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Communication: Necessary Experience

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Communication is the key to any relationship. Communication must be a two-way street with *give and take* by both parties. Both people in a relationship must share themselves. If your partner communicates her thoughts, feelings, desires, etc., but you don't, you have something to build a relationship on, but she is left in the dark. She doesn't have much hope of being able to understand you.

Both partners must receive the communication also. It is quite possible to hear the words of your partner without really listening with mind and heart to what he is saying and what he is implying.

One of the most important things for a couple to communicate to each other is feelings. Feelings are. Period. And they must be accepted as such. Many people never really understand this. You cannot change your feelings because your partner doesn't like them or because you feel you ought to. You can only attempt to hide them from yourself and others often times with disastrous results.

Emotions and their feelings were given to you by God as mechanisms to help you understand yourself and each other better. They enable you to better experience your world. They come in all types. One of the basic qualities of a good, loving relationship between two people is the ability to accept, at face value, and communicate your feelings and your partner's. This can be very hard to do, particularly when the issues concerned are painful and sensitive to you (anger, resentment, fear, humiliation, sorrow, passion, tenderness, joy). Often under these

circumstances it is a good idea to write your feelings down in love letters to each other. It is important that there be ground rules for these letters.

Rule number one is to share your feelings. Together pick out a question or statement to write on and each write a letter to the other about the way you feel about it. You are analyzing *your* feelings first and putting them on paper. This is hard when you are not used to doing it and takes practice.

As you write, you must keep remembering that the point of this communication is to share the feelings. You can tell you have written down a feeling by trying to substitute the words "are" or "think" for the word "feel" in your sentence. If you can substitute "are" or "think", what you have written is a thought, not a true feeling.

Example 1: "I feel intense burning anger and frustration, as if a door were slammed in my face when you don't communicate with me. I feel as if you are coldly shutting me out." (These are feelings.)

Example 2: "I feel you coldly shut me out of your world a lot of the time." (This is not a feeling since "think" can be substituted for "feel.")

Rule number two: There can be no condemning, blaming or criticizing of the other person. These *are* and *should be* your feelings. Your partner is not responsible for them—you are.

Example 1: "I feel suspicious and doubt your faithfulness when you come home late and don't tell me where you've been." (This writer accepts responsibility for his own feelings.)

Example 2: "You drive me crazy with doubts. You come home late and won't tell me where you've been." (This writer is blaming his partner for his feelings.)

Many times, because you have never shared feelings like this before and they have remained unaccepted and bottled up inside you, they can be startlingly intense. It is easy to lose your rationality concerning them. That's why letters to each other can be helpful so the tendency to jump in and criticize or defend, etc. (as frequently happens when you are face-to-face), does not get in the way of getting the feelings out in the open.

After you have written the love letters, come together and exchange them. Read each other's feelings and then talk over what you have discovered about yourself and each other. The same rules apply during the discussion period: express your feelings and accept responsibility for them; don't criticize your partner. The object of the whole process is to understand each other better, not to judge. This enhanced understanding of each other can solve problems, reconcile differences, and lead to a richer, more loving relationship.

The reason for writing your feelings down first is twofold. First, it gives you an opportunity to sort through your emotions and discover what you are feeling, clarifying these as you write about them. Second, it gives you an opportunity to get a hold on the expression of your emotions.

Once you are talking with each other, it is important not to allow your emotions to boil over and spew out at your partner. If you feel

anger express it—but not as an instrument of war. Don't strike out verbally (or physically). You can say, "I feel anger churning up my insides when you say that," without blaming your partner for your feelings. The difference is in your attitude.

A physical technique to help avoid the arousal of anger is to hold hands and look at each other directly when you're talking. Another technique which forestalls anger and helps each of you to understand yourselves and each other better is to pursue why you feel angry at something your partner has said. The answer lies within you. Finding the answer can sometimes dissipate the present emotion, but even more, you may not become angry over that topic again. As an example, your mother may have habitually used the same phrase that your wife just did as a technique to shut off communications, and you're still reacting to that phrase because of your early experience.

First you must accept your own feelings, and then you can begin to try to accept the other person's feelings. He has dared to share his heartfelt feelings with you—because he loves you. This is not an easy task for those of us who were not brought up in an atmosphere of freely-communicated feelings (which very few of us are these days). It takes lots of practice. But, believe me, it's worth the effort expended! Our society is highly intellectual these days which is very sad, for few of us ever get to learn how to freely accept and share our feelings. But the ability to do this can be learned. The rewards are immeasurable! A relationship evolves of real love and acceptance of yourself and your loved one. You two have created a special, safe, warm, understanding place between the two of you when you share intimate parts of yourselves. (Even when feelings are painful, it always helps to share.)

Just remember it's OK to feel: to laugh, to cry, to hug, to touch, to

be angry, to be passionate, to be tender, etc. And it's wonderful to reach out and share these feelings. So reach out and experience communication.

Questions for Love Letters

Here are some topics which arouse strong feelings and so are good ones to write love letters on: Money, health, time, work, rest, sexual relations, marriage, children, relatives, relationship to God, atmosphere in the home, death.

Here are some sample questions to help you understand how to word the questions you write about:

What are my feelings about your death?

How does the presence of God in our relationship make me feel?

How does my attitude about our material possessions make me feel?

How do I feel when I want to have sex and you say "no." (Partner writes on: How do I feel when you want to have sex and I say "no.")«

PRESENCE from page 10.

Often our human and personal hopes and purposes which we have planned and cherished for years are shattered on the rocks of evolutionary reality and transmuted into the larger and wiser objectives of spirit determination. Sometimes we are constrained to do things which we would most wish to avoid. Like Moses who lacked public speaking abilities was nonetheless required to become a speaker and teacher, so we often find it necessary to engage in activities where our talents are marginal. The important thing is that we are sensitive to the leading of the spirit and have the courage to act in conformity with that guidance. Ours is the responsibility to act; the results are in larger hands. And history demonstrates that God can use very mediocre talent to accomplish great things. "Service--more service, increased service, difficult service, adventurous ser-

vice, and at last divine and perfect service—s the goal of time and the destination of space." (316:4/ 28.6.17) It is through such service that we human beings fulfill our deepest needs and longings, discover happiness, and come closest to greatness.

The presence of God is most effectively experienced in action—service. Our lives find meaning and purpose through action. Seldom have the people of this planet had greater opportunities for significant service which will effect future generations than now. Let us unite in spreading the message of the fifth epochal revelation which promises to precipitate one of our world's "most amazing and enthralling epochs of social readjustment, moral quickening, and spiritual enlightenment." (2082:7/ 195.9.2) And I would now ask you, even as I ask myself: What are you doing to contribute to this new age?«

KEY from page 6.

zation and preservation of peaceful relations with all people; the service of the needy and socially down-trodden groups of men; etc. Everyone has a collection of such insights into the dimensions of the will of God for mankind. Each man can mirror God in his own way.

Life is not a win/lose, or even a win/win, situation; it is an ALL-win situation in which every creature has a unique place in the unfolding of evolutionary reality. The existence of other unique beings does not lead to a competitive scenario. Each unique being has its select point and process in the life of the Father's projected plan. Everyone has a perfectable, singular though interrelated purpose and destiny.

Now I would like to share another idea which has had a major and vision-clearing impact on me. Jesus put it so clearly: "Although this gospel of the kingdom never fails to bring peace to the soul of the individual believer, it will not bring peace on earth until man is willing to believe my teaching whole-

See KEY on page 22.