Marriage and relationships · Rooted in Christ · 7-day journey

For adults seeking healthier communication in marriage, family, friendship or shared living. Practise truthful, kind communication and distinguish forgiveness, reconciliation, trust and safety. This is not a substitute for specialist support where abuse is present.

Safety comes first

If you are in immediate danger, call 999. Abuse is not ordinary conflict. Do not use a joint conversation exercise where there is fear, coercion or violence. Women can contact Refuge's National Domestic Abuse Helpline on 0808 2000 247, free, 24 hours. Men can contact Respect Men's Advice Line on 0808 8010 327. See NHS domestic-abuse support for service hours and other support options. Use a safer device if someone monitors your activity. Do not disclose a safety plan to an abusive person because this guide encourages honesty. Contact information checked 7 October 2026.

Begin the study · Begin Day 1 · Non-emergency pastoral care

ROOTED IN CHRIST · SEVEN-DAY DEVOTIONAL

Make room for truth, care and healthy boundaries.

Explore communication, forgiveness and wise next steps in relationships.

Full Bible passages · Guided prayer · A practical step each day

A little encouragement before you begin. Move at a safe pace. Care, truthful conversation and appropriate boundaries belong together.

When marriage feels distant: rebuilding connection and seeking help

Distance in a marriage can grow through routines, disappointment, unresolved conflict or pressures neither person has named. A conversation may help when both people are free and safe to participate. It is not an appropriate response to every situation. Read the safety guidance already on this page before attempting any joint exercise.

Important: If there is fear, coercion, threats, violence or controlling behaviour, do not use these joint communication exercises. Seek specialist support safely. Abuse is not a shared communication failure, and faith must not be used to pressure someone to remain in danger or accept unwanted contact.

Go directly to the seven-day Bible readings and prayers

1. Check whether a conversation is safe and welcome

In a relationship without abuse or coercion, ask whether you can set aside a short, agreed time. Give each other freedom to decline or choose another time. If asking for a

conversation creates fear of punishment, move towards suitable individual support instead of trying to improve the wording of your request.

2. Describe one pattern, not the whole marriage

Use a specific observation: ‘We have not had an uninterrupted conversation this week, and I miss that.’ Avoid claims about motives or words such as ‘always’ and ‘never’. Explain what you hope could change, and invite the other person’s view. The aim is understanding, not winning a complete case.

3. Listen and check your understanding

If it is safe, take turns speaking without interruption. Summarise what you heard and ask whether it is accurate before replying. Understanding does not require agreement with an accusation. If either person becomes overwhelmed, agree a pause and a realistic return time; a pause should not become a threat or punishment.

4. Make one small agreement

Choose a change both people freely accept: sharing a routine task, a brief weekly check-in or a specific act of consideration. Be clear about what will happen and when. Do not make promises about feelings, sexual contact, spending or access to devices that one person does not freely want to make.

5. Review honestly and seek the right help

After the agreed period, ask whether the action happened and whether it was useful. Repeated difficulties may need a suitably qualified relationship professional; do not assume ANCC provides that service. Where there is abuse, specialist safety support takes priority over joint counselling or reconciliation pressure.

Your private next-step worksheet

Only when safe and freely agreed: one pattern we notice; what each person heard; one change each freely accepts; the review date; what outside support may help. Keep private information out of group discussions and general church forms.

Questions you may be asking

What if my partner will not take part?

You cannot make a joint exercise work alone. Consider appropriate individual advice and the choices within your control. Do not use prayer, a leader or a Bible passage to force agreement or present the other person as the sole problem.

Does an apology mean everything returns to normal?

Not automatically. Repair may involve practical change, accountability and time. The person who was hurt is not required to offer immediate reassurance, intimacy or restored trust. Serious harm needs an appropriate response beyond a private apology.

Is forgiveness the same as staying together?

Forgiveness, safety, legal decisions and the future of a relationship are different questions. This guide cannot decide them for you. Seek appropriate specialist support and do not treat a devotional as a substitute for careful advice.

Continue with relevant ANCC resources

- When your marriage is difficult: care, safety and next steps
- When Resentment Lingers: An Honest Christian Prayer
- Building a Faith-Filled Family: 7-Day Bible Study

NHS: recognising domestic abuse and getting help

You are welcome to explore ANCC at your own pace. Ask about current opportunities; no attendance, disclosure or donation is required to read this guide.

Go deeper: the Bible study and group discussion

Love tells the truth without using it as a weapon

Read Ephesians 4:25–29 and James 1:19–20 under Days 2 and 1. Christian kindness is not avoiding every difficult conversation. It includes truthful speech, patient listening and refusing humiliation. Describe a specific action and its effect rather than attacking the other person’s character. In a safe relationship, ask for a realistic change and listen to the response. A conversation should seek understanding and repair, not victory through religious language or threats.

