

MBC MEN'S STUDY

LEADERSHIP 7: MAN AND HIS HOME

CLASS 4: HOW TO RESOLVE CONFLICT IN THE HOME

Before getting into the book, here is the lay out the framework for our five-month men's study class.

- **Jan. 15th:** *The Exemplary Husband* chapters 7-8
- **Feb. 12th:** *The Exemplary Husband* chapters 9-10
- **Mar. 12th:** *The Exemplary Husband* chapter 14
- **Apr 16th:** *The Exemplary Husband* chapters 16-17
- **May 21st:** *The Shepherd Leader at Home* Instructing your family

PURPOSE OF THIS 5 MONTH CLASS

- Why do we want to talk about the man and his home?
- We have talked about many theological and technical subjects over the past couple years, this is where all that knowledge and information has the chance to be lived out.
- While not everyone is called to the elder role in a church, all men are called to live for the glory of God, all husbands and fathers are called to lead, guide, feed and protect their families.
- If you are desiring the office of elder, Paul says in **1 Timothy 3:4-5** "He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)."
- While this applies to those who are elders, there are many other exhortations throughout the Bible which speak of having an organized, peaceful, spiritual and well-ordered home (Deut 6; Pro 24:3-4; Col 3:19; 1 Tim 5:8; Eph 5:25-31).
- Over the course of this class, our hope is that you are going to grow in several key areas of bring a man of God. As you grow in these areas, you are also going to grow in being a husband, a father and a leader of the family. The overall purpose is for your life to bring honor and glory to Christ and to be an example to others.
- This class is going to examine our heart. We want to have a clear definition of what our heart is, the relationship that our heart has with our works and what influences our worship and love.

THE HUSBAND IS TO COMMUNICATE WITH HIS WIFE

- “One of the biggest obstacles to a good marriage is poor communication.”¹
- Since I believe the vast majority of conflicts in a marriage come from poor communication, I have put these two categories together, communication and conflict resolution.
- Your marriage (and every other relationship you have) runs with communication. You must be able to communicate with people in order for anything at any time to get done.
- A lack of communication or poorly communicated words will not only have detrimental effects in the immediate context, but they will also plant seeds which will slowly grow over time.
- You will not be able to love, lead or learn your wife if you are not willing to properly communicate with her.
- As communication is a fruit issue, you will be able to quickly tell what is going on in your heart as you are communicating with your wife.
- To “fix” communication issues, one must be willing to do the heart work that is necessary.

HOW GOD VIEWS COMMUNICATION²

- As with anything that we do in this life, we always want to first look at what the Bible has to say about it. If we strive to align ourselves with what the Bible says, it shows we are seeking to please God above anything else.

Our inner hearts are revealed by our prevailing words.

- **Matthew 12:34** “You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? **For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.**”
- This is why we spend so much time on heart issues. If you are able to make sure your heart is guarded (**Pro. 4:23**), then you are more than likely to speak in such a way that is God honoring.
- Whenever you hear things coming out of your mouth (or writing online, or even thinking), you must realize that there is something else that is going on. It’s not just your words that should give you a moment of pause, but where those words are coming from.
- If we have idols ruling in our hearts, they are going to ruling our tongues as well.
- We must keep a close watch on our hearts so that they are clean before the Lord.
- The interesting thing is, if we are watching our hearts, we are not worried so much about what’s coming out of our mouths.
- If we are filling ourselves with Scripture, prayer and fellowship, that’s what will come out.

¹ Scott, *Exemplary Husband*, 227.

