



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

Monthly Message for the Priests Wives

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Supportive Individuals

Volume 2

2- Criteria: Supportive Communication

Scientific Definition: Supportive communication involves using active listening, empathy, and validation to create an environment of understanding and comfort during conversations. It promotes effective emotional connection and helps individuals feel heard and valued. (Reference: Burleson, B. R. (2003). "The experience and effects of emotional support: What the study of cultural and gender differences can tell us about close relationships, emotion, and interpersonal communication." *Personal Relationships*, 10(1), 1-23.)

Biblical Story: The story of Ruth and Naomi highlights supportive communication. Ruth's commitment to accompany Naomi and her empathetic words ("Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay") demonstrate the power of standing by a loved one in difficult times. (Reference: The Book of Ruth)

Funny Story: Imagine a scenario where the priest's wife tries to console her husband after a challenging sermon. She fumbles with words and accidentally mixes up her comforting phrases, leaving her husband bewildered and laughing. Their shared laughter becomes a moment of genuine connection.

Practical Exercise: Engage in active listening exercises with your husband. Choose a topic and take turns speaking and listening. After each person speaks, summarize their thoughts to ensure you've understood correctly. This exercise will enhance your ability to provide supportive communication.

here are five biblical verses that emphasize the importance of supportive communication, along with their references in the New King James Version (NKJV):

- **Ephesians 4:29** "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers."

- **Proverbs 16:24** "Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones."
- **Colossians 4:6** "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one."
- **James 1:19** "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."
- **Proverbs 12:18** "There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health."

And here are five sayings from Church Fathers that emphasize the importance of supportive communication:

- **St. John Chrysostom** "Let your speech be better than silence, or be silent."
- Reference: Attributed to St. John Chrysostom
- **St. Augustine of Hippo** "In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity."
- Reference: Attributed to St. Augustine
- **St. Francis de Sales** "Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself."
- Reference: Attributed to St. Francis de Sales
- **St. Teresa of Ávila** "Accustom yourself continually to make many acts of love, for they enkindle and melt the soul."
- Reference: "The Way of Perfection" by St. Teresa of Ávila
- **St. John of Kronstadt** "When you notice that someone has been made weak by illness or is troubled in soul or body, hasten to support him with prayer, with affection and comforting words."
- Reference: "My Life in Christ" by St. John of Kronstadt

A challenge that a wife's priest in the Coptic Orthodox Church might face when dealing with supportive communication is assisting couples in bridging cultural and generational gaps within their relationships. In an increasingly globalized world, couples often come from diverse backgrounds, and the clash of cultures and generations can lead to communication difficulties and strained relationships. The wife's priest plays a crucial role in helping couples navigate these challenges through effective and supportive communication.

Story Example:

In a bustling Coptic Orthodox parish, there lived a couple named David and Sarah. David was born and raised in Egypt, while Sarah had grown up in the United States. They met while studying at a university and fell in love, quickly deciding to marry. As time passed, they realized that their differing cultural backgrounds were causing communication issues and misunderstandings.

David came from a traditional Egyptian family and had deeply ingrained cultural values. He believed in strong family ties, close intergenerational relationships, and a hierarchical structure in family decision-making. Sarah, on the other hand, grew up in an individualistic society that valued personal autonomy, open expression of feelings, and equality in decision-making.

As they tried to navigate their marriage, David and Sarah found themselves arguing frequently, often struggling to comprehend each other's perspectives. Feeling desperate, they turned to their wife's priest for guidance.

Tasny recognized the importance of open dialogue and understanding in a cross-cultural marriage like David and Sarah's. She started by conducting individual counseling sessions with each of them to understand their upbringing, values, and communication styles. She encouraged them to openly share their feelings and thoughts, creating a safe space for honest expression.

After gaining insights from both David and Sarah, Tasny brought them together for joint counseling sessions. She facilitated conversations where they could discuss their cultural differences without judgment. She also supported them to learn active listening techniques, empathy, and the importance of finding common ground through other teaching programs in the diocese.

Over time, David and Sarah began to appreciate each other's backgrounds and perspectives. They worked on finding compromises that respected both of their cultural values while maintaining the unity of their marriage. As years went by, David and Sarah became an example within their parish of a successful cross-cultural marriage. They often shared their journey during marriage workshops emphasizing the importance of open communication, respect, and compromise.

This story illustrates how a wife's priest in the Coptic Orthodox Church can address the challenge of supportive communication by helping couples bridge cultural and generational gaps in their relationships. Through counseling, empathy, and a faith-based approach, couples like David and Sarah can learn to navigate their differences and strengthen their marital bonds.

(Reference based on a true story but the names mentioned here are not the original names for privacy reasons)