

He Said, She Said

1 Corinthians 13: 1-7; 13

5th in a series of 6 *Built to Last: Christian Marriages that Endure*

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Introduction

Marriages may be made up in heaven, but they are managed down on earth. A critical key to relationships in general and marriage in particular is **communication**. What is said and unsaid, what is heard and unheard, dramatically shapes a relationship between husband and wife. Poet Ogden Nash gave this advice:

*To keep your marriage brimming, With love in the loving cup,
Whenever you're wrong, admit it; Whenever you're right, shut up!*

I. Communication

Effective communication can be quite a challenge. One author listed **five common assumptions of communication**. They include:

- 1) Assume the other person didn't hear you.
- 2) Assume if the other person heard you, he didn't understand you.
- 3) Assume if the other person heard and understood you, she didn't agree with you.
- 4) Assume if the other person heard, understood, and agreed with you, he won't necessarily do anything about it.
- 5) And the fifth assumption of communication is: don't assume anything!

Miscommunication often occurs in marriage. One day a housework-challenged husband decided to wash his favorite sweatshirt. From the laundry room, he shouted to his wife, "What setting do I use on the washing machine?"
She answered, "It depends, what does it say on your shirt?"
He yelled back, "The University of Georgia!"

Part of the problem in marriage is that men and women speak **two different languages**. And what is worse, we don't even REALIZE that we are speaking two different languages. It's an interesting paradox: the two genders are attracted to each other because of our differences, and then we expect each other to be alike. Men expect women to think and act like men. Women expect men to think and act like women. But as we saw at the beginning of the series, there are fundamental differences between the two sexes that begin on a cellular level with XX and XY chromosomes.

In this clip from *Seinfeld*, Jerry and George try to figure out women:

DVD: *Seinfeld: Season 1: Revised Pilot* Begin: 16:21 "Wouldn't it be great . . ."
End: 17:45 ". . . wasn't in the manual."

What men and women need is a woman-to-man and man-to-woman **dictionary** that translates the two languages. Someone actually began a glossary for men to understand what women *say* and what they *mean*. For example:

- **Fine:** This is a word women use to end an argument when they are right and you need to shut up.
- **Five minutes:** If she is getting dressed, five minutes could mean half an hour. If it is accompanied by the phrase, “I hate my hair,” then a man might as well see what’s on TV!
- **Nothing:** Nothing always means something, and men should take note of the storm warning. Arguments over “Nothing” usually end in “Fine.”
- **Go ahead:** This is a dare, not permission. Don’t do it.
- **That’s okay:** This is one of the most dangerous statements a woman can make to a man. This means that she wants to think long and hard before deciding how and when he will pay for his mistake!

Of course, men have their own code when they talk with women. Some key phrases include:

- **What’s for supper?** I’m hungry—why isn’t there food on the table?
- **Five minutes:** Only five minutes are left on the game clock which means I will be sitting in the easy chair watching the game and post-game report for an hour.
- **Any color is fine:** I don’t care what color you paint the walls as long as it’s off-white.
- **Yes, dear:** Translation: Generally, this is a statement used to stall a woman in hopes that she will forget what she asked. If a man is watching TV, it means absolutely nothing.

Miscommunication between the sexes provides the material for countless jokes, TV sitcoms, and movie plots. Sometimes we laugh to keep from crying. We can empathize with the woman who prayed:

*Dear Lord,
I pray for Wisdom to understand my man;
Love to forgive him; And Patience for his moods.
Because, Lord, if I pray for Strength,
I’ll beat him half to death! AMEN!*

II. Mars and Venus

The phrase “**he said/she said**” has become a familiar saying in our society. It points to the differences in perspective and understanding between men and women. The Bible is clear that God created us “*male and female*” with differences intended to complement one another. Recognizing that the two genders speak and listen in different ways is a critical start to effective communication.

