

Scriptural Validation for the Ten Skills

Taught by Relationship Enhancement, Mastering the Mysteries of Love, Mastering the Mysteries of Christian Love, Love's Cradle, and Ready for Love

I'm sure you've heard or read the statistic that Christians have the same or higher divorce rate as the general public. I used to think that the persons represented by those statistics were not really committed Christians...or called themselves Christians without being integral, active members of a church community. Yet my husband was a working pastor and I was a committed Christian while desperately searching for solutions for our unresolved, ongoing conflicts that were slowly eroding the good in our marriage. We well knew the *principles* of loving one another, but were lacking the specific *skills* to implement those principles.

We eventually pieced together the guidelines and communication skills that produced for us a loving marriage...one in which we both honestly shared our feelings and concerns and found solutions to issues that met both of our needs. Our home became a refuge of peace; our marriage more intimate, compassionate and loving than either of us dreamed we could have.

When I saw the Ten Skills, I was struck by how perfectly they paralleled what my husband and I learned and still practiced. I see the what Dr Bernard Guerny found in his relationship laboratory as a way to practice the Truth I found within the framework of scriptures.

Although we hadn't ferreted out these life-changing guidelines from scripture during the troubled years of our marriage, in the years since, the skills we learned and the relationship habits we practiced were constantly affirmed by scriptures that now "jump out at us."

When asked to compile a body of scriptures that validate and underscore the eternal Truth of the Ten Skills, the problem wasn't finding them, but trying to choose the clearest and most potent of them! I pray that the following scriptures will provide the scriptural foundation that allows you to learn and consistently practice the Ten Skills with the full assurance that these principles were originally God's idea—and that His way of doing relationships is the *only way* that brings the love, respect and harmony that we crave in our most valuable human connections.

Sincerely,

Nancy Landrum, MPsy, MML Teacher

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#1. Giving Empathy or Showing Understanding Skill

Why learn this skill?

- To be sure I accurately understand my partner's thoughts, feelings, concerns and desires.
- To meet one of the greatest emotional needs of my loved one.
- To eliminate misunderstandings and shorten the healing time of upsets.
- To pave the way for workable solutions.
- To develop greater emotional intimacy and safety.
- To earn the right to be heard, in turn, by my partner.
- To listen with the depth of caring in the way I wish to be heard.

Scriptures that support this skill:

- "A *wise* person learns by listening." Proverbs 21:11 LB
- "If I don't understand what someone is saying, I am a stranger to that person. And that person is a stranger to me." I Cor 14:11 NIRV
- "A soft answer turns away wrath, but harsh words cause quarrels."

Proverbs 15:1 LB

- Love "...doesn't force itself on others, isn't always "me first," doesn't fly off the handle..." I Cor 13:5 The Message
- "Love is patient and kind." I Cor 13:4 MSNT
- "Don't be concerned only about your own interests, but also be concerned about the interests of others." Phil 2:4 GWT
- The ultimate example of showing understanding: Jesus, "Although he was in the form of God and equal with God, he did not take advantage of this equality. Instead, he emptied himself by taking on the form of a servant, by becoming like other humans, by having a human appearance." Phil 2:6,7 GWT
- "Here is a simple rule of thumb for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people (your spouse) to do for you; then grab the initiative and do it for *them!*" Luke 6:31 TMSG
- "A wise man is hungry for truth..." Proverbs 15:14 LB

#2. Expression Skill

Why learn this skill?

- To insure the greatest potential of willing cooperation from my spouse.
- To increase the likelihood of a successful resolution to issues.
- To increase my own self-respect.
- To speak the way I wish to be spoken to.
- To speak without judgment or criticism because intimacy is impossible with a self-righteous person.

Scriptures that support this skill:

- “A good man thinks before he speaks; the evil man pours out his evil words without a thought.” Proverbs 15:28 LB
- “We will lovingly follow the truth at all times...speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly...and so become more and more in every way like Christ.” Eph 4:15
- “Your own soul is nourished when you are kind. It is destroyed when you are cruel.” Proverbs 11:17 LB
- “Just say yes or no. Just say what is true. That way, your language can’t be used against you.” James 5:11 TMSG
- “With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in God’s likeness. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. It should not be like this, my brothers! A spring cannot pour both fresh and brackish water from the same opening, can it?” James 1:9-11 ISVNT
- “Some people like to make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise soothe and heal.” Proverbs 12:18 LB
- Love... “does not behave rudely...” I Cor 13:4 NKJV
- “Harsh words cause quarrels. Gentle words cause life and health; griping brings discouragement.” Proverbs 15:1,3
- “Don’t lie to one another. You’re done with that old life. Col 3:9 TMSG
- “Let your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” Col 4:6 NKJV
- “When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire and is itself set on fire by hell.” James 3:3-6 NIV
- “Self-control means controlling the tongue! A quick retort can ruin everything.” Proverbs 13:3 LB
- “When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise.” Proverbs 10:19 NAS
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#3: Discussion Skill

Why learn this skill?