² Ibid. pp 228-229

- Colossians 3:16 “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”
- This is a common verse; I hope you’ve heard it a lot. The words of Christ (a.k.a. the Bible) needs to dwell within us...not just dwell but *richly dwell*.
- The verb used for “dwell” is used metaphorically to mean *to well in one and influence him for good*.
 - This word is only used 5 times and is always linked to something (faith) or someone (the Holy Spirit) that is actually *in* someone and causes them to do good (Rom. 8:11; 2 Cor 6:16; 2 Tim 1:5; 2 Tim 1:14).
 - The linking is quite interesting, the Word, saving faith and the Holy Spirit. These three things should be filling us and are linked with one another.
- In other words, the Bible recognizes that there is going to be something dwelling inside of you. There is no getting away from it. You either have idols or Scripture. You either have selfish motivations or you have God’s desires on your mind.
- The only thing that can dwell in you and have a good influence is the Word of God.
- Psalm 119:11 “Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.”
- If you are not treasuring God’s Word in our heart, you will fall prey to sinful speech. Notice what the author says...it’s a sin against God. When you speak sinfully, you are not just hurting the person in front of you, you are also actively coming against God.
- What does your heart treasure? What are you storing up in your heart that will come out when you speak?
- This is why we spent the whole first class talking about worshipping Christ only and how we are to diagnose the idols of our hearts.
- If we don’t do these things with all diligence, we are not going to be able to communicate with our wives as we are commanded to do so.

Strive to control your speech.

- James 3:2 “For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.”
- “Anyone who can control the most difficult problem of all, the use of his tongue, ought to be able to control everything else. If the greater, then the lesser.”³
- “With respect to one’s own affairs in life, if the tongue is controlled, general self-control will be the result. James asserted that controlled speech enables one to guide the whole body by the maturity of faith (cf. 1:26). The power of faith to bridle the tongue conveys a power to guide the activities of the body (as with

³ Jay E. Adams, *Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, and Jude, The Christian Counselor’s Commentary* (Cordova, TN: The Institute for Nouthetic Studies, 2020), 190.

the horse or ship, vv. 3–4). The sense of “guide” here is important, for it not only implies the curbing of evil action but also the directing of the body into good action.”⁴

- How do we know that James is not talking about sinless perfection in this verse? He starts by saying *for we all stumble in many ways*.
- We can be in control of what we do and don’t say, as Scott says, *it is a great virtue in God’s sight*.
- Our words are either going to bring God glory or shame. The communication between you and your wife is not just between you and your wife. No matter what, the Lord is always there.
- I believe that when James uses the word *perfect*, he is talking about a mature person in the faith.
- You can tell how mature someone is in the faith by the words they are using. Not so much the theological terminology, but how and what are they communicating.
- The more mature man has more of the Word of God in him so therefore more of the Word of God is going to come out of him.
- It is God alone who has given us the power to be able to bridle our tongue and have control over it.
- The reckless evil which seems to come out of our mouths can come under control. If you are not willing to do it with the Holy Spirit, that evil tongue will soon control you.

6 PREREQUISITES TO GOOD COMMUNICATION⁵

- I believe that Scott does an excellent job of talking about the heart attitudes of someone who desires to have good communication. He does this before getting into the actual communication itself.
- We must always be working on ourself in these areas if we expect to communicate well, especially when there is conflict involved. If you are not always ready, then when the war comes, you are going to fall back to what you know.

A husband must want to please God more than anything else.

- This goes back, once again, to our very first lesson. Your heart must be set on Christ and making much of Him as the focus of your life.
- 2 Corinthians 5:9 “Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.”
- This means that your speech should be pleasing to God. If you are constantly seeking to please the Lord, your speech is going to show that.

⁴ Kurt A. Richardson, *James*, vol. 36, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 148.

⁵ Scott, pp. 230-233.

A husband must be humble.

- **Philippians 2:3** “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves...”
- When you speak, are you trying to just get your own point across, not really listening to what is being said by the other person?
- Are you patient, waiting to hear the full conversation before answering or saying anything?
- Are you filtering what is being said through your own lens and not hearing what your wife is actually saying to you?

A husband must know they are accountable to God for every word spoken.

- **Matthew 12:26** “But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.”
- This is a hard one to remember when we are driven by our emotions and not by the Spirit. Even if nobody else hears what or how you speak, the Lord hears.
- He is not just hearing, but He is taking a record of it. You may not pay the penalty today, but you will be held accountable on judgment day.

A husband must know how to listen.

- **James 1:19** “This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger...”
- **Proverbs 18:13** “He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him.”
- If you are to communicate well, you must listen well. When things start to heat up in an argument or if someone gets their feelings hurt, we start to just want to talk.
- When we talk too much, it may communicate that we think we have the only important things to say.
- It can show the other person that they are not valued and their thoughts are not significant.
- If a husband can't listen well he will more than likely quickly jump to conclusions about what is being said and make rash and unwise decisions.
- **Proverbs 29:20** “Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”

A husband must know that communication is more than words.

