

Looking at how we talk



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The manner in which family members talk to each other affects the quality of their family life. In extended families, it is the married people who have a key role in modelling, to other family members, the standard of verbal exchange. In modern marriages, there is the tendency for partners to become flippant with each other. The reason for this is that spouses see each other only at the conclusion of the day. It is a time when fatigue and irritability are very high.

Full weekend agendas result in couples being over-extended and, thus, there are few opportunities to talk to each other without the pressure of obligations, to other people or projects. Communication problems develop in marriages when people treat serious things lightly.

One spouse may express a concern to the other regarding the academic performance of their child. The other refuses to take the concern seriously and responds 'you are such a worry wort!' As the marriage endures in length of years, these types of comments may escalate to a new stage, where verbal exchanges become disrespectful of the other person. Critical remarks are now being

made in public about the partner's behavior or appearance. An example of this would be to criticize the appearance of the other with a comparison to the attractiveness of another person.

The third stage in the progression of poor communication patterns is for verbal abuse to develop. One spouse discredits the other as having little value or significance as a person. When this happens in a marital relationship, it is time to seek counselling.

We can prevent these patterns of communication from developing in our marriages. One way is to say clearly and plainly that you do not like the way you are being spoken to, and it must stop. Secondly, you might reflect on the following questions:

When are we not taking each other's concerns seriously? How have we been disrespectful of the other person? Are we using verbal

abuse in our patterns of communication?

These are questions upon which we might reflect in relation to all our family relationships.

Our faith can support us in improving the quality of our communication in families. One of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit is self control. Self control enables us to discipline ourselves in verbal exchanges. We are then less likely to resort to flippant, disrespectful or abusive behavior.

Married people are significant persons in shaping the quality of family life. This is the season of Pentecost. May we be granted the gift of self control in our verbal exchanges. May we talk gently to each other, particularly at the dinner table.

OUR LANGUAGE

by Jeffrey McQuain

Immemorial describes something extending back in time beyond memory or record. This adjective, which came into English in 1602, isn't from time immemorial.

Varnish is a liquid preparation used to give wood or metal a hard, glossy surface. Try varnish, a word you might take a shine to.

Q. A story describing some firemen said, "They were heroes." Is that spelled right?

A. No, it isn't. The correct spelling for the plural of hero is heroes, with a second e. An exception in some dictionaries is the plural heroes, used for more than one hero sandwich. I'd say the least those firemen deserve is the

proper spelling of heroes.

Q. I was told not to use "tomorrow morning at 7 a.m." Why not?

A. "Tomorrow morning at 7 a.m." is redundant. Use either morning or a.m. to indicate the time of day. Don't use both, however, or you'll find that some English teachers won't give you the time of day.

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