

## What Is Communication?

Satisfying relational communication is a process of verbal and nonverbal interaction with others in which thoughts and feelings are shared and understood—that is, the receiver of the communication hears what is said and understands what is meant by the sender.

- **Verbal communication** conveys thoughts and feelings with the spoken word—both choice of words and tone of voice.
- **Nonverbal communication** expresses thoughts and feelings without words (facial expressions, body posture, hand gestures, direct or indirect eye contact, gentle or rough touch, apathetic or silent responses, platonic or romantic kisses).

*“The mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”*  
(Matthew 12:34)

## Some Guidelines for Effective Communication

Good relational communication has these three basic characteristics.

1. **Warmth**—conveying acceptance and courtesy  
Warmth says, “You are important to me. I will not try to make you a carbon copy of myself, but rather I desire that you fully realize your own potential.”
2. **Genuineness**—having no hidden agendas  
Genuineness says, “I am not trying to manipulate you, nor am I trying to bend you to my will.”
3. **Empathy**—putting one’s self in the other’s circumstances—  
“walking in another’s shoes”  
Empathy says, “While I may not know exactly what you are going through, I’m trying to understand the emotions you feel and the challenges you face. I will seek to understand you, rather than trying to make you understand me.”

## The “Ten Commandments” of Godly Communication

1. Your words are to be truthful. (Proverbs 12:22)
2. Your words are to be pleasing to God. (Psalm 19:14)
3. Your words are to be life-giving. (Proverbs 18:21)
4. Your words are to be encouraging. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
5. Your words are to be gracious. (Ecclesiastes 10:12)
6. Your words are to be wise. (Proverbs 10:13)
7. Your words are to be few. (Proverbs 10:19)
8. Your words are to be timely. (Proverbs 15:23)
9. Your words are to be an investment. (Proverbs 12:14)
10. Your words are to be loving. (1 Corinthians 13:1)

## Some Levels of Communication

1. **Common** (superficial): General remarks or inquiries that are appropriate between strangers are shared. (Read John 4:7–9.)
2. **Casual**: Statements and information are shared, but no real personal interaction occurs. (Read John 4:10–11.)
3. **Comfortable**: Thoughts and ideas are communicated in this first step toward risk taking. Objections, judgments, and decisions are easily expressed. (Read John 4:12–14.)
4. **Caring**: Feelings and emotions are shared by moving beyond “head talk” into revealing “who I am.” (Read John 4:16–26.)
5. **Committed**: Freedom from all fear of judgment or rejection may allow for meaningful emotional connection with another person. This highest level of communication requires complete openness and deep honesty. (Read John 4:32–35.)

## Words That Wound

- **Degrading Words**: Thoughtless, insensitive, teasing, wisecracking, critical, coarse, tactless, indelicate expressions, inappropriate words (Proverbs 12:18)

- **Demanding Words:** Ordering, threatening, arguing, cursing, accusing, probing, angry words (Proverbs 27:4)
- **Demeaning Words:** Moralizing, preaching, lecturing, judging, criticizing, disapproving, condemning words (Proverbs 18:21)
- **Destructive Words:** Gossiping, repeating rumors or confidences, discrediting, belittling, blaming others, slandering words (Proverbs 11:9)
- **Deceitful Words:** Lying, false statements, exaggerating, bragging, boasting, flattering, insincere, untruthful words (Proverbs 15:4)

*“Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men,  
from men whose words are perverse.”*

(Proverbs 2:12)

## Hidden Agendas

- **I will receive love** if I hide my faults, stuff my feelings, look good, become popular, give gifts, flatter those around me, and am always willing to please or help others.
- **I will have significance** if I deny my failures, appear superior, dominate, judge and criticize others, point out faults, perform well, get attention, or impress others.
- **I will be secure** if I conceal my fears, deny my anger, avoid conflict, shade the truth, withhold trust, dodge vulnerability, require certain conditions, and, above all, stay in control.

*“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure.*

*Who can understand it?”*

(Jeremiah 17:9)

## Key Verse to Memorize

*“Do not let any unwholesome talk  
come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful  
for building others up according to their needs,  
that it may benefit those who listen.”*

(Ephesians 4:29)

## Key Passage to Read

Ephesians chapter 4

## Listening to God

- Listening to God requires a belief that God loves me and desires to communicate with me. (Jeremiah 31:3)

- Listening to God requires consistent reading, studying, and meditating on His living Word, the Bible. (Isaiah 55:11)
- Listening to God means regularly getting alone and giving Him my undivided attention. (Matthew 14:23)
- Listening to God is opening my heart and letting God point His finger of truth on the real me. (Psalm 139:23-24)
- Listening to God is listening carefully to others, realizing that God may be using them to communicate His personal message to me. (Proverbs 13:10)
- Listening to God is recognizing the presence of the Holy Spirit within me and responding to His guidance for communicating with others. (John 14:26)

*“Let the wise listen and add to their learning,  
and let the discerning get guidance.”*

(Proverbs 1:5)

## Seven Don'ts for Successful Listening

1. **Don't** feel you must do the talking. (Ecclesiastes 3:7)
2. **Don't** give premature advice. (Proverbs 18:13)
3. **Don't** become defensive. (Proverbs 19:11)
4. **Don't** become hot-tempered. (Proverbs 15:18)
5. **Don't** laugh at others. (Proverbs 11:12)
6. **Don't** hold on to hatred. (Proverbs 10:12)
7. **Don't** break a confidence. (Proverbs 11:13)

## Recipe for Reconciliation

When life gives you lemons ... make lemonade! Practice following this easy recipe and taste the sweetness of reconciling painful differences.

- **Confront:** When one of you feels sour (hurt, frustrated or unjustly treated), don't hold it in. Communicate feelings (anger or unmet need) by squeezing out the truth in a loving, nonaccusatory way. (Ephesians 4:15, 26)
- **Comply:** The person being confronted indicates a willingness to listen (to receive the rebuke without becoming angry or defensive) and sincerely seeks to hear the other's pain. (Ephesians 5:21)

- **Confirm:** The listener now paraphrases the problem back (repeats what is heard) without reacting negatively. (Proverbs 15:31)
- **Change:** After feelings have been delivered and received, the hurting one is allowed to request a change in behavior. Willingness to listen and changed behavior becomes the sweet ingredient for developing intimacy in the relationship. (Proverbs 13:19)

## Communicate

**C**ommunicate care.

“I really care about your feelings. Are you okay?”

**O**pen the door on the past.

“I would like to know how you felt about your father.”

**M**ove away from manipulation.

“When is a good time for us to talk?”

**M**irror the message back.

“I hear you saying that you feel I have rejected you. Is that right?”

**U**se “I” messages instead of “you” messages.

“I’m struggling with feeling that I am of little value to you.”

**N**ever say “never.”

“I feel at times that my opinions are not respected.”

**I**nvest yourself in the other person’s security.

“Have I made it safe for you to respond?”

**C**larify when confused.

“Would it be better if I were not here at his time?”

**A**void arguments.

“Help me understand your reasons for this decision.”

**T**rust the Lord’s timing.

“Let’s talk when it’s convenient for you.”

**E**liminate expectations.

“I love you and am committed to our relationship.”

*“The tongue has the power of life and death,  
and those who love it will eat its fruit.”*

(Proverbs 18:21)

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