

Do You Hear What I Hear?

One Plus One Equals One – Ephesians 4 – God’s Solution

Have you ever played “the telephone game”?

I am sure it has gone by several names, but the idea is that one person whispers something to someone else. The “phone” conversation is then passed around the circle until it reaches the last person, who tells everyone what they thought they heard. Of course, it is drastically different from what it began as and everyone laughs at how it ended up.

It is a fun game, unless it is being played in marriage.

When was the last time you had bad communication with your spouse?

Often, bad communication leads to bad comments which lead to bad criticism which leads to bad battles. Let’s face it, communication or lack thereof is a huge problem in marriage. In fact, it is probably the number problem that destroys marriages. We do not know how to communicate and in turn we do not know how to fight, so we are left with injured hearts, crushed spirits, and broken marriages.

Paul says in Romans 12:18 that we are to live at peace with one another. Later in 14:19, he calls us to pursue peace and the building up of one another. Sometimes we do this everywhere but in the home. We try to live at peace with the boss, the neighbor, the drycleaners, and the pizza delivery man, but when it comes to the spouse we throw peace out the window.

Why do we tend to fight most with our spouse?

Here is a little hint that will instantly strengthen your marriage when practiced. Talk.

I know it sounds simple, but every single marriage would grow if the husband and wife talked more to each other about heart issues rather than just the weather. Every marriage would benefit if the husband and wife read books on communication and then practiced it in their marriage.

Here is an example that shows the need to learn about communication.

Which would you rather lose, your eyesight or your hearing? _____

Ask your spouse the same question. Here is the insight. Those who would rather lose their eyesight are more focused on what is being said in a conversation. They will listen to voice inflection and tone. They will hear what is being said and how it is being said. Those who would rather lose their hearing will pay

“If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”

Romans 12:18

“So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”

Romans 14:19

more attention to body language. They will hear what is being said, but if the body language says something different, then they go with that. It helps to learn about communication.

It also helps to evaluate communication.

This will mean being open and honest with each other. Here are some questions to get you going.

- How well do I communicate? What is good and what is bad?
- How well do I listen? What tells you I am listening?
- Do I tend to interrupt you at times?
- Do I jump to conclusions?
- Do I show you that I am involved in the conversation?
- Is there something I do that irritates you in conversation?

Now, I realize these may be some challenging questions, but they will help you to work through and discover how to better communicate with your spouse. Better communication leads to better conversation, which leads to better communion, which leads to better fulfillment. One person said that feelings of happiness in marriage have a direct connection to the way a husband and wife relate to each other. It all works together.

Even if it is conflict.

Conflict can be one of the more rewarding and growing times in your marriage when done correctly. Conflict cannot be avoided. It can be ignored, but that does not mean it went away. There will always be conflict. Conflict is simply a difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates another person.

What was the last conflict you had with your spouse?

How well (or not so well) did you handle it?

Here again we have a bad perspective on conflict. We see conflict as a terrible thing that destroys marriages. Good conflict does not destroy marriages, but bad conflict can hurt and wound each other and others.

How can conflict be good?

Conflict can help us to see another point of view. It can bring us into a better understanding of our spouse. It can also teach us something about ourselves that we need to work on, but there is another wrong perspective that we have of conflict. We often see our spouse as the bad guy in the conflict. If your spouse disagrees with you then they are against you. Your argument is a "me versus my spouse" mentality. This causes you to attack your spouse and undermine

“Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.”

Ephesians 4:25-27

“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

Ephesians 4:29-32

the very foundation of love that you have for him or her. Consider the words of Ken Sande.

“As long as we see other people as our adversaries and focus our attacks on them, we will give no thought to guarding against our most dangerous enemy.”¹

Do you see the real enemy in the conflict? The real enemy is not your spouse, but the evil one who is roaming about seeking whom he will destroy (1 Peter 5:9). Remember that God has made the man and woman one. Even in conflict they can be an example of oneness as they resolve their differences. Satan would want the man and woman to be against each other. He would want them to be on opposite sides, but that is not the case. The man and woman are on the same side and Satan is the enemy.

Seeing Satan as the true enemy in conflict, how will that affect your conflict?

Thankfully, God helps us to work through conflict and see that it can be used to draw us closer to Christ and to each other. Ephesians 4 provides a step by step process to conflict resolution. As you find yourself at odds with your spouse, take time to work through these steps to bring about resolution.

1. **Speak truth to each other** (4:25). This means that you will refrain from using general statements like, “you always” or “you never”. It means that you are going to address the issue in truth without bring drama or exaggeration into it.
2. **Don't hold on to anger** (4:26) – Notice that the verse says there will be times when you get angry, but the idea is that you do not sin in your anger and you do not hold onto it. There may be times that you need to step away from the conflict or conversation and take a few moments to settle down. It is better to pause and say something true (first step) than to spout off and say something wrong. The key here is stepping away for a little time. Too much time will give the devil a foothold. Hence, the need to not let the sun go down on your wrath. This may mean some late nights.
3. **Speak what is edifying** (4:29). This is another check and balance in regards to your mouth. As you are in the midst of conflict it is important to remember that you should be trying to work towards resolution. Words that are edifying will accomplish that. Words that are degrading will not. At this point it is not a matter of proving your point but talking about how to work through the issue.
4. **Be filled with the Spirit** (4:30). Notice that there has been a progression. It is not until you have spoken truth, let go of anger, and started working towards a solution that you can hear the Holy Spirit. Part of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control. It is here that the conflict begins to take a different twist.
5. **Forgive each other** (4:32). As the Spirit fills us, we are able to truly forgive. Ken Sande says, “Unforgiveness is the poison we drink, hoping others will die.”² When we do not forgive, it begins to eat away at us

¹Ken Sande Peacemaker, Baker, Michigan, 2004. Page51

²Ibid, Page208

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”

Ephesians 5:1-2

and allows Satan to drive a wedge further and further between us and our spouse. It is the Spirit that brings us to the point of admitting we were wrong and asking for forgiveness.

6. **Sacrifice self** (5:1-2). Paul tells us to be imitators of Christ to the point of sacrificing ourselves in love. Marriage is no longer two people just living together. It is two people becoming one. Two people setting aside their own desires and differences for the benefit of the one. Conflict is an opportunity to bring a husband and wife back into oneness.

Have you ever considered conflict as a road to oneness? How does this affect your thinking?

This puts conflict into a whole new light. I no longer see conflict as something that comes between my spouse and me. I see it as something that my spouse and I work through together.

Interesting, isn't it? Even in conflict, God designed the marriage to work together.

Another evidence of 1+1=1.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