In 1992, Dr. **John Gray** published a bestseller entitled **Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus**. The book was based upon the simple premise that men and women really are different from one another. He wrote: “*We mistakenly assume that if*

our partners love us they will react and behave in certain ways—the ways we react and behave when we love someone.” (p. 10)

Some of Gray’s statements sound like gross generalizations and classic stereotypes; but I believe there are valuable lessons in the book. Consider these points.

The most frequent complaint women make about the opposite sex is that **men don’t listen**. There was a husband who read an article about how women use 30,000 words a day while men only use 15,000. When he kidded his wife about thi, she replied: “The reason we use twice as many words is that we have to repeat everything to men.” The husband turned to his wife and said, “Huh?”

When men DO listen, they oftentimes say stupid things in reply. For their anniversary, a husband asked his wife, “Where do you want to go for our anniversary? And the wife answered, “Somewhere I haven’t been in a long time.” So the man replied, “How about the kitchen?” And THAT’S when the fight started.

The most frequent complaint men make is that the women in their life are always trying to **change them**. Wives tend to view their husbands as home improvement projects. And men don’t like to be renovated or accessorized!

An ancient Latin phrase warns “*Caveat emptor*” which means “*Buyer beware!*” Ladies, what you see is what you get. If you’re trying to peel an onion in order to discover your man’s deeper levels, then let me advise you: we don’t have any! Jeff Foxworthy has a GREAT routine on this subject that I cannot quote in this context! Suffice it to say that men are shallow creatures with simple wants and needs.

Men are goal oriented. They like to fix things. Males are motivated when they feel needed. And they seek appreciation for what they have done. It doesn’t matter if our spouse does the laundry and dishes 360 days of the year—when men do it, they expect to be praised loudly and at length! We grew up with our mamas telling us how wonderful we are, and we expect the same from our wives! Under stress, men tend to withdraw into their caves to solve their problems alone.

Women are process oriented. They are less interested in fixing a problem than talking about their feelings. Females are motivated by relationships. They seek to be cherished for who they are. Under stress, women tend to get together and talk about their problems. It’s the journey more than the destination that’s important.

Consider these two scenarios that illustrate the differences:

- 1) A woman comes home and shares the problems and difficulties of her day. All she wants is for the man of her life to listen, understand, and hold her. However, the husband sees a problem that needs fixing. So he immediately begins to give advice on how to resolve the situation. Both are hurt and confused when the other doesn’t respond in the hoped-for way.
- 2) A man is struggling to do something—perhaps assembling a toy, maintaining a friendship, or finding an unknown address. All he wants is to be left alone until he solves the problem. He is, after all, a man, and quite capable of handling the situation. The woman in his life is trying to be helpful and makes seemingly sensible suggestions such as: “Why don’t you read the instruction manual? Have you told your friend how you feel?” And the classic, “Why don’t we stop and ask for directions?!?” She is trying to help, but he experiences her advice an attack upon his masculinity!

Other differences in spouses are based upon **personality** rather than gender. Opposites tend to attract in marriage. Someone once said: *“There are two types of people in this world: people who think there are two types of people in this world and those who don’t!”* Well, there are usually two types of people in every marriage, including:

- Spenders and savers with money
- Turtles and badgers in conflict
- Keepers and thrower-awayers
- Introverts and extroverts

And the list goes on. Hear clearly: your spouse is a unique individual who experiences the world in a radically different way than you do. And chances are real good that your spouse is not going to change. Long-lived relationships require three actions: recognize your real differences, appreciate the other person for who s/he is, and learn how to complement one another.

III. Church Surveys

A while back we conducted a **congregational survey** about family and marriage. During the past two weeks, I have shared some of the advice people gave to new brides and grooms. Responses to the questions varied widely between humorous, serious, heartfelt, and poignant. Hear some of what “he said and she said”.

One thing my spouse does that makes me feel good about myself is:

- She accepts me for whom and what I am with my successes and shortcomings.
- He is very complimentary (# of responses from women)
- She supports my decisions.
- He always encourages me.
- She is constantly building me up and encouraging me.
- He listens to me when I need him to. Eye to eye and face to face.
- She says “I love you” every time we say “Goodbye.”
- He makes me feel attractive even when I don’t think I am.
- She tells others about my strength and knowledge when I help her.
- He is very involved in our children’s lives.

