

Communication

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I. Definitions

1. **Communication** *n.* – 1. The action of communicating or imparting. Now rare of things material, except as the vehicles of information: *e.g.* of a letter, a paper to a society, an article to a magazine, etc. 2. *spec.* The imparting, conveying, or exchange of ideas, knowledge, information, etc. (whether by speech, writing, or signs). 4. Interchange of speech, conversation, conference.
2. **Communicate** *v.* – 1. *trans.* To give to another as a partaker; to give a share of; to impart, confer, transmit (something intangible or abstract, as light, heat, motion, a quality, feeling, etc.). 2. *spec.* a. To impart (information, knowledge, or the like); to impart or convey the knowledge of, inform a person of, tell. (cites Gal 2:2)
3. **Impart** *v.* – 1. *trans.* To give a part or share of; to make another a partaker of; to bestow, give, communicate.
4. **Conversation** *n.* – 1. The action of living or having one's being *in* a place or *among* persons. 7. Interchange of thoughts and words; familiar discourse or talk.

II. We were designed by God to communicate with others.

1. We are communicative creatures because we are created in the image of God (**Gen 1:27; Jam 3:9**) who is a communicative being.
 - A. God communed with men personally (**Gen 18:33; Exo 25:22**).
 - B. God spoke to men through prophets and His Son Jesus Christ (**Heb 1:1-2**).
2. The Bible extols face-to-face communication, and so should we (**2Jo 1:12; 3Jo 1:13-14**).
3. Texting, emailing, social media, and even talking on the phone are no substitute for face-to-face communication.

III. Communing

1. **Commune** *v.* – II. Current senses, now always *commune*. 6. *intr.* a. To talk together, converse. b. To confer, consult (with a view to decision). 7. *intr.* To hold intimate (chiefly mental or spiritual) intercourse (*with*).
2. Communing with someone reveals what is in his mind (**Gen 23:8-11**).
3. The queen of Sheba communed with Solomon of all that was in her heart (**1Ki 10:2**).
4. In order to commune intimately with others, we must first commune with ourselves so that we know ourselves and have a thought-out philosophy of life on which to base our thoughts in conversation (**Psa 4:4; Psa 77:6; Ecc 1:16**).

IV. Communication skills are necessary to impart thoughts and information to others effectively.

1. The gospel is transmitted from one person to another by verbal or written communication (**Gal 2:2**).

- A. Notice from Gal 2:2 that to effectively communicate the gospel (or anything) to others, it is not only necessary to transmit the facts to other person, but also to do so at an opportune time and in a manner that will increase its likelihood of being received.
- B. To communicate our faith to others effectively, we must be humble and acknowledge that every good thing in us is in Christ Jesus (**Phm 1:6**).
- 2. Communication skills are necessary to negotiate, especially from a position of weakness.
 - A. Abraham had a conversation with God in an attempt to negotiate the sparing of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (**Gen 18:20-33**).
 - B. Notice the communication skills Abraham employed while negotiating with God.
 - i. He reasons from the concept of justice (**v. 23**).
 - ii. Having the under hand, he begins his negotiation with a reasonable offer that is not likely to be rejected (**v. 24**).
 - iii. He appeals to God's righteousness (**v. 25**).
 - iv. Having made it through round one, he precedes with humility (**v. 26-28**).
 - v. He builds off of previous successes, incrementally asking for more while continuing to humble himself (**v. 29-31**).
 - vi. He has the wisdom to know when to stop (**v. 32**).

