my point home to my spouse over and over til I win? And I can't bring up past, unrelated hurts just to make me look better?"

Yes. Yes. And, most definitely, yes.

But these three 'little' steps are the 'secret sauce' to genuine and beneficial and mutually edifying communication—with anyone, but especially between a husband and wife.

Haven't you tried it the 'old' way where you both go at it, insistent upon making sure you're proved right or justified? Usually doesn't work too well, does it? Or maybe you'll retreat feeling victorious or vindicated only to realize down the road that you may have won that battle, but lost the war in terms of strengthening your marriage.

We've all been there, done that. Small issues escalate into bigger issues when we rush to speak. Miscommunication leads to all-out arguments when we quit listening. Hurt is

almost always a by-product when we become angry. Every discussion has the potential to be a lose-lose-lose situation when we fail to listen, speak impulsively, and fight with anger.

Here's the good news: Every discussion also has the potential to be a win-win-win moment when we listen with focus, speak with intent, and resist the urge to become angry in the moment.

You know what happens when you do it your way. A 'win' in your column means a 'loss' in your spouse's.

Take a walk on the wild side next time you arrive at a crossroads with your spouse: try it Jesus' way. Chances are, the results will be surprising. And a terrific departure from 'discussions' of the past.

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you feel when someone takes the time to listen to you?
2. What prevents you from listening to others?

Action Steps:

Memorize James 1: 9 and make a plan to incorporate this when you have discussions with your spouse.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, help me to practice these simple challenges from the Book of James. Let me always be cognizant of hearing and responding, not merely reacting and speaking without first considering the impact of my words. Allow me to grasp the gravity of my words and use them for supporting and encouraging my spouse rather than calling forth hurt and anger.

