

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Speaking & Writing

"Whoever speaks is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God"
1Peter 4:11

Speaking or Writing Skills

Following our model from the previous study we know that verbal or written statements are necessary to give information about myself, my reasoning about a given situation or subject, or feedback to the other person about himself or his reasoning. How we do that is of critical importance.

1. Communicate with Clarity

"It is important to be understood; it may even be more important to avoid being misunderstood."
Thomas E. Anastasi, Jr.

In order to be understood we must communicate with clarity. Does what you say match with what you intended to say? Think through your message and choose your words carefully. Factors that influence what you say and how you say it include:

- The emotional impact of what you say or write
- How will the person feel about what is heard or read
- What does the person expect to hear or read from you

Some guidelines that can be helpful include:

- Use the listeners language
- Use familiar words in place of the unfamiliar
- Use concrete words in place of the abstract
- Use short words in place of the long

- Read *1Cor 14:7-9*. *How does this apply?*
- Read *Titus 2:7-8*. *How does this apply?*
- *What can you do to improve the clarity of your communication?*

2. Communicate Love

Words given in love are far more likely to be heard than those that are not. If you communicate with negative emotion your words may not be heard, only your emotion. Also, if they know that you care about them they are more likely to take what you have to say to heart.

- Read *Eph 4:15-16*. *Does this mean that we should always speak? What are the consequences of speaking the truth without love, or speaking in love while ignoring truth?*
- *Can you communicate love if you do not love? How can you become more loving?*

3. Communicate Truth

We are believers in truth and must represent truth at all times in oral and written communication. We should seek truth in all circumstances when dealing with one another. Words that are malicious and misrepresent the truth are unacceptable from a believer. There are numerous verses that prohibit both slander and malice, such as:

- Read [Acts 4:19-20](#). *What were the consequences of Peter and John speaking the truth? Should they have said something else?*
- Read [Prov 12:17](#). *What is the purpose of falsehood? What is the purpose of truth?*
- *What situations might motivate you to misrepresent the truth? What are the hazards of doing so?*

4. Learn When To Keep Your Mouth Shut

There are times when silence speaks more than words. Recognize when to not react to what is said and never say what is hurtful and damaging. Don't speak just to be heard.

"There are three times when you should never say anything important to a person: when he is tired, when he is angry, and when he has just made a mistake." **Dr. David Phillips**

- Read [Jud 11:30-35](#). *What were the consequences of Jephthah speaking his mind? What consequences have you experienced for doing the same?*
- Read [Prov 17:27-28](#). *What causes us to speak when we shouldn't?*
- Read [Jam 1:26](#). *What does it reveal about a person who can't control their tongue?*
- *Under what circumstances would it be best not to say anything?*

Asking Questions

Questions are a doorway into the mind and heart of the other person. What are they thinking? What are they passionate about? Why did they do what they did? What do they know about me that I don't know?

Asking questions begins with a focus on the other person rather than yourself. Maybe you know what's in your mind but that isn't the point. What's in the other person's mind? Isn't that what we want to find out? In order to gain mutual understanding we begin dialogue by asking questions that will lead to greater information out in the open...in the arena.

1. **Material Questions:** Having to do with statistics & facts. Often we disagree with someone because we are not working from the same set of facts. Asking material questions will help put the facts in the arena where they can be discussed and evaluated.
2. **Ideational Questions:** Asking the person what he thinks or what he suggests or what he feels. These questions bring forward his ideas that may be based on his perception of the facts as well as his passions, prejudices and preconceived conclusions.
3. **Evaluation Questions:** Asking a person to evaluate his work, ideas, concepts, or anything with which he is associated or involved. These questions deal with how we put facts together to draw conclusions. They challenge the person to see if conclusions are factually based rather than formed on assumptions or preconceived ideas.

4. **Open Questions:** Inviting the other person to express freely what they feel or think. These questions give permission for the people to express themselves. They encourage a person to open up and put their thoughts in the arena.
5. **Closed Questions:** Forcing the other person to a point of view other than his own. This is usually done with a question that can only be answered with either a “yes” or “no.” You are not seeking information but pushing the person to agree with you. This prevents dialogue and the seeking of mutual understanding.
6. **Leading Questions:** Giving direction to the reply but not restricting it to any one way. It makes the assumption of agreement but leaves open the opportunity for people to express themselves even if they disagree.
7. **Loaded Questions:** Forcing the person to agree to something that they normally would not want to admit. Such questions contain two or more questionable concepts that are constructed in such a way that agreement or disagreement with one term seems to imply agreement with the second. These questions are constructed in a way that clearly prompts a “yes” or “no” answer. The purpose of such questions is to demonstrate inconsistency in the other persons thinking or force them to accept your assumptions. A well-informed thinking person, or someone with something to hide, would not respond with a simple “yes” or “no” and might instead challenge each concept presented. The relationship between the speaker and the responder, and the situation in which the question is asked, greatly affects the “success” of a loaded question.

Examples of Loaded Questions

- Have you stopped cheating on your taxes?
- Are you happy with the mess your interruption has created?
- Have you lied to your wife because you no longer love her?
- Are you gossiping about Sally because you’re jealous?

8. **Heated Questions:** Reflect the feelings of the questioner and incites feelings. Such questions raise the intensity of the communication releasing strong emotion and minimizing reason. These types of questions normally only stir contention, but in some instances force the other person to understand and accept the magnitude and impact of the current circumstances. They may also be used to provoke or “bait” the other person into an emotional reaction.
9. **Cool Questions:** Appealing to reason. These questions are used to calm a situation and move from an emotional context to a reasoning context.