V. Some tips on communication

- 1. Not all questions need answered.
 - A. Jesus with the Samaritan woman
 - i. When conversing with the Samaritan woman, Jesus repeatedly ignored her distracting questions and directed the conversation where He wanted to take it (**Joh 4:7-16**).
 - ii. This is a good tactic to use when witnessing to others about Biblical things.
 - iii. Don't let them derail the conversation with irrelevant questions.
 - iv. Just ignore them, or say that we can get back to that later.
 - B. Jesus with freeloaders
 - i. After getting a free lunch, some of the unbelieving Jews tracked down Jesus on the other side of the sea and asked Him when He got there (**Joh 6:25**).
 - ii. Jesus ignored their question and told them that they were not seeking Him because of the miracles He did, but because of the free food (**Joh 6:26**).
 - iii. Don't waste time answering questions from people who are not seeking Jesus for the right reason.
 - iv. Note: if churches give out free meals to the public, they should expect to get freeloading "followers" of Christ.
 - C. Jesus witnessing to unbelieving Jews
 - i. When Jesus received a question from those who did not believe on Him, He ignored it and instead told them what to do (**Joh 12:34-40**).
 - ii. We need not to answer the questions of those who are not honest inquirers.
 - D. Nehemiah with the enemies of the Jews
 - i. When Nehemiah was rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, some of his enemies tried to get him to come down and meet with them (**Neh 6:1-2**).

- ii. Nehemiah perceived that they thought to do him mischief and declined their request, saying that he was doing a great work and would not stop to waste his time with them (**Neh 6:3**).
 - iii. Never take time away from what you should be doing to talk with people who are going to waste your time.
 - iv. They repeated their request four times, to all of which Nehemiah gave the same response (**Neh 6:4**).
 - v. Don't bother coming up with new ways to decline the repeated requests of fools; just keep repeating your answer.
 - E. Ignore stupid questions.
 - i. Foolish and unlearned questions, genealogies, and strivings about the law should be avoided, not entertained (**2Ti 2:23; 1Ti 1:4; Tit 3:9**).
 - ii. Don't strive over words to no profit, but only engage in conversations with the intent of subverting the hearers (**2Ti 2:14**).
 - iii. Shun profane and vain babblings (**2Ti 2:16**).
 - iv. Don't give heed to Jewish fables (**Tit 1:14**).
 - v. Refuse profane and old wives' fables (**1Ti 4:7**).
 - vi. These verses are written to pastors and make it clear that they do not need to entertain and answer all questions they receive, especially stupid ones.
- 2. It's not wrong to "play dumb" and ask questions you already know the answer to.
 - A. Jesus on the road to Emmaus
 - i. After His resurrection, Jesus walked with two men to Emmaus, during which He acted as if He did not know what they were talking about (**Luk 24:13-19**), even though they were talking about Him.
 - ii. Jesus "played dumb" in order to get them to elaborate so that He could preach the gospel to them (**Luk 24:25-27**).
 - B. Jesus with the Samaritan woman
 - i. Despite knowing that the Samaritan woman was in a relationship with a man who was not her husband (**Joh 4:17-18**), Jesus "played dumb" and told her to go and call her husband (**Joh 4:16**).
 - ii. Again, Jesus "played dumb" for a purpose: to demonstrate His omniscience to the woman and prove that He was the Messiah (**Joh 4:17-19, 28-29**).
 - C. Jesus prior to feeding the 5000
 - i. Jesus asked Philip where they should go to buy bread to feed the multitude that had been following Him (**Joh 6:5**).
 - ii. He did this to prove him, already knowing what He would do (**Joh 6:6**).
 - iii. This can be an effective tactic when training children or employees to get them to think for themselves.
- 3. It's not wrong to say something to one person when the message is really meant for another person who is hearing it.
 - A. Jesus spoke to the Father so that the people around Him would hear and believe that He was sent by God (**Joh 11:41-42**).
 - B. The Father spoke audibly to Jesus Christ for the sake of the people around Him who would hear Him (**Joh 12:28-30**).
 - C. It's therefore okay to say something to one person for the purpose of a bystander hearing it.

