

## Family Communication and Dialoguing

### Introduction

Dialoguing is the ideal communication method among family members. We do not get to know each other except through talking with each other. Dialogues open channels of communication through which family members get to express their opinions freely and that leads to a level of understanding and thus tolerance of each other. An agreeable family is a family who has arrived at a reasonable level of open communication. For dialoguing to be successful, there are four important steps to be taken into consideration:

#### 1. Positive Listening

Most of family conflicts spring from lack of positive listening to each other's opinion as well as negligence of each other's feelings. In this respect, delinquency finds a breeding ground in homes where parents do not listen to their children's opinions ignoring their feelings and neglecting their need of appreciation. So, the children seek their emotional satisfaction outside their family and hence fall victims to bad behavior and deadly habits. Case in point is the Aids victims in the USA who confessed that they took to the streets seeking love and understanding when they could not find them within their families; and that was the starting point of their loss. Most family problems are not that complicated and require positive listening and compassionate understanding in order to be solved. The problem is that most of the time we hear ourselves only without making effort to listen to the other person talking, presupposing that we know what they are about to say as well as interrupting them while they are trying to make us hear them. Unfortunately, when we talk the only one we hear and listen to is ourselves.

The aim behind listening is getting to know the speaker, their thoughts, feelings and what exactly they aspire to express through words. It takes an effort to understand what the person speaking means and wants to say as well as the type of personality, heart and feelings that hide behind the words. Therefore, a length of time is required as well as patience, depth in analysis, wisdom in judgment and open quiet discussions in order to successfully achieve the outcome of listening; because God looks inside the heart and not to the eyes. Genuine focusing gives the speaker a feeling of comfort and trust that the listener is sympathizing and empathizing with their pain and sufferings, offering care and love. This is a lesson for mothers to open their hearts to their daughters love them and teach them what is and what is not right.

#### 2. Acceptance and Empathy

“Love is patient.” Empathy means to put oneself into someone else's shoe meaning to feel the way they feel. That should be the attitude within families, that the members feel sympathy for one another especially during hard times. Listening to others attentively and sympathetically even if they are exaggerating in expressing their feelings of pain will comfort the speaker and increase their confidence in the listener.

It is important to show engagement in the dialogue through a nodding of the head, a word of sympathy, or a pat on the shoulder just to assure the speaker of active and interactive listening. Early rushing into giving answers or participating in a discussion or offering hasty solutions

before showing understanding and sympathy with what has been said are not signs of good, deep impartial listening.

### **3. Objective Negotiations**

Feelings are not negotiable nor open to discussions. It is wrong to ask people not to feel the way they do. Asking for such a thing is in itself a declaration of lack of sympathy on the listener's side, and thus the futility of continuing the discussion. The reason behind giving an attentive ear to the speaker is primarily to define those emotions, find a solution or at least reduce them.

- Start any discussion by searching for causes of the problem not by pointing fingers that would eventually end up in exchanging accusations and extending struggles till the whole scenario ends up in strife and total conflict. Replace accusations with specific requests concerning the causes of the conflict; because people do not get to know what you want unless you ask. Do not expect your hearer to know what you want unless you ask for what you want.
- Family dialoguing is communicative discussion not battling. It is not victory of one side over the other or cancelling of the demands of one side or imposing the opinions of one side over those of the other. Giving in is not weakness or loss; but gain for the sake of the general peace of the family. Familial security and bonding requires some condescension and giving in. Do not wait for the other end to give in before you do. Start by showing some condescending even when not totally approving of it. Starting first will make the other follow your pattern and give in. Continuing in stubbornness and struggles will bring about nothing except loss. Besides, there will be no enjoyment of what we have enforced upon the others. No joy will be experienced while strife exists between members of the same family.
- Every side in a problem has a point of view to be respected and taken into consideration. No one is totally wrong. Therefore do not fight deadly to hold your point of view while discarding that of the other. Reaching an agreement is the best solution, because family problems require arriving at a common ground and a point of agreement among all ends. The Holy Book of Revelation offers a perfect example of a perfect style of presenting one's opinion while not ignoring the good element in the opinion of the other person. *“I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”* (Revelation 2:2-4).

### **4. Reasonable Words**

Beginning a discussion with accusations is fruitless. Open the discussion with presenting the problem or the feelings troubling you. Concentrating on accusations and charges will make you not ready or willing to listen to the opinion of the other. Complaints block the channels of communication between the speaker and the listener who in turn will switch to the role of self-defense instead of empathizer and explorer of the scope and cause of the problem. The type of language used plays a big role in problem solutions. Avoid harsh words because they could be the cause of interrupted family relations. Learn gentleness and meek response from our Lord

Jesus Christ. Focus on His words when coming face to face with the one who was about to deliver him to his enemies.

