

Silence – A Marriage Killer

Many married couples don't know how to communicate effectively with each other. They come home and sit in front of the TV or internet screen, read the newspaper or a book, play video games, work on projects around the house, or spend more time with friends or at work than they do with their spouse. **There may not be complete silence, but there is little or no heart-to-heart connection. When they do talk, it is usually stays at a surface level about news, weather, sports, or the kids.**

That's the way it was with Sue and I during the first half of our married life. When we were dating, we could talk for hours (I still can't imagine how I did it!) about a lot of topics. But after we got married, it seemed that the cares of this world and our children dominated our conversations. I can remember a period of time when we would take walks around our neighborhood just to get away from the distractions of the house and my projects so we could focus on each other. However, the entire walk ended up focusing on our children! We had difficulty resolving conflicts which typically deteriorated quickly to raised voices, arguing, blame shifting, hurt feelings, or me disengaging into silence. The conflicts seldom got resolved, only tolerated or ignored. There were a lot of "elephants" in our house that we just walked around!! The issues kept piling up and our passion and love for each other began to wane.

I was the dominator in our house and Sue said to me later that my size and strong opinions were very intimidating to her. I had to be right and I did not honor, value, or listen to what Sue was trying to tell me. I often regretted not listening to Sue and made a lot of mistakes, but I never could admit that she was right! There was not a safe place for Sue to express herself or just share what was on her heart about our relationship, our boys, finances, or the spiritual atmosphere in our house. I didn't realize until later that my domination was stopping almost all meaningful heart-to-heart conversation and was destroying the trust and intimacy in our marriage.

Another form of silence that will hurt your marriage is not talking with your spouse about important decisions and being in agreement before you make them. Besides talking and praying about decisions together, we also need to bring Father into them. A good marriage requires that we treat each other as equals. Once my left-brain logic finally realized that Sue's opinions and thoughts were valuable and helped me make better decisions, I wanted her to be a part of all the important decision in our lives. We aren't completely there yet, but my goal is to allow Sue to feel safe to share anything she wants without me responding in a negative way or not valuing what she says. I want to create a safe place where there is love, trust, and respect and we can talk about deeper heart issues and resolve conflicts in a healthy way.

John Gray in his book *Mars and Venus in Touch* gives some helpful advice he calls "Duck and Dodge." When our spouse says something that may offend you, hurt your ego (men usually!), create negative emotions or feelings, or just doesn't agree with where you are at, instead of reacting in some negative way, you simply "duck or dodge" it. Like a boxer who ducks those knockout punches, we can respond in love or an opposite spirit and not allow our spouse's words to trigger any negative "buttons" in us. Of course, this is easier said than done and requires us to allow Father to keep filling us with more of His Love!! I've learned this from experience!

Silence can also include keeping things in the dark where Satan can have the legal right to traffic in them. James 5:16 says, “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.” We will not experience deeper intimacy in our marriage until we can be completely transparent with each other with everything in our lives. Praying together and keeping everything out in the open is a great way to keep Satan out of your marriage!

Jimmy Evans in his small booklet, *Stop the Marriage Killers- Silence*, gives this advice on communication that will help you have a thriving marriage that will last for a lifetime:

- ♥ Don't underestimate the significance of silence as a weapon Satan will use to destroy your marriage
- ♥ Your marriage is worth the effort to develop healthy communications
- ♥ Treat each other as complete equals. There should never be a dominator in any area of your life together.
- ♥ Create a safe place where you and your spouse can feel free to bring anything up in a loving and respectful way.
- ♥ Keep the communication lines open and transparent so Satan cannot bring any lies or division and strife into your marriage.

I hope this has been an encouragement for you to continue to work on your communication skills and walk in a deeper level of intimacy and love with your spouse. Remember, we all get to start over again tomorrow!

Dialogue Questions

(Answer each question by writing a letter to your spouse. Then exchange letters and talk about what your spouse wrote.)

1. List three things or areas from your heart that you enjoy talking about with your spouse. For each one describe how that makes you feel.
2. Do I feel safe to share anything with you that is on my heart? What are the most difficult areas for me to share with you? How does that make me feel?

Fun Night Ideas

1. Give each other a massage. If you don't know how, Google on giving massages and read the instructions together. To make it even more enjoyable, get a bottle of massage oil ahead of time! There are all types of massage techniques and styles, so this can become a long-term way to relax and enjoy each other!
2. Have a fondue night. There are lots of great recipes that you can research together on line and pick from for your menu. You don't really need all of the paraphernalia, but it is fun to at least have the long forks and a way to keep the fondue warm.