

Life Coach: Marriage

Communication, Part 8

Introduction: The final “Golden Rule of Communication” involves our imitation of Christ, our Christlikeness. Ephesians 4:32 specifies that our forgiveness is to mimic that of God—“...even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” Broadening the application, our speech should be godly, like God. Of course, the best way to mimic God is to pattern our speech after that of the Lord Jesus, God in the flesh. The question we ask ourselves is, “What would Jesus say?”

- I. The UPWARD Rule: What would Jesus say?
 - A. Communication in marriage breaks down most easily in times of pressure, stress, conflict, betrayal and denial. Examining the responses of Christ in such a time in His life enables us to determine godly responses to such times in our own lives.
 - B. As a core value, the question “What would Jesus say?” should reflect our automatic responses to pressured situations. In other words, as godliness becomes an inward reality, our responses become consistently Christ-like.
 - C. Those who internalize the principle of mimicking Christ find that, even under pressure, their responses consistently characterize Christ. The rare aberration of lost temper both surprises and disappoints them.
- II. Matthew 26: A Study of Jesus’ Responses When Under Pressure
 - A. Every marriage experiences moments of stress: disagreements, offenses, hurts and even betrayal taint the most sacred of human relationships.
 - B. While Jesus never married, He experienced these shortcomings in His closest human relationships, His relationships with the disciples. In intensity infused moments of His passion, Jesus teaches us how to respond under pressure.
 1. Confrontation (26:21-25)—Jesus predicts his betrayal
 - a. Jesus did not keep the issue of His betrayal “bottled up inside.” Rather, He addressed it directly. Address issues quickly, lest they fester and undermine the relationship.
 - b. Jesus specifically identified the problem (Judas) without bringing unrelated issues into the conversation. In other words, He narrowed his discussion to the key issue at hand.
 - c. Jesus presented His perspective and the consequences of the issue (24). Confrontation is important because if issues are left unaddressed, fearful consequences result in the relationship.
 - d. Jesus led Judas to understand his guilt calmly and rationally without using emotionally charged words (25). Even serious confrontations should be approached as dispassionately as

- possible. Shouting usually results in galvanizing the other party into a defensive position.
2. Intimacy (26:26-30)—In the most pressured moment of His life, Jesus maintained a sense of intimacy with His disciples when He instituted the Lord's Supper.
 - a. Having confronted Judas' duplicity, Jesus did not give up on human relationships. He did not allow one failure, even a major one, to color His thinking about the wonderful possibilities of the relationships He had enjoyed. Some people, disappointed in a relationship, withdraw from relationships altogether.
 - b. The Lord's Supper, sometimes called "communion," represents Christ's ongoing desire for intimate fellowship with His followers—even in the midst of stress, pressure, and devastating disappointment.
 - c. When conflict arises in marriage, the goal should always be restored intimacy—not estrangement, divorce, and dividing of assets.
 - d. Jesus made His personal sacrifice the basis of restored intimacy. He was willing to put His interests last in order to restore relationships. When conflict arises, married partners should be willing to put their interests aside in order to restore intimacy. They should give "whatever it takes" to bring about restoration.
 3. Acceptance (26:31-35)—Under tremendous stress and pressure, Jesus understood the disciples' human weaknesses and faults.
 - a. Jesus not only faced Judas' imminent betrayal, but He also predicted the cowardly denial of Peter.
 - b. Rather than reject them for their failings, Jesus accepted their weaknesses and loved them beyond their imperfections.
 - c. Marriage requires overcoming love—love that accepts faults and failures. Imperfection is the reality of life. Genuine love embraces the whole person, warts and all! It accepts the other for who he/she is.
 4. Correction (26:40-41)—As pressure built toward Jesus' crucifixion, Jesus desired the prayers of those closest to them. The disciples, however, were tired and nodded off when they should have been praying.
 - a. Jesus gently reproved Peter for his sleepiness and indifference to Jesus' plight. His correcting words were gentle and inquisitive—not condemnatory. Jesus did not berate Peter as lazy, careless, indolent, etc.
 - b. Married partners can help each other improve when they demonstrate they have the other's best interests at heart.