Forgiveness and renewed access are not identical

Read Romans 12:17–21 and Luke 17:3–4 under Days 4 and 5. Forgiveness does not require calling evil good, cancelling accountability or pretending trust has already returned. Reconciliation involves more than one person’s decision and may depend on repentance, changed conduct and safety. You can refuse revenge while maintaining a boundary or reporting harm. Another person’s demand for immediate forgiveness must not be used to stop protection, investigation or support.

Safety comes before a communication exercise

Read Psalm 82:3–4 and Romans 12:18 under Days 6 and 7. The instruction to live peaceably includes the recognition that peace is not wholly within one person's power. Abuse is not simply a disagreement between equal partners. Threats, intimidation, sexual coercion, financial control and violence require specialist support, not a joint devotional or a forced meeting. Do not confront an abusive person because a general guide suggests honest conversation.

Discuss and apply

1. How does Ephesians join truth with kindness?
2. Which communication habit do you personally need to change?
3. What is the difference between forgiveness and restored trust?
4. When is a joint conversation unsafe or inappropriate?
5. What boundary or support would help protect dignity and safety?

An exercise only for a safe relationship: Write When this specific thing happens, I experience this effect, and I would like this practical change. Take turns speaking briefly and summarising what you heard before replying. Agree one small action and a review time. Where there is fear, coercion or abuse, do not use this joint exercise; seek independent specialist help.

For leaders: Do not mediate abuse as ordinary conflict, make the harmed person responsible for keeping a marriage together, or promise absolute secrecy. Follow safeguarding procedures and seek specialist advice. Prayer never requires remaining in danger. A church contact form is not an emergency route.

Seven days of Bible reading and prayer

All passages are printed in full. Declarations and decrees are optional Scripture-shaped commitments, not guarantees of another person's behaviour. Use the guide individually where a joint discussion would be unhelpful or unsafe.

Day 1: Listen to understand

Read James 1:19–20.

> [19] So, then, my beloved brothers, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger; [20] for the anger of man doesn't produce the righteousness of God.

Reflect: Quick answers can turn a conversation into a contest. Listening is an act of care when both people are safe and free to speak. Ask what the other person means before defending yourself. This is not an instruction to remain in a threatening conversation; listening never requires accepting intimidation.

Consider: What do you assume before the other person finishes speaking?

Pray: Lord, teach me to listen patiently and speak carefully. Help me seek understanding while respecting the need for safety and boundaries. Amen.

Declare / decree: With God's help I will listen without surrendering truth or safety.

Practise: In a safe conversation, summarise what you heard before replying.

Day 2: Speak about the action

Read Ephesians 4:25–29.

> [25] Therefore, putting away falsehood, speak truth each one with his neighbour, for we
> are members of one another. [26] "Be angry, and don't sin." Don't let the sun go down on
> your wrath, [27] and don't give place to the devil. [28] Let him who stole steal no more; but
> rather let him labour, producing with his hands something that is good, that he may
> have something to give to him who has need. [29] Let no corrupt speech proceed out of
> your mouth, but only what is good for building others up as the need may be, that it
> may give grace to those who hear.

Reflect: Truthful speech names what happened rather than turning a person into an insult. Explain the action, its effect and a reasonable request. Words can be honest without being cruel. Repair becomes harder when we exaggerate with always and never or recruit an audience to embarrass someone. The instruction about anger is not a demand to resolve a difficult or unsafe conflict before bedtime.

Consider: What specific behaviour needs discussion rather than a character attack?

Pray: Father, guard my speech from contempt and exaggeration. Help me speak truth in a way that opens a path towards understanding and repair. Amen.

Declare / decree: My words can be truthful, specific and kind.

Practise: Replace one accusation with a description of an action and its effect.

Day 3: Own your part

Read Matthew 7:1–5.

> [1] “Don’t judge, so that you won’t be judged. [2] For with whatever judgement you judge,
> you will be judged; and with whatever measure you measure, it will be measured to
> you. [3] Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but don’t consider the
> beam that is in your own eye? [4] Or how will you tell your brother, ‘Let me remove the
> speck from your eye,’ and behold, the beam is in your own eye? [5] You hypocrite! First
> remove the beam out of your own eye, and then you can see clearly to remove the
> speck out of your brother’s eye.”

Reflect: Jesus challenges the hypocrisy of seeing another person’s fault while ignoring our own. Examine the behaviour for which you are responsible. Do not use this passage to imply that a victim caused abuse or shares responsibility for another’s violence. Honest self-examination addresses your conduct without accepting false blame.

Consider: What is yours to own, and what is not?

