

## **COMMUNICATION COVENANT\***

This covenant will be read together each Sunday, and then we will ask one another in what way can we improve our application of this covenant in our daily life.

1. We will express irritations and annoyances we have with one another in a loving, specific, and positive way rather than holding them in or being negative in general.
  - a. I will acknowledge that I have a problem rather than stating you are doing such and such.
  - b. I will not procrastinate by waiting for the right time to express irritations or annoyances.
  - c. I will pinpoint to myself the reason for my annoyances. I will ask myself why I feel irritation or annoyance over this problem.
2. We will not exaggerate or attack the other person during the course of a disagreement.
  - a. I will stick with the specific issue.
  - b. I will take several seconds to formulate my words so that I can be accurate.
  - c. I will consider the consequences of what I say before I say it.
  - d. I will not use the words *always, all the time, everyone, nothing*, etc.
3. We will attempt to control the emotional level and intensity of arguments (no yelling, uncontrollable anger, hurtfulness).
  - a. We will take time-outs for calming down if either of us feels that our own anger is starting to elevate too much. The minimum amount of time for a time-out will be one minute and the maximum, ten minutes. The person who needs a greater amount of time in order to calm down will be the one to set the time limit. During the time-out each person, in writing, will first of all define the problem that is being discussed. Second, the areas of agreement in the problem will be listed. Third, the areas of disagreement will be listed, and fourth, three alternate solutions to this problem will be listed. When we come back together the person who has been the most upset will express to the other individual, "I'm interested in what you've written during our time-out. Will you share yours with me?"
  - b. Before I say anything, I will decide if I would want this same statement said to me with the same words and tone of voice.
4. We will "never let the sun go down on our anger" or never run away from each other during an argument.
  - a. I will remind myself that controlling my emotional level will get things resolved quicker and make one less inclined to back off from the problem.
  - b. I am willing to make a personal sacrifice.
  - c. I will not take advantage of my mate by drawing out the discussion. If we have discussed an issue for 15 minutes, then at that time we will take a time-out and put into practice the written procedure discussed under #3.

5. We will both try hard not to interrupt the other person when he/she is talking (as a result of this commitment, there will be no need to keep reminding the other person of his/her responsibility, especially during an argument).
  - a. I will consider information that will be lost by interrupting the other person.
  - b. It is important that the person talking should be concise and to the point.
  - c. I will remember that the person who was interrupted won't be able to listen as well as possible if I had waited for my turn.
  - d. I will put into practice Proverbs 18:13 and James 1:19.  
Prov 18:13—He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him.  
Jas 1:19—Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;
6. We will carefully listen to the other person when he/she is talking (rather than spending that time thinking up a defense).
  - a. If I find myself formulating my response while the other person is talking, I will say, "Please stop and repeat what you said because I was not listening, and I want to hear what you were sharing."
  - b. If we are having difficulty hearing one another, then when a statement is made, we will repeat back to the other person what we heard and what we thought he/she was feeling.
7. We will not toss in past failures of the other person in the course of an argument.
  - a. I will remind myself that a past failure has been discussed and forgiven. True forgiveness means it will not be brought up to the person again.
  - b. I will remind myself that bringing up a past failure cripples the other person from growing and developing.
  - c. If I catch myself bringing up a past failure, I will ask the other person's forgiveness. Then I will state what it is that I am desirous that the other person will do in the future, and I will commit myself to this behavior.
8. When something is important enough for one person to discuss, it is that important for the other person.
  - a. If I have difficulty wanting to discuss what the other person desires to discuss, I will say, "I know this topic is important to you, and I do want to hear this even though it is a bit difficult for me."
  - b. In implementing this agreement and all the principles of communication in this covenant we will eliminate outside interferences to our communication such as the radio on, television, reading books on our lap, etc. We will look at one another and hold hands during our discussion times.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Husband's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Wife's signature \_\_\_\_\_

[\* *After You Say I Do*, by H. Norman Wright, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR, p79]