

**Lesson 15: Helping Others Change Skill**  
*Mystery #6: Is there a way to stop nagging?*

**I. Why We Should Learn This Skill**

- a. The effort to change one's own behavior is not easy and takes time. The support of one's partner can make all the difference. However, sometimes a partner means to help, but it comes across as **nagging**.
- b. When we feel that our partner is nagging, the effect is **contrary** to what we hope to accomplish. Being nagged builds hostility and resentment in a relationship.
- c. The opposite of nagging is supporting your partner's attempts to change. This is **perceived** as being a cheerleader and reflects the fact that you believe in your partner and his/her efforts to change.
- d. Supporting my loved one in the way he/she requested is a **gift of love** and this is what the "Helping others change skill" is designed to do.
- e. When we identify areas that we desire to change, we do so anticipating that those desired changes will **positively** affect the one who changes *and* the overall marriage relationship.
- f. Using the "Helping others change skill" makes the change effort a **team** effort and provides the helping partner with the opportunity to "be the change s/he wishes to see."
- g. This is accomplished by the "**helping spouse**" honoring the changing spouse by using only the reminders he or she requested.
- h. This joint effort builds **good will** between the partners. We are more apt to receive gentle and respectful reminders when we request them if we have used this skill.
- i. Helping others change skill works hand in hand with self-change skill and problem solving skill to create **long term** changes in your relationship.

**II. Scriptures That Support This Skill**

- a. A true expression of love, as demonstrated by our use of communication skills with others, will help us **avoid** sounding like we are nagging or being critical in our tone of voice. *Galatians 5:13-15 You have been given freedom: not freedom to do wrong, but freedom to love and serve each other. For the whole Law can be summed up in this one command: Love others as you love yourself. But if instead of showing love among yourselves you are always critical and catty, watch out! Beware of ruining each other.* LB
- b. The helping others change skill helps us avoid coercion and **forcing** our way on our partner. *Gal 5:22,23 But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.* TMSG
- c. The essence of the helping others change skill is that we learn how to come along side and help people change in ways that are **acceptable** to them. *Gal 6:1,2 Brothers, if a person is caught doing something wrong, those of you who are spiritual should restore that person in a spirit of gentleness. Watch out for yourself so that you are not tempted as well. Practice carrying each others burdens. In this way you will fulfill the law of Christ*
- d. The ability to use the helping others change skill is the ability to say the **right thing** at the right time. *Proverbs 15:23 Everyone enjoys giving good advice, and how wonderful it is to be able to say the right thing at the right time!* LB

**III. How to Help Others Change**

- a. Work from an **agreement**. Know exactly how, when and where help will be given. Agree on reminders that will not be seen by the other person as nagging or criticism.
- b. Each person is **responsible** for his/her own change. Helping others change skill means that the person who is doing the change is in charge of the process. Helpers give reminders only as requested.
- c. Nagging in any way, shape or form is **not** helpful. The difference between nagging and a reminder is that in reminding, the person receiving it has requested it and finds it helpful.
- d. Reinforce effort and accomplishment. See change as a gradual process which takes time. Take the opportunity to show appreciation for the other person's effort and successes **often**.
- e. Work through frustration or disappointment. If the other person doesn't seem to be following through **use skills** to talk about your frustration or disappointment. Revise the plan if necessary.
- f. Keep showing **appreciation** every once in a while even after your partner regularly practices the new behavior.
- g. **Intermittent** reinforcement is very potent. It not only strengthens the change but it also strengthens the other person's commitment to new change projects.

**Lesson 15: Helping Others Change Skill**  
*Mystery #6: Is there a way to stop nagging?*

**IV. Growing the Relationship Without Agreement to Change**

- a. The helping others change skill is for when someone has **agreed** to change. What do you do if someone doesn't see a reason to change?
- b. The following strategies do not require agreement to change from the other person. They are strategies you choose because you wish things could be different and because you are **resolved** to do your part.
- c. This is the **ultimate** test of obedience to Christ when you choose to live godly in spite of the fact that your efforts are neither acknowledged nor supported. *1 Peter 2:21-3:7 This is the kind of life you've been invited into, the kind of life Christ lived. He suffered everything that came his way so you would know that it could be done, and also know how to do it, step-by-step. He never did one thing wrong, Not once said anything amiss. They called him every name in the book and he said nothing back. He suffered in silence, content to let God set things right. He used his servant body to carry our sins to the Cross so we could be rid of sin, free to live the right way. His wounds became your healing. You were lost sheep with no idea who you were or where you were going. Now you're named and kept for good by the Shepherd of your souls. The same goes for you wives: Be good wives to your husbands, responsive to their needs. There are husbands who, indifferent as they are to any words about God, will be captivated by your life of holy beauty. What matters is not your outer appearance — the styling of your hair, the jewelry you wear, the cut of your clothes — but your inner disposition. Cultivate inner beauty, the gentle, gracious kind that God delights in. The holy women of old were beautiful before God that way, and were good, loyal wives to their husbands Sarah, for instance, taking care of Abraham, would address him as "my dear husband." You'll be true daughters of Sarah if you do the same, unanxious and unintimidated. The same goes for you husbands: Be good husbands to your wives. Honor them, delight in them. As women they lack some of your advantages. But in the new life of God's grace, you're equals. Treat your wives, then, as equals so your prayers don't run aground.*
- d. Show understanding **even if** you are not understood.
- e. Express yourself fully with skill, even if the other person uses **trigger** words or causes you to want to close down or attack.
- f. Talk beneath the **surface** to find out core concerns by discussing each person's thoughts, feelings, concerns and desires.
- g. Take a **time out**, yet eventually follow through to discuss anything that causes strong feelings in you.
- h. Avoid arguing about what **you want**, rather, problem solve in ways that meet each person's needs.
- i. Follow through on change that you **promise**.
- j. Help others change by **supporting**, rather than nagging.
- k. Consistently expect **respectful** language from yourself and others when you disagree.
- l. Use your skills **any** time there is emotion or disagreement.
- m. **Invest** time and caring in your relationship.

**V. Application**

- a. Look at the last ten items in the section above (d-m). Which of these skills, if you practiced it every day, would emulate Christ?
- b. To what extent are you prepared to live Christ?
- c. Which of these skills, if you practiced it every day, would encourage change in someone?
- d. Is your relationship important enough to you to put these skills to use?