- **Proverbs 15:1** “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”
- There are certainly times when hard things have to be said, but they need to be said in a loving way.
- A gentle answer means not throwing your arms around or making other gestures. These gestures give away what is really going on in your heart.
- If you are looking to keep the conversation civil, then a gentle answer is the only way you can answer.

- If you are just looking for a fight, then your words are going to be harsh and communicate that you really are not interested in talking, just letting your thoughts out.
- Some areas that Scott points out that all husbands should work on:
 - The volume of his voice.
 - The tone of his voice.
 - Facial expressions.
 - Hand gestures.
 - Sighing, or in some cases, snorting.
 - Rolling of the eyes.
 - A look of either amazement or disgust.
 - Their body posture
- Communication also involves deeds, the things that we do either to, or for one another.
- It is like the old saying, *actions speak louder than words*. If you tell your wife one thing and then act in a completely different way, she is going to believe your actions...not your words.
- We must be willing to do what is right and make sure our actions align with our words.

A husband must put forth effort in his communication skills.

- **Romans 12:10-12** “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer...”
- This is, without a doubt, the top thing which husbands say *I am not a good communicator*.
- As if by saying that you will either be off the hook for having to communicate or your marriage will all of a sudden blossom because of your admission.
- “A husband who is self-serving will most likely not communicate well.” (Scott)
- Notice what Paul says in Romans 12, be devoted to another.
 - While this word is not in the context of the family, its common usage means *the mutual love of parents and children and wives and husbands*.
 - It also means *loving affection, prone to love, loving tenderly*.
- To be devoted to your wife is to love her tenderly, not make excuses. It is to also *give preference* to her.
 - This means *one going before another as an example of deference, to go before as a leader. To prefer someone over yourself*.
 - This is saying that husbands must die to self and show by example what that means.
 - You can't expect to not communicate with your wife simply because you are tired or for any other reason. Your wife needs to communicate with you; therefore, you must communicate with her.
- This may not be something which comes naturally or easily, but it is something that you can do.

- It has to do with what our hearts desire, to love our wife or to serve ourselves.

FOUR RULES OF COMMUNICATION (EPHESIANS 4:25-32)⁶

Good relationships don't happen automatically! Neither are they immune from problems. **All men are sinners Romans 3:10-12, 23) meaning they are selfish and finite — and that's all it takes to set the stage for conflicts.** Take heart! Good marriages and solid lasting relationships can be built by people who know Jesus Christ and follow His principles for communication, especially as they relate to problem solving. In Ephesians 4:22-24 Paul stresses the importance of laying aside the "old self" and its way of doing things and putting on the "new self," which is God's way of handling matters.

1. BE HONEST (V. 25)

A. Speak

- 1) Greek imperative- i.e. a command- "You speak!"
- 2) People cannot read our minds. "For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him?" (1 Corinthians 2:11).
- 3) Clamming up is out for the Christian!

B. Speak truth

- 1) "Speaking the truth" in 4:15 is a verb that involves continuous action. We're to always speak truth!
- 2) Examples of dishonesty
 - a) Outright deceit
 - b) Incongruency: when "halo" communication and "content" communication conflict
 - c) Disguised communication: when the real message is masked; innuendo.
 - d) Honesty is more than not lying—it is being open and truthful.
 - e) "Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices" (Col. 3:9)

C. Speak the truth lovingly (4:15)

- 1) You can be brutal with the truth!
- 2) Christians are to speak the truth with the other person's best interests in mind. Care must be given to not only what you say but also how you say it. (e.g. tone of voice; volume; facial expressions, etc.)
- 3) "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned as it were with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person" (Colossians 4:6).

