

“Taking Time to Talk: Communication in Marriage”

David J. Torres

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For further information, write:
BYU Women’s Conference
253 Harman Continuing Education Building
Provo, Utah 84602
801-422-7692
Email: womens_conference@byu.edu
Website: womensconference.byu.edu

When I first met María Luisa, I was certain that this was someone I wanted to get to know better. So what did I do? Well, I determined that I needed to do everything in my power to get to learn everything I could about her.

I had been on a two-year mission and I could see that living with a woman had to be better than living with a man. So that meant I would go out with her every weekend. Not just once, but all three days: Friday, Saturday and Sunday; and on the weekdays I’d call her up to talk to her. This was because I needed to get to know her well. I needed to talk to her. I wanted to learn everything I could about her.

Well, it didn’t take long before I knew she was the one for me. Three weeks later I asked her to marry me, and surprisingly, she agreed. That was June and we were married three months later on the 6th of September, forty-five years ago in the Los Angeles Temple. It seems like yesterday in many ways, but we both learned that we still needed and even now need to learn about and from one other.

However, even though we were both members of the Church of Jesus Christ and had served missions and came from Hispanic backgrounds, that didn’t mean that there wouldn’t be differences. That is to be expected among all couples. We need to realize that Heavenly Father knew this would happen and it has to happen. It allows us to grow.

Remember how after Adam was formed “the Gods said: Let us make an help meet for the man, for it is not good that the man should be alone, therefore we will form an help

meet for him. . . .Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.” (Abraham 5:14, 18)

We can see how important this was and is for us. We truly need to have our companions. I am still learning things that I have needed to learn from my Eternal companion, Maria.

I’d like to share some of the things I’ve learned about the importance of communication in marriage. In doing so, I hope you will see the big picture as I have, that in learning to communicate with my sweetheart it has also helped me learn how to better communicate with my Heavenly Father.

First, it is critical that we are both willing to build a solid foundation in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This requires constant renewal, study and sharing. Of all the points, this must be constant for our entire lives. As the Apostle John taught, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10).

In that we both have a testimony of the Savior, Jesus Christ, then we’ll be striving to build the spirit of revelation and prophecy in our lives. That means we will both be striving “to speak when moved upon by the Spirit” and whatsoever we “speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be the will, the mind, the word and the voice of the Lord and the power of God unto salvation” (D&C 68:3-4). What a beautiful thought that there will be two people, a husband and a wife, receiving revelation in each and every home.

Second, we need to always express gratitude for big as well as little things. Let me illustrate with a life experience. When we were married, I knew I didn’t want to be the family cook, so I determined that I needed to always be happy with whatever my dear wife María made for me. So, after each and every meal I have always sought to thank her and tell her what a wonderful and delicious meal we had. Of course, during the meal, I needed to make sure that I ate everything and show that I was enjoying the meal. And that was never made up because I have always enjoyed each and every one of my meals. If I have forgotten, she will ask me if I liked the meal. Of course, my answer is always, “Yes, it was wonderful.” That has never been a lie.

She, in turn, thanks me for whatever I do. She might say, “I like the way the lawn looks.” “I like the way the lights turned out.” Her compliments are always meaningful and could include a variety of things such as cutting and trimming the lawn, painting, repairs around the house, taking care of the car, anything.

Let me let you in on a special Torres family secret. On big projects she is always right by my side helping me, and of course I help her on her projects. During our work activities

we are always talking to each other; after all, we're really newlyweds and there is something special to talk about.

These simple acknowledgements are ways we show love. Martin Luther wrote, "Marriage is the school of love." (Favorite Quotations from the Collection of Thomas S. Monson, Deseret Book Company, 1985, page 15.) and President Monson taught, "Often we live side by side but not heart to heart" (Ibid, page 202). I hope we will learn to show more gratitude and love to each other.

If your husbands were here, I'd tell them to bring home flowers for you. I remember when we were in Guatemala, there was a spot just in front of the mission home. I'd go there and pick flowers that I'd never seen before for my true love. Every time I did, she was so happy, why I could even see it in her eyes. Am I right, sisters? Of course I am!

You know even the Savior must have been pleased to hear compliments from His Father. Do you remember how at His baptism and on other occasions when Heavenly Father introduces His Son He said, "This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3: 17; 17:5; 3 Nephi 17:7). I think there is something special in that little communication between a Father and His Son.

Thirdly, problem resolution. We all will have, and I like to say need to have problems or concerns, whether minor or major, which will come to us, and we'll need to discuss and work out so that we can learn how to resolve them as a couple. However, this cannot work unless both are in agreement to participate fully, but we must agree to not get upset for anything which may seem upsetting. Remember you love each other, and this is a needed process in our eternal development.

Always remember, both husband and wife have "the testimony of Jesus" and have the promise to receive revelation. Please, please realize that all decisions need to be agreed upon unanimously. Just like it is taught in D&C 107:27, where it teaches that "every member in each quorum must be agreed to its decisions." Now if that doesn't happen in a companionship, it is either not the correct thing to do, or it may be something that needs to wait for another time, or it may simply be we haven't discovered the correct solution yet, but if we'll do our homework the solution will come.

One of the problems María and I saw that we needed to get a handle on was using credit cards. Even though we paid them off at the beginning of every month we never seemed to have a really good idea at how much we had spent until the statements came at the end of the month. We were always over our spending budget.

Let me just add at this point that my sweetheart has always been able to make a dollar stretch two to five times its value. I have always been amazed at how she has been able to do that. This has been a great help in our home.

So, we started studying the problem and realized that we could solve this problem, but it would require some major work in changing how we did things. Soon we realized that this was a topic that had been discussed by ancient as well as modern prophets as well as others. This was a problem that we both wanted to resolve and work together on it. It took us a little time to resolve but once we saw what we should do and carried out our agreed plan it solidified our marriage and gave us greater happiness as a couple, as well as individuals. And this because we came out of our discussions with a workable monthly strategy, an emergency fund, and an incredible feeling of happiness and joy that we had worked it out together.

I have found that problem solving helps us draw closer together. Of course, there are disagreements and things which need to be worked out. However, the end result is always amazing.

In resolving problems, we need to listen, practice patience, vocalize our feelings without being rude and negative, and most important be willing to work together. All of this requires insightfulness and communication, and I can assure you it can be done. It can be done because we love each other.

Because we love and respect each other, we are willing to learn from each other. We have to, because we are planning to spend eternity together and we build our eternity right here on this earth.

Eternal life is God's life, and I wouldn't be happy without my María, and she wouldn't be happy without me. Just ask her if that isn't true.

I'm sure I'm correct in saying I thought I loved Maria forty-five years ago, but that was nothing in comparison with what I feel today, and I'm sure what I feel today is nothing with what I'll feel in 20, 50, 100 years from now.

I'm happy for you because I know what awaits you.

I want you to know that I know these things which I've shared are possible and true principles. I share this witness humbly in the sacred name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who I love. Amen.