



Marriage Growth-Track

Week 4 - Day 5

God's way of Communicating

By Doug and Cheryll Duffie

*The heart of the wise instructs his mouth and adds persuasiveness to his lips.
Proverbs 16:23*

God's way of communicating in marriage is to talk with words of unconditional love and respect. Women are all about the love; men thrive on respect. When our words reflect these to the other, it's a beautiful thing. It's that simple...and complex. Here's what we learn in this verse:

- A wise person allows his/her heart to govern what he/she says;
- Persuasiveness flows from the heart and out of the mouth

It is pretty universally understood that your words are a strong indication of what is going on in your heart. Have you ever gotten into a conflict with your spouse that escalated into a full-blown argument and you never even saw it coming? That's usually because 'the issue' wasn't really the issue at all; it was merely the overflow of a heart that somehow manifested itself in some slightly related issue. In other words—it's not the fact that he leaves the toilet seat up time after time that sets her off; it's because she projects his bad habit into a deliberate act meant solely to aggravate her (which, for the record, usually isn't the case at all!). And it's not the fact that she never brings the garbage cans back off the curb that drives him nuts; it's that he feels disrespected for always having to do so, even when he works late.

The seemingly insignificant surface issue may be the trigger, but it's the underlying (and oftentimes unresolved) issue that's the real issue.

Conflict like this inevitably happens when spouses focus on their own needs (and how they perceive them to be unmet) and overlook, discount, or disregard the needs of the other. And that's when the problems move from simple annoyances to full-blown arguments. The wife primarily needs love; she's not intentionally trying to be disrespectful. The husband needs respect; neither is he meaning to come across as unloving. And once the couple grasps this basic principle – the whole love/respect perspective – they can really begin to effectively communicate with one another.

Conflict is inevitable; it is simply part of living together. The key to keeping conflict

from escalating is to choose to practice love and respect. When a husband speaks with a loving tone during a conflict, the wife will usually be more receptive to what he has to say. And when a wife softens her approach and comes across more respectfully during times of friction, the husband is more prone to dial it down a notch or two, also.

Will the disagreement be solved? Maybe; maybe not. But, at the very least, both parties will have responded in ways that best speak to the other and, in the end, sometimes that's the bigger victory.

Discussion Questions:

1. In what areas do you try to address your behaviors but don't examine the condition of your heart?
2. What keeps you from regularly checking the condition of your heart?

Action Step:

Perform a self-reflection and determine if you are focusing on how your needs are not being met, or discounting the needs of your spouse. Make sure you are speaking with a loving tone.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, let the words I speak be what my spouse needs to hear—if respect, let it be respect; if love, let it be loving. Don't allow me to speak harshly or to withhold what means the most to my spouse, be it love or respect. Help me to look for opportunities to speak these qualities into my everyday conversations with my spouse as a reassurance that I have his/her needs as a priority above my own.

