

# Expectations, Conflict & Communication

*Understanding and resolving a common marriage problem*

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Words are powerful, important, significant. It was meant to be that way. When we speak, it must be with the realization that God has given our words significance. He has ordained for them to be important. Words were significant at Creation and at the Fall. They are significant to redemption. God has given words value.

Paul Tripp, *War of Words*

We keep bringing in mechanics when what we need are gardeners.

*Peter Senge*

When I have learnt to love God better than my earthly dearest, I shall love my earthly dearest better than I do now. In so far as I learn to love my earthly dearest at the expense of God and *instead* of God, I shall be moving towards the state in which I shall not love my earthly dearest at all. When first things are put first, second things are not suppressed but increased.

*C.S. Lewis*

## Introduction

## Principles

- God \_\_\_\_\_
- There is a direct \_\_\_\_\_ between our hearts and our speech
  - **Winston Smith:** "...finally we must realize that the war against sin is not simply *interpersonal*, but *intrapersonal*. Our first responsibility in battling against sin is in waging war against ourselves..."
- God keeps us in messy [marital] relationships for His \_\_\_\_\_ purposes
- Every time you have \_\_\_\_\_ in marriage there is an opportunity for redemption and glory

- Scripture not only diagnoses our relationships, it also prescribes gospel \_\_\_\_\_ for our relationships

*Exercise:*

1. *One strength*
2. *One weakness*

## Let's talk about relationships

Ephesians 1—3

1. The tendency toward living as if we have the old nature: vs. 17-24
2. The tendency toward \_\_\_\_\_ : vs. 25
3. The tendency toward \_\_\_\_\_ : vs. 26-27
  - a. **Ed Welch:** Anger specializes in indicting others but is unskilled at both self-\_\_\_\_\_ and love.
4. The tendency toward \_\_\_\_\_ : vs. 28
5. The tendency toward unhelpful \_\_\_\_\_ : vs. 29
6. The tendency to \_\_\_\_\_ the Holy Spirit by our words/actions: vs. 30
  - a. **F.F. Bruce:** Conversation that helps to build up the common life in Christ is a congenial instrument for the Holy Spirit to use to this end. On the other hand, conversation (or any other activity) that endangers the unity of the body of Christ 'grieves the Holy Spirit'.

7. The tendency toward \_\_\_\_\_: vs. 31

8. The tendency toward an \_\_\_\_\_ spirit: vs. 32

Here's another way to look at it:

<sup>25</sup> Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

<sup>26</sup> Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

<sup>27</sup> *and give no opportunity to the devil.*

<sup>28</sup> Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

<sup>29</sup> Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

<sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

<sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

<sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Paul gives a command, but he always gives you a motivation...a gospel-centered impulse for our obedience. This helps keep us from legalism.

Three classic marital motivators: threat, guilt, manipulation

THREAT:

GUILT:

MANIPULATION:

Brad Hambrick (Day-to-Day Communication)<http://bradhambrick.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/240-Marital-Conversations.pdf>

## **Expectations in Marriage:**

Where do expectations in marriage come from?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ upbringing
2. \_\_\_\_\_ upbringing
3. \_\_\_\_\_ and disposition
4. Self-\_\_\_\_\_

- the passive husband and the aggressive wife
- the organized person and the disorganized person (ill.: junk drawer)
- the fearful/anxious person and the carefree/impulsive person
- the self-righteous person and the outwardly rebellious person
- the manipulating/controlling and the weak-willed person
- the needy person and the self-centered person
- the doubter/skeptic and the self-assured person

*Brad Hambrick (Celebrating Our Non-Moral Marital Differences)*

## How do expectations morph into ungodly desires?

### 1. James 4:1-10

a. I \_\_\_\_\_

b. I \_\_\_\_\_

c. I \_\_\_\_\_

d. I \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Common desires which go awry

## *Tim Lane & Paul Tripp (Relationships Chart)*

- *What's good about your desires?*
- *What's bad about your desires?*
- *Do you understand your desires?*

## What should you do with unmet expectations?

- Three dynamics
- Questions to ask:
  - Is this expectation of my spouse biblically-informed and mandated or a personal preference?
  - Is this expectation of my spouse unbiblical? If so, it needs to be removed.
  - In this moment, would wisdom demand that I re-calibrate and re-orient my expectation?
  - In this moment, will I choose to walk in the empowering grace of the Holy Spirit to deal the disappointment of my unmet expectation?
  - At the end of the day am I trying to conform my spouse into my image or into the image of Christ?

## Come back together:

These represent relational commitments, not necessarily an order for conflict resolution. When these principles and commitments are in place, the opportunities for godly conflict resolution greatly, significantly increase.

- There must be a fundamental, \_\_\_\_\_ to each other and to the relationship no matter what.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ your love
  
- Set a time that both spouses agree to
  
- Take \_\_\_\_\_ for your words, actions, posture...for how your spouse experienced you
  - **Ed Welch:** Imagine it—reserving our harshest judgment for ourselves. We submit to being judged before we judge.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ that you understand the heart of the problem
  
- Don't use \_\_\_\_\_ grenades
  
- Stay away from \_\_\_\_\_ language
  
- Stay away from \_\_\_\_\_ language
  
- Stay away from \_\_\_\_\_ language

- Reframe your spouse's story/\_\_\_\_\_ and ask for input
- Practice biblical \_\_\_\_\_
- Create a communication \_\_\_\_\_
- Rebuild \_\_\_\_\_
- Build a family \_\_\_\_\_ statement

### **Paul David Tripp:**

I love how shockingly honest the Bible is. It's a book that really doesn't pull any punches. You see, what damages our relationships is not having a realistic acceptance of our own weaknesses and struggles. What damages our relationships is our delusions of perfection and strength! The first step in any kind of change is admitting that change is needed in the first place.

There's a reason you don't have to settle for the relational status quo. There's a reason you don't have to panic. There's a reason you don't have to pack your bags and give up. The cross of Jesus Christ is the epicenter of hope in every relationship. Jesus was willing to face the ultimate in suffering, the rejection of his Father, so that we could experience reconciliation with Him and with one another.

You don't have what it takes to make you and the other person do the right thing, but He does! He is the Prince of Peace and He is able to bring lasting peace to where conflict once reigned. How does He do this? By doing the one thing we can't do for ourselves! He changes our hearts, and the result is radical change in our words and our actions. Look for ways to point the other person to this hope as well.

So be determined. Don't settle for way less than what Jesus suffered and died to give you. Be honest about your relationships and be hopeful about change. You can do both, because in Jesus Christ you really do have everything you need to live in peace with God and the people he has placed in your life.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Tripp, "Relationships: Gaining Ground," February 18, 2013. <https://www.paultripp.com/articles/posts/relationships-gaining-groun>. Accessed 6 November 2017.