Pray: Jesus, help me acknowledge my real faults without taking responsibility for another person’s harmful choices. Lead me into honest and appropriate repair. Amen.

Declare / decree: I will take responsibility for my conduct, not for another person’s abuse.

Practise: Write one change you can make and one burden that is not yours.

Day 4: Forgive without denying harm

Read Romans 12:17–21.

> [17] Repay no one evil for evil. Respect what is honourable in the sight of all men. [18] If it is
> possible, as much as it is up to you, be at peace with all men. [19] Don’t seek revenge
> yourselves, beloved, but give place to God’s wrath. For it is written, “Vengeance
> belongs to me; I will repay, says the Lord.” [20] Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed
> him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing so, you will heap coals of fire on his
> head.” [21] Don’t be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Reflect: Paul redirects revenge and entrusts judgement to God. That does not make wrongdoing acceptable or remove the role of lawful protection. Forgiveness may be a difficult process, not an emotion achieved on command. You can pray towards freedom from revenge while still seeking justice and maintaining distance.

Consider: Where do you need help distinguishing mercy from denial?

Pray: God of justice and mercy, meet me in the harm I carry. Help me release revenge without surrendering truth, protection or appropriate accountability. Amen.

Declare / decree: I can seek freedom from revenge while preserving truth, justice and safe boundaries.

Practise: Name a safe source of support for the hurt you are carrying.

Day 5: Trust needs truth over time

Read Luke 17:3–4 and Matthew 3:8.

> **Luke 17:** [3] Be careful. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him. If he repents, forgive him. [4] If he sins against you seven times in the day, and seven times returns, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him.
>
> **Matthew 3:8:** Therefore produce fruit worthy of repentance!

Reflect: Repentance includes more than a persuasive apology. Look for conduct consistent with what has been said. You do not need to restore access simply because someone claims spiritual change. Patience can include waiting for dependable evidence and seeking advice. Reconciliation cannot be demanded as proof of your faith.

Consider: What observable change would be needed before trust could grow?

Pray: Lord, give me wisdom about trust and reconciliation. Help me recognise sincere change without ignoring patterns, pressure or the need for protection. Amen.

Declare / decree: Trust may grow through truth and changed conduct; it cannot be forced by spiritual pressure.

Practise: Write what dependable change would look like in practice.

Day 6: Protect the vulnerable

Read Psalm 82:3–4 (World English Bible Classic).

> [3] "Defend the weak, the poor, and the fatherless. Maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.
> [4] Rescue the weak and needy. Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked."

Reflect: The psalm calls for the defence of vulnerable people. Protecting someone is not disloyalty to a family or church. When there is abuse, the next faithful step may be confidential specialist advice or urgent help. Do not test an unsafe person's reaction with a confrontation suggested by a general relationship guide.

Consider: Who needs protection rather than another demand to keep the peace?

Pray: God, protect those living with fear and control. Give them safe support, wise helpers and practical routes away from harm. Amen.

Declare / decree: God's call to love does not require silence about abuse or acceptance of danger.

Practise: Save a support route only where safe to do so, or share it privately with someone who needs it.

Day 7: A realistic next step

Read Romans 12:18 and Colossians 3:12–15.

> **Romans 12:18:** If it is possible, as much as it is up to you, be at peace with all men.
>
> **Colossians 3:** [12] Put on therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, humility, and perseverance; [13] bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, if any man has a complaint against any; even as Christ forgave you, so you also do. [14] Above all these things, walk in love, which is the bond of perfection. [15] And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body, and be thankful.

Reflect: Pursue peace where it is possible and within your responsibility. You cannot guarantee another person's response. Choose a kind, truthful next step: a safe conversation, an apology, a boundary or specialist support. Healthy love does not require controlling the result. Review the week with honesty about both hope and limits.

Consider: What next step is wise, safe and within your responsibility?

Pray: Father, guide me in the next step of love and truth. Help me act responsibly and release the outcomes I cannot control. Amen.

Declare / decree: By God's grace I will pursue peace without abandoning dignity, truth or safety.

Practise: Choose one safe next step and the support needed to take it.

Continue with appropriate support

For ordinary relationship concerns, request pastoral support. For abuse or coercive control, use independent specialist support above. Continue with Building a Faith-Filled Family, Testing Spiritual Messages, or Hope in a Crisis.

Continue with a prayer guide

Reflect prayerfully on forgiveness and disappointment alongside this guide's teaching on healthy boundaries.

- The Forgiving Prayer
- The Fighting Bitterness Prayer

Explore the complete twelve-day prayer journey

Original ANCC Rooted in Christ study. Scripture: World English Bible British Edition, except Psalm 82:3–4, from World English Bible Classic. Both are public domain. Full readings appear above. Use your browser's Print menu to print or save this page as a PDF, only when safe for you.