⁶ <https://ibcd.org/four-rules-of-communication/>

2. KEEP CURRENT (VV. 26, 27)

A. "Be angry and yet do not sin...do not let the sun go down on your anger."

B. Failure to solve each day's problems that day means you are:

- 1) Guilty of sin - you're commanded to do it!
- 2) Opening the way to resentment and hatred
- 3) Distorting subsequent problem⁵
- 4) Endangering your sexual relationship

C. "Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:34).

3. ATTACK PROBLEMS – NOT PEOPLE (VV. 26, 27)

A. "Unwholesome words" ("corrupt communication" – KJV)

- 1) by-passes the real issue
- 2) zeroes in on the person's character (cf. Matthew 5:21-22)
- 3) tears down or rips apart (cf. James 3:5-12)
- 4) grieves the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30)

B. "Edifying" communication

- 1) encourages or builds up
- 2) zeros in on the real issue
- 3) centers on personal responsibility (cf. Matthew 7:1 f f).
- 4) gives "grace" (i.e. the desire and ability to do God's will) to those who hear.

4. ACT! DON'T REACT! (VV. 31-32)

A. Reaction (v. 31) – attitudes and actions you must "put off" completely

- 1) Bitterness – the inability to treat someone as if they never hurt you
- 2) Wrath – flaring outbursts of rage
- 3) Anger – settled indignation of hostility that frequently seeks revenge; the "slow burn"

- 4) Clamor – harsh contention and strife; public quarreling; brawling
- 5) Slander – speech that injures; abusive speech
- 6) Malice – the desire to harm others or to see others suffer

B. Actions (v. 32) – attitudes and actions you must “put on” to replace the reactions

- 1) Kind – benevolent; helpful; courteous
- 2) Tenderhearted – lit. “of good heartedness”; compassionate; sympathetic
- 3) Forgiving – to pass over an offense and to free the offender from the consequences of it.
 - “just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” i.e.:
 - Firstly: before you confessed
 - Freely: without merit on your part
 - Fully: for every offense

C. Arguments are possible only if there are two people who react.

CONCLUSION

- 1) Changing habits is not easy but can be done (1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 4:13)! It is much easier than the “way of the transgressor” (Proverbs 13:15b KJV).
- 2) No matter how ungodly others are in their attitudes and actions, you must communicate biblically!
Their sin does not justify your sin!!

CHAPTER 17: CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- Once we have our hearts in a place that we are ready to communicate, what do we do when conflict in our marriage comes.
- “Any Christian couple can learn to dwell together in unity. I am not saying that Christian couples will always see *everything* eye to eye or even *never* offend on another. What I am saying is that true Christians can learn how to keep from fighting with one another.”
- I think this is very helpful. It is not as if conflict or other issues are not going to come up in marriage. What Scott is saying is our fighting comes when we do not respond well to the conflict
- What is conflict? It is when both people are actively involved against each another. Scott says “when both parties sin against one another (in their communication and/or their actions) and are then in opposition to one another.”

What does the Bible say about conflict?

- Ephesians 4:1-3 “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”
- When Paul commands the church to *walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called*, he then describes what that looks like.
- We are to be humble, gentle, patient and show tolerance in love for each other.
- He also says *being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*.
- God does not like conflict, especially when it is between two of His children.
- Do you see what Paul *does not say*? We are not to look for ways to have unity...but we are united by the fact that we are called into salvation.
- We are to **preserve** that unity in the bond of peace.
- It is when we forget that we are children of God that we start to have conflict.
- When our own desires become the ruling desires we will most definitely have conflict with each other.
- If we have the mind of God then we will do all we can to preserve the unity that He established by bringing us into His family.
- 1 Corinthians 10:32 “Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God...”

Why do we have conflict?

- James 4:1-3 “What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.”
- This passage describes the root cause of conflict in each person...conflict comes when we have unmet desires which originate in our hearts.
- While conflict always involve more than just you, conflict comes when we have set an expectation in our own heart and that expectation is not met.
- **A common question:** what about when I have done nothing wrong and conflict comes upon me?
 - Many people believe that they have a “right” to respond to someone when they have not been talked to with “respect.”
 - This idea is still an unmet expectation in one’s heart. You “expect” to be talked to in a certain way and when that does not happen, you respond sinfully in anger or shouting.
 - While how the other person has talked to you or treated you may not be kind at all, you may still have expectations in your heart, which when not met, are exposed through your sinful response.

