

The Impact of Words . . .

Have you ever paused to evaluate the impact of how you communicate? A thoughtful, encouraging word, an empathetic comment, a compassionate glance . . . or a careless comment, a rude remark, a sarcastic smirk . . . what do they really communicate to those closest to you? Your words have the potential of bringing life or death to the heart of another. Your words, along with underlying attitudes, will either build others up or tear them down, strengthen them in the Lord or weaken their faith.

*“Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
and those who love it will eat its fruits.”
(Proverbs 18:21)*

Q: “Why is it often difficult to have healthy communication within close relationships?”

Healthy, mature communication is the revelation of our true selves to someone who cares about us. Risk of rejection can be so intense that we learn different ways to hide our fears and self-doubts. We may not be aware of the destructive habits that were often formed in childhood and that stayed with us into adulthood. Yet they remain established responses that block honest and sincere communication with others.

*“When I was a child, I spoke like a child,
I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.
When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.”
(1 Corinthians 13:11)*

Q: “How can I communicate with others in a way that is most pleasing to God?”

The method of communication most pleasing to God is one that reflects Jesus Christ in all you say and do. That means allowing Jesus Christ to be Lord of your life . . . allowing Him to express His words and actions through you.

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,
teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom,
singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with
thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do,
in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord
Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”
(Colossians 3:16–17)*

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)

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”
(Exodus 20:16)

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. You are valuable to me. I enjoy and respect you. 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. I want to make it safe for you to communicate with me and safe for you to trust that I will be truthful with you.”
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.”

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.”
(Proverbs 25:11)

Key Verse to Memorize

“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”
(Ephesians 4:29)

Key Passage to Read and Reread

Ephesians chapter 4

Listening to Others

- Listen with focused attention. (Proverbs 18:13)
- Listen without judging. (James 1:19)
- Listen without dispensing advice. (Proverbs 17:28)
- Listen without becoming defensive. (Proverbs 19:11)
- Listen with humility. (Proverbs 29:23)
- Listen with love. (Proverbs 3:3)

*“When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.”
(Proverbs 10:19)*

Communicate

- C**ommunicate care.
- O**pen the door on the past.
- M**ove away from manipulation.
- M**irror the message back.
- U**se “I” messages instead of “you” messages.
- N**ever say “never.”
- I**nterest yourself in the other person’s security.
- C**larify when confused.
- A**void arguments.
- T**rust the Lord’s timing.
- E**liminate expectations.

*“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”
(Matthew 12:34)*

Related Topics . . .

- Conflict Resolution:
Solving People Problems
- Critical Spirit:
Be an Encourager—Not a Critic
- Friendship:
Iron Sharpening Iron
- Mentoring:
How to Shepherd the Sheep
- Premarital Counseling:
Are You Fit to Be Tied?

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