Dialoguing is the style of the wise

- Dialoguing is God's tool in dealing with mankind. ""*Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord...*"" (Isaiah 1:18).
- Dialoguing was Jesus Christ's manner with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the disciples.
- Dialoguing is the genre of the philosophers and the sage.
- Dialoguing is the modern method in education.
- Dialoguing should be the style adopted in Sunday school lessons.

### **Advantages of Give-and-Take**

1. Convincing brings about conviction. Nowadays there exist no such thing as, 'must do' type of orders coming from higher authorities. The common jargon among youths is "convince me why it is so". Through discussion, it is easy to turn a 'must do' into "will do", a pleasant acceptance to fulfill a task springing out of understanding.

2. Discussions promote logical thinking and replaces repeating with analyzing. It is important to encourage youths to think and not just to blindly copy and follow established pattern, thus making them capable of thinking through any difficulty without having to run to spiritual fathers and mentors for the least minor thing.

3. Discussions teach individuals to become independent thinkers open to communication and ready to accept other opinions just as correct as their own.

4. Discussions require humility on the side of the head of the family, assurance of their fallibility and willingness to listen to the opinions of the other members of the family and readiness to discuss them and admit their validity.

5. Discussions widen an offspring's scope of thinking and promote independence.

### **Destructive Weapons**

Among the weapons that lead to the destruction of familial relations are:

- **Violence**

Anger is destructive to all members of the family. It shuts all doors to understanding and discussions, creates inhibition, and resorts to depression and loneliness, sadness, loss of husband-wife intimacy and psychosomatic sickness. For example, stomach ache, high blood pressure, stomach ulcers, diabetes and others.

- **Manipulative Tears**

Some wives appeal to tears as a means of obtaining their desires without considering the ramifications of such desires and without trying to open channels of discussion to review the pros and cons of the goal aimed at.

- **Harsh Criticism**

Strong words are successful weapons in destroying any discussion or dialogue. Verbal attacks belittle the thoughts of the other person turning him either into a stubborn person or stopping him from sharing his thoughts.

- **Punitive Silence**

As a result of not being able to reach a solution to a problem through dialogue, punitive silence might be adopted by any of the people involved as a means of punishment. Such absence of communication may continue for a length of time without heeding to the church advice issued during the crowning ceremony.

- **Offenses**

Talking about each other behind each other's back is not acceptable. Offending your wife is offending yourself and vice versa. Talking about each other negatively before the offspring does not provide a healthy environment for them within which to grow and develop healthy personalities.

## **Articles on the Christian History The Fifth Century**

### **Pope Peter III (477-489 AD)**

#### **Historical Introduction**

A few months after having been crowned emperor (476 AD) , Zeno escaped to Constantinople because he was rebelled against by governor Basiliscus, who took over the empire for a long time during which he tried to bridge the gap between the Eastern non Chalcedonian churches and the Western Chalcedonian churches and retribute the harm done to the Eastern popes. He managed to return Pope Timothy II back from his exile.

Sadly enough, having succeeded to overthrow Basiliscus, Zeno returned to Constantinople, restored the empire to himself and with the support of his group, he cancelled all of Basiliscus' efforts to bring understanding between the Eastern and Western churches. Thus the door was once again opened wide to the persecution of the Copts in Egypt.

Shortly after the departure of Pope Timothy to heaven, the Church of Alexandria unanimously elected Fr. Peter the worshipping monk, to be ordained pope on the See of St. Mark. Fr. Peter was serving at the big church in Alexandria from the time he had been ordained priest by Pope Dioscorus till his ordination as pope. In his new serving capacity, he called for a counsel composed of all the bishops of the see of St. Mark to refute and reject the dogmas of the Council of Chalcedon as well as the content of Leo's letter that was contradictory to the faith and beliefs of all the apostolic councils.

Seeing that he was not consulted concerning the ordination of Pope Peter nor concerning the convening of the Council of Alexandria, Zeno was enraged and got stimulated to increase his persecution against the Eastern churches especially that of Alexandria. Thus, he issued a decree

of exiling the pope. However, the people of Alexandria refused to let go of their father and kept him hidden among them for five years till the beginning of the year 483 AD.

### **John Talaia**

Judas the Iscariot was embodied in this monk who sold his church cheap for the peanuts of glory and fame offered by this world, only to find himself thrown into the forgotten and forgetting belly of history. From one of the monasteries in the West of Alexandria, this monk was originally from a small town called Tala, Monufia province. After the departure of the fake patriarch Timothy, this monk somehow managed to gain the favor of the few Chalcedonian churches in Alexandria and aspired to be made patriarch of the See of St. Mark. He caused problems to Pope Peter, confiscated some of the Coptic churches under the false allegiance that the people had given those churches over to him.

After the death of Zeno, this monk went to Constantinople to meet with the new emperor Anastasius to falsely accuse Pope Peter. Sensing falsehood in the accusations, the emperor decided to exile him. The monk escaped to Rome and was received by Felix, bishop of Rome, who welcomed him and appointed him bishop at a small town where shortly after he died far away from his people, country and monastery.