



LESS *is more*

Say Less. Mean More. Leave It in Their Court.

*"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."
Proverbs 15:1*

Sometimes Less Isn't Just More... It's Clearer.

When we're hurt, disappointed, frustrated, or feel misunderstood, our natural instinct is to explain.

We tell our spouse:

- what they did,
- why it hurt,
- how long it's been happening,
- what they should have done differently,
- what they need to change,
- and sometimes even what we think they were thinking.

Our intentions are usually good. We want to be understood. We want them to "get it." We want to prevent it from happening again. We want them to understand our heart. But something else often happens. Instead of listening...

Our spouse begins preparing a defense. They stop hearing our heart and start looking for something to argue with. Before long, the conversation has shifted from understanding to defending.

The Less Is More Principle

One of the simplest communication tools I teach is this: **Say less.**

Not because your feelings don't matter. Not because you should keep quiet. But because fewer words often carry more weight. Sometimes the most powerful message is only two or three words.

Instead of talking for five minutes... simply say,

"That hurt." Then... **stop.**

Two Simple Pictures That Help Me Remember This Principle

Whenever I'm tempted to explain just a little more, these two pictures come to mind. They've helped me communicate more effectively in my own marriage, and I hope they'll help you too.

1. Don't Water Down Your Message

Imagine pouring yourself a glass of fresh lemonade on a hot summer day. It's full of flavor—sweet, refreshing, and just right.

Now imagine adding one glass of water. It still tastes pretty good.

Add another. Then another. Before long, the lemonade barely tastes like lemonade anymore.

Our words can do the same thing. Every extra explanation, every justification, and every attempt to convince has the potential to dilute the heart of our message. The longer we explain, defend, lecture, or justify ourselves, the easier it becomes for our spouse to focus on one small detail instead of hearing our heart.

The message that started out clear becomes diluted. Don't water down your message by adding too many words.

Keep it simple. Keep it clear. Keep it strong.

2. Leave It in Their Court

Now imagine you're playing tennis. You hit the ball over the net. It's now in your spouse's court.

Your job isn't to run across the net and hit it again. You don't chase after the ball. You don't grab it back. You don't explain why you hit it where you did. You simply step back and let your spouse decide what to do with it.

Communication works much the same way. Your responsibility is to communicate your experience honestly, respectfully, and clearly.

Your spouse's responsibility is deciding what to do with what you've shared. But here's what so many of us do... We keep explaining.

We walk into their court. We pick up the ball. We hit it again. We explain it in a different way. We hit it again. Before long, we're the only one playing the match. If you keep hitting the ball, your spouse never gets a chance to return it. And if they never get a chance to return it, they'll never have the opportunity to really think about what you've said or reflect on their own behavior.

Instead... Hit the ball once. **Leave it in their court.** Trust that you've done your part. Give your spouse the opportunity to think, process, and respond in their own time.

Communication isn't about winning the point. It's about making sure your message gets across the net. It's about being understood.

Once you've spoken your truth with kindness and respect, trust that you've done your part. Sometimes silence gives people room to hear what a long explanation never could.

Simple Statements That Carry Weight

When Something Hurts

- That hurt.
- That was painful.
- That stung.
- I felt hurt.
- That was hard to hear.
- That affected me.

When Something Feels Disrespectful

- That felt disrespectful.
- That was rude.
- That wasn't kind.
- I don't feel respected.
- That didn't sit well with me.

When You Feel Ignored

- I don't feel heard.
- I don't feel understood.
- I feel dismissed.
- I feel overlooked.
- I needed you to hear me.

When Trust Is Damaged

- That makes trusting harder.
- My trust took a hit.
- That concerns me.
- I'm struggling with that.
- That doesn't feel safe.

When Boundaries Are Crossed

- That's not okay with me.
- I'm uncomfortable with that.
- That crossed a line.
- I need something different.
- I can't agree with that.

When You're Disappointed

- I'm disappointed.
- I expected something different.
- I'm sad this happened.
- That wasn't what I hoped for.

When You're Feeling Alone

- I feel alone.
- I miss us.
- I don't feel connected.
- I need more from us.
- I need your support.

When the Conversation Is Escalating

- I need a pause.
- I'm becoming overwhelmed.
- Let's come back to this later.
- I don't want us to fight.
- I need a few minutes.

What If They Want to Argue?

Sometimes your spouse will immediately respond with:

"You're too sensitive."

"That's ridiculous."

"Give me an example."

"You're overreacting."

This is where many of us make the mistake of trying harder. We assume that if we just explain it one more way, they'll finally understand. So... We explain. We defend. We give examples. We try to convince them.

Instead... Stay with your original message.

"I understand you see it differently."

"That was my experience."

"I've shared what I needed to share."

"I'll let you think about that."

Then stop. Remember...the goal isn't to win the conversation. The goal is to communicate clearly.

The Difference Between Explaining and Communicating

Many people believe that if they just explain it better, their spouse will finally understand. Sometimes that's true. Often it isn't.

The more emotional we become, the more words we use. The more words we use, the easier it becomes for our spouse to focus on one sentence instead of hearing our heart.

A simple statement allows your message to land without overwhelming the other person. A clear message is powerful. Too many words can water it down.

Practice Exercise

Here are a few lengthy explanations written into one simple statement.

Instead of:

"You embarrassed me in front of everyone tonight. You always joke like that, and you know I hate it. I don't understand why you keep doing this."

Try:

"That embarrassed me."

Instead of:

"I can't believe you forgot again. It makes me feel like I don't matter to you."

Try:

"I felt unimportant."

Instead of:

"You never listen when I'm talking."

Try:

"I don't feel heard."

Instead of:

"I wish you would stop interrupting me every time I start talking."

Try:

"I don't feel heard."

Coaching Reminder

When you're hurt, your instinct may be to explain. When you're frustrated, your instinct may be to convince. When you're afraid of being misunderstood, your instinct may be to keep talking. Instead...

Pause. Choose one simple sentence. Say it with kindness and confidence. Then stop.

Leave it in their court, giving your spouse the opportunity to think about what you've shared, process it, and decide how they want to respond.

Sometimes the most powerful conversations begin after we've stopped talking.

Less is More

Sometimes less isn't just more...
It's clearer.

Don't water down your message by adding too many words. A clear message is powerful. Too many words can water it down.

Short words. Calm voice. Leave it in their court.

Because the goal isn't to say everything. The goal is to say what matters.



Trust that God can often do more with one honest sentence than we can accomplish with a hundred anxious words. Speak the truth in love. Then trust God with the rest.

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