- Discussing an issue without adhering to guidelines will be as successful as playing football without a play book or sewing a dress without a pattern.
- A *skilled* discussion moves focus from the surface facts and opinions to the deeper meanings underneath. With deeper understanding of each other, lasting solutions are much easier to find.
- A *skilled* discussion increases intimacy—that sometimes elusive feeling of being deeply and safely connected to each other.
- It's risky to assume that I know what my partner is feeling or thinking. It's equally risky to assume that my partner knows what I am thinking or feeling.

Scriptures that support this skill?

- “But the wisdom that comes from heaven ...*allows discussion* and is willing to yield to another.” James 3:17 LB
- “The wisdom from above is first of all pure, then peaceful, courteous, not self-willed, full of compassion and kind actions, free from favoritism and from all insincerity. And peace, for those who strive for peace, is the seed of which the harvest is righteousness.” James 3:17,18 MSNT
- “A fool thinks he needs no advice, but a wise man listens to others.” Proverbs 12:15 LB
- “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!” Psalm 33:1 NAS
- “Blessings on all who reverence and trust the Lord—on all who obey him! Their reward shall be prosperity and happiness. Your wife shall be contented in your home...that is God's reward to those who reverence and trust him.” Psalm 128:1,2,4 LB
- “Never forget to be truthful and kind. Hold these virtues tightly. Write them deep within your heart.” Proverbs 3:2,3 LB
- Scripture about conduction of worship services. I believe it can be applied to our discussions, as well. “Be sure that everything is done properly in a good and orderly way.” I Cor 14:40 LB

#4: Problem Solving Skill

Why learn this skill?

- Problems that remain unresolved create emotional distance and drain energy from us and from our marriage
- Resolved problems build confidence that our marriage can thrive.
- It's limiting and narrow for me to think that there is only one solution to a problem (mine). It's gracious to hear my partner's proposed solutions and creative to look for a solution that will meet *both* of our needs.
- Over our lifetime together, time spent on the first four skills will enormously reduce the amount of time we spend in frustration and/or irritation and greatly increase our happiness with each other.

Scriptures that support this skill:

- "Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to everyone generously without a rebuke, and it will be given to him." James 1:5 ISVNT
- "He shows how to find the right decision every time." Proverbs 2:7-9 LB
- "If you want favor with both God and (your spouse)...trust the Lord completely. He will direct you and crown your efforts with success." Prov 3:5,6 LB
- The good-willed husband is "concerned about...how he may please his wife" and the good-willed wife is "concerned about... how she may please her husband." I Cor 7:33-34
- "Put up with each other, and forgive each other if anyone has a complaint. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Above all, be loving. This ties everything together perfectly." Col 3:13,14 GWT
- "Don't be concerned only about your own interests, but also be concerned about the interests of others." Phil 2:4 GWT
- "Plans go wrong with too few counselors; many counselors bring success." (Involve everyone concerned in the solutions.) Proverbs 15:22 LB
- "We should make plans—counting on God to direct us." Proverbs 16:9 LB
- "The wise man looks ahead. The fool attempts to fool himself and won't face facts." Proverbs 14:8 LB
- "Through presumption comes nothing but strife, but with those who receive counsel is wisdom." Proverbs 13:10 NAS
- "It is possible to give away and become richer! It is also possible to hold on too tightly and lose everything. Yes, the liberal man shall be rich! By watering others he waters himself." Proverbs 11:24,25 LB

#5: Self Change Skill

Why learn this skill?

- *One* of the purposes of marriage is to motivate me (out of love and respect for my loved one and obedience to God) to change selfish and annoying habits and to build the character traits that are the fruit of the Spirit.
- Assuming appropriate responsibility for my poor or hurtful patterns of behavior makes room for the grace and mercy of God to enable me change.

