

Communication

Detailed Outline

Part 2 of 4

I. General Principles of Good Communication (cont.)

3. Be aware of the ways you block good communication.

There are many different ways we can hinder communication. As a result of sin entering the world, we are not the communicators God made us to be. There are all kinds of ways we can ruin communication with other people and with God.

a. Lecturing and preaching

(1) People come to you and ask you a question. If you just lecture them and preach at them, they will never get a chance to say a word or ask questions.

(2) Illustration: One night, I went out with a young person and some other people. The young person asked a question, and for the next half hour, one of the men hammered him! By the time the man was done, I could see that the poor kid was worn out. Don't lecture and preach at people. Talk with them and draw them out.

b. Withdrawing or giving "the silent treatment"

If we don't like what people say or they offend us or they make us uncomfortable, we can withdraw or give them the silent treatment.

c. Being easily angered or hurt

(1) Some people don't want to go to their leaders because the leaders easily get angered or upset if you ask them a question or challenge them.

(2) Illustration: A friend who attended our church went to talk to his pastor (at another church). He simply said he thought the church should have some more Bible studies and that he wanted to open his home for having a Bible study. The pastor angrily snapped back at him, "If you can't support me, then get out!" My poor friend just wanted to bring a suggestion! You wouldn't approach that kind of person again, because you don't know what they will do!

d. Monopolizing conversations

(1) A person asks you a question or wants to talk to you about a concern, and then you do all the talking.

(2) We need to be careful of this, because people in church leadership often have this problem. They tend to be big talkers and have difficulty controlling their tongue. This wears the listener down!

(3) Learn to direct the conversation to the other person and draw them out.

e. Being argumentative

If you turn everything into a debate or argument, you will hinder people from coming to you.

All these things destroy good communication. They frustrate people, and they will stop coming to you. Seek to be aware of how you personally hinder good communication. If you don't know, have the courage to ask your spouse or a good friend. Ask them how you block good communication. If they have the courage, they will tell you. Often we don't notice that we are doing this. Take it to the Lord and seek to improve your weaknesses and to be a communicator more like our Lord Jesus.

4. Make a conscious effort to be a patient listener.

I cannot give you better advice than what James tells us in chapter 1. James has a lot to say about conflict. Here is one of the first things he says:

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness [that God requires]. (James 1:19 ESV)

Here is a scriptural command: you are to be a good listener. Someone wrote this: effective leadership has more to do with listening than with talking. It is tragic that so often, people will come to us and we never really hear them. We make misjudgments or misunderstandings because we don't take the time to listen and understand.

- a. People want to be heard and understood. They want you to listen to them.
- b. When people come to you, train yourself to listen. Be slow to speak, be quick to hear, and of course, be slow to anger. Your anger is not going to produce the kind of righteousness that God wants to produce in your life or the lives of others.
- c. When you are in a conversation with someone, ask lots of questions.
 - (1) Show real interest in the other person.
 - (2) Draw them out, and make sure you really understand what they are saying.
 - (3) Make it your business to get their perspective and understand their reasoning. Don't give them all of your advice as soon as they mention an issue you think you have the answers for. You haven't even heard what the problem is!
 - (4) A good leader or conversationalist does not do all the talking. He or she asks a lot of questions, seeking, listening, and evaluating. This is the secret to good leadership. Let people know that you are interested in who they are and what they have to say.
- d. Illustration: One time, a certain person came up to me at church. This person is known for being very emotional and getting heated and causing conflict. As they approached me, I could tell they were upset. So I placed my hand on that person's back and guided them to another room. We sat down on the couch, and I asked them what the problem was. As they told me, I simply listened and asked a few key questions, asking them how they thought the problem could be fixed. They calmed right down and the problem was solved. If I had

accused them of being emotionally out of control and always causing problems, this would have gone on and on. But by simply listening and asking questions, even asking what they thought the solution should be, they were satisfied. Most people, if you will just listen to them, will calm down.

“God gave us two eyes, two ears, and only one mouth. A lot of people never learn a lesson from that—which is that you ought always to use your eyes and ears twice as much as you use your mouth. Another way of putting it in electronic terms...is that the purpose of the eyes and ears is to program the mouth. The problem with a lot of human relationships is that there is too much unprogrammed talk.” – Reuel Howe, The Responsibility of the Preaching Task, p. 10

5. Be proactive in your communication.

- a. Because elders work under shared leadership, we need to be proactive and deliberate in how we communicate to one another. We must be able to talk to one another honestly and openly because we need to correct, challenge, and direct one another.
- b. This is especially true at elders’ meetings.
 - (1) So often people don’t speak up, because they are afraid it will cause disunity, or they fear older or more powerful members. They become silent members in the meeting.
 - (2) But God wants every perspective of every elder. Each one has something to contribute. God wants you to speak up! Your advice and counsel is needed in the eldership. You need to have courage and not be intimidated.
- c. A healthy eldership team promotes an atmosphere that encourages everyone to speak up honestly without fear of rejection or attack.
- d. Make sure this atmosphere of encouraging communication is maintained in the elders’ meetings and in the whole church.
- e. You must be able to speak to one another without intimidation and fear. If you see someone angry at another person or causing intimidation or fear, you need to speak up and address the problem. That is not how Christians should relate to one another. Deal with it right away.
- f. We need to be able to speak to one another clearly, honestly, openly, and sincerely; otherwise, we as elders will not be able to make good decisions.