One thing my spouse does that makes me feel bad about myself is:

- She gives me that “You sure are dumb” look.
- He thinks he is right even when he is wrong and assumes his way is the right way.
- She corrects me.
- Sometimes he humorously teases me about touchy areas of my life.
- When she is in a bad mood, I’m sometimes the target of her “venting.”
- He’s not around enough. I feel like I play second fiddle.
- She doesn’t show appreciation for the things I do around the house.
- He doesn’t listen to me.
- She interrupts and corrects me when I’m talking.
- He doesn’t compliment me like he used to.
- She says I’m not affectionate enough.

- And the prize winner: “I can’t think of a thing.”

If I could change one thing about my spouse it would be:

- I wish she could see herself the way I see her
- That he would have more time to do the things he wants to do
- That she would say “No” to others sometimes
- He would brag about me in public
- I wish she would cut back on spending
- I wish he would pick up the things he leaves laying around
- I wish she would pick up her stuff!
- I wish he would compliment and encourage me more.
- That she would talk *to* me more rather than *at* me
- I wish he would listen to me rather than half-listening while he watches TV
- I wish he would be around more.
- Nothing—a good overall package—and not just because she’s sitting next to me.
- *And the most honest response:* Are you crazy? I would never answer that!

IV. Love Banks

In his book, Making Love Last a Lifetime, Adam Hamilton (p. 27-29) wrote about the work of Dr. Willard Harley and Dr. Barbara DeAngelis. The authors use the metaphor of “**love banks**” to describe marital relationships. In marriage, the words, actions, and attitudes of each partner are either deposits or withdrawals in their love banks.

Deposits are positive, loving acts one spouse does for another. Saying “I love you.” Leaving a note or sending an email “just because.” Compliments. Bragging on your spouse in public. Getting up with a crying infant in the middle of the night when it’s not your turn. Taking a cup of coffee to them without being asked. Dates, gifts, etc.

Withdrawals are negative acts of hurt or neglect. Not showing affection. Criticism. Not listening. Forgetting important dates. Telling stories in public that put your spouse in a bad light. Undermining his or her authority with the children. Not picking up after themselves. Spending too much time away and not enough time at home. Mismanaging money. Untruthfulness.

Marriage is a series of deposits and withdrawals; however, Christian marriages that last have more income than outgo. If you continue to make withdrawals without any deposits, then you can slip below the minimum balance and penalties are due. Stay overdrawn too long and the account may be closed.

The other dynamic to “love banks” is that men and women not only speak a different language but also spend a **different currency**. For example, rookie husbands don’t understand why their brides are not excited about getting a dishwasher or lawnmower for Christmas. Guys, NEVER buy your wife a gift that plugs in! And rookie wives don’t understand why their husbands are unexcited by color swatches and window treatments. Ladies, never buy your husband a gift for the house!

Deposits in a man’s “love bank” include: admiration and compliments, listening to his stories (no matter how many times you’ve heard them before!), physical intimacy, and time both together and alone. Deposits in a woman’s “love bank” from her husband

include: sincere compliments, listening to how she feels without giving advice, romantic notes gestures, physical contact like hugs, kisses, and holding hands that are not necessarily a prelude to anything else, and doing household chores without being asked.

We have to determine what our spouse considers to be a deposit into their love banks. Even if it's not important to us, it is important to them. Here is a critical lesson of life: what is important to the people who are important to us must be important to us!

Conclusion

Miscommunication occurs in every relationship, ranging from humorous to serious. But its long term affects can keep spouses from bridging the gap between one another. Ultimately, it takes both human effort and divine love to make a Christian marriage endure. Our Scripture lesson today from 1 Corinthians 13 is one of the most popular Bible passages used at weddings. However, Paul's words are actually addressed to the entire church; and they contain excellent principles for Christian marriages that are "built to last."

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails

Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love."
And it is only this kind of Godly love that will enable a Christian marriage to endure.