Scriptures that support this skill:

- “I haven’t learned all I should even yet, but I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ saved me for and wants me to be.” Phil 3:12 LB
- “A wise woman builds her house, while a foolish woman tears her down by her own efforts.” Proverbs 14:1 LB
- “I will try to walk a blameless path, but how I need your help, especially in my own home, where I long to act as I should.” Psalm 101:2 LB
- “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.” John 15:1,2 NKJV
- “If you love me, show it by doing what I’ve told you. I will talk to the Father, and he’ll provide you another Friend so that you will always have someone with you.” John 14:15 TMSG
- “This is how I want you to conduct yourself in these matters. If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God.” Matt 5:23,24 TMSG
- “The fool who provokes his family to anger and resentment will finally have nothing worthwhile left.” Proverbs 11:29 LB
- “But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...let us follow the Holy Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives.” Gal 5:22,23,25 LB
- “If you profit from constructive criticism you will be elected to the wise men’s hall of fame. But to reject criticism is to harm yourself and your own best interests.” Proverbs 15:31,32 LB

#6: Helping Others Change Skill

Why learn this skill?

- Supporting my loved one in the way he/she requested is a gift of love.
- Often the changes desired will positively affect me *and* our marriage.
- By honoring my spouse by using only the reminders he or she requested, I am building good will. I am more apt to receive the same gentle and respectful reminders when I request them.

Scriptures that support this skill:

- “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.” Galatians 5:13-15 LB
- “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.” Gal 5:22,23 TMSG
- “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 other’s burdens. In this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” Gal 6:1,2 ISVNT
- “Everyone enjoys giving good advice, and how wonderful it is to be able to say the right thing at the right time!” Proverbs 15:23 LB

#7: Coaching Skill

Why learn this skill?

- These ten skills deepen our love for each other *only* if we *use* them.
- It's in my best interests to kindly give and graciously receive reminders to use the skills correctly. What benefits our relationship, benefits me.
- The more habitual good skills become, the less frequent the upsets will be and the more consistently loving and peaceful our relationship will be.
- The more habitual good skills become between us, the more likely I will use good skills in all my other relationships, as well.
- (If you have children) The habitual use of good skills will naturally become a part of our children's lives. They will learn from our example to give respectful behavior and speech to others and to expect respectful behavior *from* others.
- Using good skills greatly increases the likelihood of a mutually agreeable resolution to issues. This means that the same issues will not come up over and over again, bringing discouragement about our relationship.
- Staying in good skills and successfully resolving issues builds confidence in our future.

Scriptures supporting this skill:

- "Instruct and direct one another using good common sense." Col 3:16 TMSG
- "Let us be mindful to stimulate one another toward love and helpful activities." Hebrews 1:24 ML
- "For we naturally love to do evil things that are just the opposite from the things that the Holy Spirit tells us to do; and the good things we want to do when the Spirit has his way with us are just the opposite of our natural desires. But when you follow your own wrong inclinations your lives will produce... fighting...constant effort to get the best for yourself, complaints and criticisms. But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Galatians 16-17, 19-20, 22-23 LB
- "There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." Proverbs 12:18 NAS
- "To learn, you must want to be taught. To refuse reproof is stupid." Proverbs 12:1 LB
- "The wise man is glad to be instructed, but a self-sufficient fool falls flat on his face. Winking at sin leads to sorrow; bold reproof leads to peace." Proverbs 9:8,10 LB
- "Anyone willing to be corrected is on the pathway to life." Proverbs 10:17 LB
- "A fool thinks he needs no advice, but a wise man listens to others." Proverbs 12:15 LB

#8: Conflict Management Skill

Why should I learn this skill?

- Nothing good comes from out-of-control anger.
- Learning appropriate ways of dealing with anger brings better physical, emotional and relational health.
- Giving my spouse love and respect through self control builds trust.
- No one “makes me” lose control. Scriptures are very clear about the fact that I alone am responsible for my behavior and will reap the rewards or suffer poor consequences depending on the choice I make.
- The wounds from a few moments of uncontrolled anger can take a very long time to heal.
- I will feel more respect for myself when I treat my loved one with respect.