- Speaking on James 4:1-3 “At the very bottom, after all else has been scraped off, James sees the desire for pleasure as the cause (vv. 1, 2). These desires for pleasure, literally translated, are “soldiering” or “campaigning” in one’s bodily members. That is, they are in full muster and are prepared to fight to obtain the pleasures your counselee desires. **The warfare, then, begins within.**”⁷
- The war over our heart is *always* taking place. There is never a time that you are not in the battle for how you are going to act, react and respond as a Christian.
- **“So to sum up, outer quarrels among Christians come from losing battles within.** Once again James takes an inside view of man. James does this, as before when dealing with temptation, **to expose the dynamic at work so that you will know where to aim your efforts to rectify the situation. It is within that the first and foremost change must begin.** One must realize his sin, confess it and seek God’s forgiveness (and the forgiveness of those he has offended) and then, after reconciliation, begin to put on the new, biblical, righteous ways outlined in the Scriptures.”⁸
- **We have conflict on the outside because we are allowing sin to dominate on the inside.** Every conflict that you have had, either good or bad, can be traced back to some expectation which has not been met.
- Even in a positive setting, when someone does not meet the expectations at work, they must be confronted, told they are not doing what is expected, be told again what is expected and then either trained in how to do their job or possibly let go.
- When someone sins, we are told in **Galatians 6:1** “**Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.**”
- That is a command from Paul, *you go and restore the sinning brother!* That means that Paul is commanding Christians to go into conflict.
- Conflict is not to be avoided but to be done in a Biblical and loving manner.
- So, we have conflicts because of our own expectations not being met or because someone else has not met the expectations which were set out for them, and we need to correct them.
- **Conflict can also arise because a husband and wife are just so different, and they may have nothing in common with each other.**
- “Having little in common does mean, however, that you must work to know one another well, appreciate one another and see things from one another’s perspective.”⁹
- This is not a time for husbands to back down and throw themselves more into their work or other hobbies.

⁷ Jay E. Adams, Hebrews, James, I & II Peter, and Jude, *The Christian Counselor’s Commentary* (Cordova, TN: The Institute for Nouthetic Studies, 2020), 200.

⁸ Ibid. p. 201

⁹ Scott, 244.

- This is a time to strive to get to know their wife better and learn about her from different perspectives.
- “Husbands, *you* must take the lead in this endeavor if there are significant differences between you both.”¹⁰
- This will take time, especially if you have a long history of poor leadership in your marriage.
- I think that it’s important to note what Scott says on page 244:
 - “One of the things that can help very differing spouses the most is growth in God’s Word. The more we have God’s Word in common as husbands and wives, the more we will agree. The more each mind is renewed (changed) by Scripture, the more similarly a couple will think (Rom 12:2). One of the worst things a couple can do is work to change one another into each other’s likeness. They are to be changed, rather, into Christ’s likeness.”

A Biblical way to resolve conflict.¹¹

- Confess any sin to God.
- Go to your wife, ask forgiveness for each thing you did specifically and discuss your plan not to do those things again.
- Express a desire to resolve the conflict fully and when you are both free to do so.
- Come together at your appointed time.
- Pray together for God’s wisdom, self-control and speech.
- Review God’s rules for communication.
 - Be a good listener...Speak the truth...Speak in love...Speak with God’s purposes, not your own.
 - Speak as clearly as possible.
- Each one should take a turn to confess any sin that has not been yet confessed and ask forgiveness.
- Begin discussing the issues that precipitated the conflict.
 - There should be a desire from both people to reach a point of unity concerning the issue. This may take some time and research, **but you can’t move forward with communication until you can both agree on what the issue(s) are.**
 - Is it a preference issue? (Philippians 2:3-5)
 - Is it a sin issue? (Ephesians 4:22-24)
 - Is it a conscience issue? (Romans 14:23)
 - Is it a wisdom issue? (Proverbs 2:3-6)
- Avoiding and resolving conflict takes repeated practice and a constant monitoring of our own thoughts, intentions, desires and expectations.
- If we always have God’s glory as our goal, we are not going to stray off His ways.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid. pp. 254-