

Biblical Principles and Practice of Christlike Communication

A. Introduction

- Context – Eph 1- 4:24
- Relationships (Vertical and Horizontal)
- Don't miss the Heart (Mat 12:34-35; Jas 4:1-3)
- The Goal in communication (1 Tim 1:5; 1 Cor 10:31; Col 1:28-29)

B. The Definition of Communication (Mack):

1. A process of sharing information with another person in such a way that the sender's message is understood in the way he intended it to be understood.
2. The art of conveying information and meaning in order to come to a common understanding.
3. A process of sharing information with another person in such a way that the people involved are mutually strengthened, enriched, and encouraged, and thus experience harmony, unity, and emotional closeness.

Good communication from God's perspective is sending a message that is true, holy, purposeful, clear, and timely. The recipient in love, humility and with care should listen to what is being said, trying to understand where the communicator is coming from without reacting – clarifying with questions if needed. Upon receiving the message, the recipient should then ponder before answering and continue using these biblical principles. SScott

C. Four Helpful Principles of Communication

(Eph. 4:25-32, remember this is in light of our Union with Christ and the fact that we are new creatures in Christ)

1. **PRINCIPLE 1 – Be honest in the Family of God** (Eph. 4:25)

a) Speak

b) Speak truth.

c) Speak truth lovingly

(Eph. 4:15; Ps 141:3; Prv 13:3; 21:23)

(1) Be concerned with what you say.

(2) Be concerned with how you say it.

(3) Be concerned with how much you say.

(4) Be concerned with when you say it.

(5) Be concerned with why you say it

d) Become a skilled listener (takes practice).

2. **PRINCIPLE 2 – Don't Sin & Keep current** (vv. 26, 27).

- a) Failure in attempting to solve each day's problems quickly is sin. Don't carry them over into tomorrow. (See Matt. 6:34)

- b) Failure to solve problems quickly:
 - (1) Opens way to resentment, hatred, and bitterness
 - (2) Distorts subsequent problems
 - (3) Endangers the sexual relationship
 - (4) Sets the stage for spiritual discouragement

- c) Questions to ask before bringing up an issue:

3. PRINCIPLE 3 – Don't Tear Down but Build Up (vv. 29,30).

- a) "Unwholesome word"
 - (1) Words that tear down
 - (2) Words that bypass the conflict
 - (3) Words that grieve the Holy Spirit

b) Edifying words

(1) Words that encourage or build up

(2) Words that deal with what the person says or does

(3) Words that help reach a solution

4. **PRINCIPLE 4 – Respond like Jesus, not in the Flesh** (vv. 31,32).

a) Typical Reactions (v. 31)

(1) Attitudes and actions that must be put off:

- (a) Bitterness
- (b) Wrath
- (c) Anger
- (d) Clamor
- (e) Slander
- (f) Malice

(2) The natural tendency of our sinful flesh is to be defensive about dealing with our own sins (shift blame, run, react, etc.).

b) Actions (v. 32)

(1) Attitudes and actions that must be put on (v.32):

- (a) Kindness
- (b) Tender-heartedness
- (c) Forgiveness

(2) It is only through God's Spirit that we can learn to be this way.

c) Conflicts are resolved when we act and don't react.

CONCLUSION

1. Changing our hearts and lives (habits) is impossible on our own and is difficult even with God's help. But by God's Spirit and His strengthening grace, it can and must be done. 1 Corinthians 10:13 ; Philippians 2:12-13; 1 Timothy 4:7-9; Romans 8:13
2. What principle(s) do you need to work on the most?
3. When will you plan on working on this?
4. Who will you ask to help you (or hold you accountable)?

A Suggested Homework Assignment for Communication – **The Conference Table**³

1. What It Is

- a) A homework assignment designed to help people develop effective, biblical communication patterns
- b) A strategy for helping people put off the old sinful ways of communicating and putting on the new, biblical way of communicating
- c) A forum for discussing and resolving conflicts and problems in a constructive way

2. Rationale

- a) We have an inborn capacity for developing habits.
- b) Because we are born sinners, many of the habit patterns we developed were unbiblical.
- c) These sinful patterns need to be changed because they are:
 - (1) Displeasing to God
 - (2) Harmful to the person
 - (3) Hurtful to that person's relationships with other people
- d) To change these unbiblical habit patterns requires:
 - (1) The new birth and all of its results and benefits
 - (2) An awareness and acknowledgment of wrong habit patterns
 - (3) An understanding of and desire for the development of biblical habit patterns
 - (4) Actually practicing the new behavior pattern until it becomes a habit – Hebrews 5:13-14, Ephesians 4:22-24, and II Timothy 3:16 delineate the biblical process by which change occurs.
- e) The conference table is one way to facilitate the practice of proper communication patterns.

2. Arrangements

³ Adapted from Jay Adams, *Christian Living in the Home*

- a) Time – agreeable to everyone; least likelihood of interruption; not at worst physically
- b) Place – preferably not some place with bad associations

3. Rules

- a) Participants – everyone involved
- b) Leadership
- c) Secretary – writes down day and time, topics, solutions, steps to be taken, topics not solved
- d) Communication principles of Ephesians 4:25-32

4. Procedure

- a) Ephesians 4:25-32
- b) Prayer
- c) Initially deal with day's concerns
- d) If none, with most recent
- e) Everyone takes turn
- f) Problems only at conference table
- g) Problems discussed with view to solution

5. Length

- a) Each session - at least 15 minutes, no more than 30
- b) If no solution, put off until next time.
- c) If still no solution after several tries, seek godly counsel.