What kinds or questions are asked in the references below based on the list given above?

- [Matt 15:1-3](#)
- [Matt 15:34](#)
- [Matt 16:13-15](#)
- [Matt 19:3](#)
- [Matt 21:16](#)
- [Matt 21:25](#)
- [Acts 17:19](#)

APPENDIX

Speaking or Writing Skills

1. Communicate with Clarity

- Read *1Cor 14:7-9*. *How does this apply?*

Unclear messages create confusion. The passage speaks of distinct sounds or messages that can't be misunderstood as to their meaning. Messages that are unclear are worthless.

- Read *Titus 2:7-8*. *How does this apply?*

"Soundness of speech," mentioned in the passage above would indicate that what we say must be clear, understandable and accurate. People that hear us must conclude that we speak with authority and that we know what we're talking about.

- *What can you do to improve the clarity of your communication?*

Know what you are going to say before speaking or writing. Think through what you want to convey and then simplify it making it less cumbersome. Use words that are familiar and short. As much as possible avoid using words that are abstract. Finally, practice writing or speaking with the intent to improve the clarity of your communication. Ask others if your communication is clear.

2. Communicate Love

- Read *Eph 4:15-16*. *Does this mean that we should always speak? What are the consequences of speaking the truth without love, or speaking in love while ignoring truth?*

The passage does not mean that we should be continuously speaking, but that when we do speak it should be wrapped in love. Speaking to one another provides encouragement, admonition, and edification that promotes spiritual growth. Speaking truth without love is harsh and tends to break the spirit rather than lift it up. It doesn't produce the desired result but builds barriers instead. Speaking in love without truth can lead to acceptance of behavior or belief that falls short of who we are to be in Christ. It will not produce spiritual growth, only approval of what should not be approved.

- *Can you communicate love if you do not love? How can you become more loving?*

If love is not within you it cannot come out of you. As followers of Christ we love because the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts. If we bury that love inside it won't come out. We bury love inside when we choose animosity, bitterness, and hatred. We bury love when we grow cold spiritually and focus on ourselves instead of God and others. In such a condition we do not communicate love even if we try. To become more loving we need to learn to release the love that God has implanted within us. We need to begin to fix our gaze on Jesus and those around us instead of focusing on ourselves and our situation. We need to spend time with God in prayer and Bible reading. We need to take physical steps to show love to those around us. As believers we have God's love. We need only to share it with others.

3. Communicate Truth

- Read *Acts 4:19-20*. *What were the consequences of Peter and John speaking the truth? Should they have said something else?*

Peter and John were arrested because they were speaking the truth of the resurrection. Speaking the truth is not always well received. In this case it reflected poorly on the Jewish leadership who had Jesus crucified. In this passage the apostles were faced with a decision: obey the instructions of the Jewish leadership or obey the instructions of God. They were witnesses proclaiming what they had seen and heard. The Jews wanted them to be false witnesses: to either say nothing or confirm the story of the Jewish leadership. Neither alternative was acceptable to Peter and John. Consequences sometimes come with speaking the truth.

- Read [Prov 12:17](#). *What is the purpose of falsehood? What is the purpose of truth?*
The purpose of falsehood is to deceive. Speaking the truth reveals what is.
 - *What situations might motivate you to misrepresent the truth? What are the hazards of doing so?*
Sometimes we are motivated to misrepresent the truth when doing so would make us look bad. Self-preservation kicks in and overtakes righteousness. Sometimes we are motivated to misrepresent the truth when it would be harmful to someone we care about. Mixing love with truth is more righteous than deceit. The truth usually comes out in the end anyway which makes matters worse causing broken relationships and damaged reputation.
4. Learn When To Keep Your Mouth Shut
- Read [Jud 11:30-35](#). *What were the consequences of Jephthah speaking his mind?*
Jephthah's vow cost him his daughter who was sacrificed as a burnt offering according to his word. He spoke his vow rashly without thinking. Asking God for help in battle would have been appropriate but making a vow is a serious matter which should not be made lightly. Actually, Jesus spoke against the making of vows ([Matt 5:33-37](#)).
 - Read [Prov 17:27-28](#). *What causes us to speak when we shouldn't?*
We speak when we shouldn't when we lack wisdom or let our emotions get in the way.
 - Read [Jam 1:26](#). *What does it reveal about a person who can't control their tongue?*
It reveals that his religious beliefs are worthless because they are not backed up by action. He has deceived himself thinking that he is righteous yet he has no self-control.
 - *Under what circumstances would it be best not to say anything?*
 - When you know little or nothing about the situation or subject
 - When you are motivated to speak by strong emotions
 - When you have nothing to say
 - When there is no benefit to saying something
 - When more can be said through silence

Asking Questions

What kinds or questions are asked in the references below based on the list given above?

- [Matt 15:1-3](#) Both the Pharisees and Jesus asked *loaded questions* that assumed wrong behavior asking why they did what they did.
- [Matt 15:34](#) Jesus asked a *material question* seeking information.
- [Matt 16:13-15](#) Jesus asked *evaluation questions* seeking their understanding. It was also an *open question* encouraging the disciples to express themselves.
- [Matt 19:3](#) It was a *leading question* seeking a "yes" answer but allowing Jesus options.
- [Matt 21:16](#) Jesus asked a *closed question* with either a yes or no answer.
- [Matt 21:25](#) Jesus asked a *loaded question* which they refused want to answer.
- [Acts 17:19](#) They were asking Paul an *ideational question* to explain his teaching.