Scriptures that support this skill:

- “A wise man controls his temper. He knows that anger causes mistakes.” Proverbs 14:29 LB
- “Your own soul is nourished when you are kind. It is destroyed when you are cruel.” Proverbs 11:17 LB
- “Whenever you’re trying to look better than others or get the better of others, things fall apart and everyone ends up at the others’ throats.” James 3:16 TMSG
- “If you are angry, don’t sin by nursing it. Get over it quickly.” Eph 4:6 LB
- “Whoever supposes he is religious without bridling his own tongue...that person’s religion is worthless.” James 1:26 ML
- “Where do you think all these appalling wars and quarrels come from? Do you think they just happen? Think again. They come about because you want your own way, and fight for it deep inside yourselves... You’re...each wanting your own way. So let God work say a quiet *yes* to God and he’ll be there in no time.” James 3:1,3,7,8 TMSG
- “When the Holy Spirit controls...he will produce...self control.” Galatians 5:22 LB
- “It is better to be slow-tempered than famous; it is better to have self-control than to control an army.” Proverbs 16:32 LB
- “Whatever you want people (your spouse) to do for you, do the same for them.” Luke 6:31 ISVNT
- “A quick tempered man starts fights; a cool-tempered man tries to stop them.” Proverbs 15:18 LB
- “Self-control means controlling the tongue! A Quick retort can ruin everything.” Proverbs 13:3 LB
- “A fool is quick-tempered; a wise man stays cool when insulted.” Proverbs 12:16 LB

#9: Generalization Skill

Why learn this skill?

- Every human being deserves to be treated with honesty and respect.
- Understanding is a skill that can bring comfort and relief even to a stranger.
- My commitment to use good skills in every relationship at all times is an expression of the Good News Jesus brought to earth.

Scriptures that support this skill:

- “Love one another as I have loved you.” John 13:34
- Show “...respect, not only to those who are kind and considerate but also to those who are harsh.” I Peter 2:18 GNB
- “Fathers, (and mothers) do not fret and harass your children, or you may make them sullen and morose.” Col 3:21 MSNT
- “When you did it to these my brothers you were doing it to me!” Matthew 25:40
- “Slaves, be obedient in everything to your earthly masters; not in acts of eye service, as aiming only to please men, but with simplicity of purpose, because you fear the Lord.” Col 3:22 MSNT
- “Be wise in the way you act toward those who are outside [the Christian faith]. Make the most of your opportunities. Everything you say should be kind and well thought out so that you know how to answer everyone.” Col 4:5,6 GWT
- “I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their message, that they may all be one. Just as you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be one in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me.” John 17:20,21 ISVNT
- “If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that. In a word, what I’m saying is, *Grow up*. You’re kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.” Matt 5:47,48 TMSG

#10: Maintenance Skill

Why learn this skill?

- I expect to maintain my vehicles, my homes...even my teeth. Why not my marriage?
- The payoffs for paying close attention to the quality of my marriage are enormous—not only for me personally, but for the one I've chosen “til death do we part,” and for our children and generations to come.
- Just as poor relationship and communication habits are passed down from parents to children, good skills are, as well.
- I want our marriage to be a visible witness of God's love to our children, as well as anyone else with whom we come in contact.
- On a human level I am improving my marriage. On a spiritual level I am cooperating with God's work in my life by weeding out sinful, selfish habits and becoming more Christ-like.

Scriptures that support this skill:

- “Let us not get tired of doing what is right, for after a while we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't get discouraged and give up.” Galatians 6:9 LB
- “Each one of you also must (continually) love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must (continually) respect her husband” Ephesians 5:33 NIV
- “Don't tell lies to each other...You are living a brand new life...continually learning more and more of what is right, and trying constantly to be more and more like Christ who created this new life within you.” Col 3:10 LB
- “Don't be misled: No one makes a fool of God. What a person plants, he will harvest. The person who plants selfishness, ignoring the needs of others—ignoring God!—harvests a crop of weeds. All he'll have to show for his life is weeds! But the one who plants in response to God, letting God's Spirit do the growth work in him, harvests a crop of real life, eternal life.” So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued doing good. At the right time we will harvest a good crop if we don't give up, or quit. Right now, therefore, every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith” Gal 6:7-10 TMSG
- “Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives.” Col 3:15,16 TMSG
- “Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world...” Phil 2:14,15

Versions Used:

ASV American Standard Version

DNT Darby's New Translation

GWT Gods Word

ISVNT International Standard Version: New Testament Edition 2

MSNT New Testament in Modern Speech

NKJV New King James Version

TMSG The Message

YLT Young's Literal Translation

LB Living Bible

Founder of Relationship Enhancement whose Ten Skills are also taught in Mastering the Mysteries of Love and Love's Cradle curriculums.

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