VI. Types of conversation

1. Small talk

- A. Though it may be rather boring and unenjoyable, especially for introverts and intellectuals, small talk serves a purpose.
 - i. It would be awkward to meet someone for the first time and begin the conversation with musings about the meaning of life or a discussion about the proper role of government in society.
 - ii. Just as stretching is advisable prior to a strenuous workout, so is small talk before a serious, meaningful, and fruitful conversation.
- B. The Bible gives examples of engaging in small talk.
 - i. Do you know so-and-so? (**Gen 29:5**)
 - ii. How is so-and-so doing? (**Gen 29:6**)
 - iii. But the Bible does not put a premium on small talk.
- C. There are two extremes to avoid when it comes to small talk.
 - i. Never engaging in small talk
 - a. Some socially-challenged people who don't understand social norms will skip the "hi, how are you, what have you been up to?" introduction and jump right into whatever topic they have been obsessing about all day.
 - b. This is off-putting to most people.
 - c. Such a person needs to learn to "warm up" with some light conversation for a few minutes before diving into something thought-provoking and interesting.
 - ii. Always engaging in small talk
 - a. Some people never go deeper in a conversation than discussing the weather, what they ate for lunch today, how the game went last night, what happened at work today, and what they saw on social media this morning.
 - b. Such a person needs to spend more time thinking about serious matters of life and reading quality books (starting with the Bible).
 - (i) This will focus his mind on important and substantial things which will then prompt him to talk about such things (**Luk 6:45; Psa 77:12**).
 - (ii) This will also give him a depth of knowledge and understanding that will enable him to have an intelligent and fruitful conversation about things that matter (**Psa 119:27; 1Pe 3:15; Pro 15:28; Pro 22:20-21**).
 - (iii) The degree to which a man will be able to engage in a meaningful, interesting, and fruitful conversation will in many cases be proportional to the number of quality books he has read (or possibly other media he has consumed such as podcasts, lectures, documentaries, etc.).
 - (iv) A Christian should at a minimum read and study his Bible so that he will be able to participate in a conversation about

spiritual matters and not be ashamed by his ignorance (**2Ti 2:15**).

2. Serious conversation

A. Sound speech is extolled in the Bible.

- i. Pastors are to be a pattern for the brethren to follow in all things, including sound speech (**Tit 2:7-8**).
- ii. Sound *adj.* – II. 8. a. In full accordance with fact, reason, or good sense; founded on true or well-established grounds; free from error, fallacy, or logical defect; good, strong, valid.

B. Christians are exhorted to be grave (**1Ti 3:8, 11; Tit 2:2**).

- i. Grave *adj.* - 1. Of persons: Having weight or importance; influential, respected. (Sometimes used as an epithet of respectful address.) Of authors, books, maxims, advice: Weighty, authoritative. 3. Of persons, their character, aspect, speech, or behaviour: Marked by weighty dignity; of reverend seriousness. In later use with wider sense, of temperament, feeling, or their manifestations: Serious, not mirthful or jocular; opposed to gay.
- ii. This implies that our conversations should be more serious than trifling.

C. One does not need impressive oratorical skills to engage in quality conversation.

- i. Paul was rude in speech, but not in knowledge (**2Co 11:6**).
- ii. His speech was contemptible, but his ideas were weighty and powerful (**2Co 10:10**).

D. A good conversation is like iron sharpening iron (**Pro 27:17**).

E. A good heart-to-heart conversation with another person is like looking into a mirror and seeing your thoughts, feelings, experiences, struggles, and temptations in the other person (**Pro 27:19**).

F. There will only be a limited amount of people in one's life and social circles with whom he can engage in serious conversation.

- i. Some people have neither the inclination nor the ability to discuss meaningful matters of life.
- ii. A man can find people with whom he can participate in weighty conversation by asking *personal questions* and bringing up *intellectual topics*.
 - a. If the person will not open up about personal matters or shows no interest in, or has nothing to say about, intellectual topics, then serious conversation with him is very unlikely.
 - b. In such as case, talk about the weather for a few minutes and then seek out someone else with whom to converse seriously.
- iii. A good way to generate a meaningful conversation is to ask the other person what he is reading these days.
 - a. His answer will indicate how deep of a thinker he is.
 - b. It could also bring up interesting topics for conversation.
- iv. "Men always talk about the most important things to perfect strangers."
(G.K. Chesterton)

3. What a person talks about most manifests his intellect.

- A. "Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people." (falsely attributed to Eleanor Roosevelt)

- B. “Men and women range themselves into three classes or orders of intelligence; you can tell the lowest class by their habit of always talking about persons; the next by the fact that their habit is always to converse about things; the highest by their preference for the discussion of ideas.” (Henry Thomas Buckle)

VII. Tips for effective and enjoyable communication

1. To be interesting, you must be interested.

A. If you want to make and maintain friendships, you must be friendly (**Pro 18:24**).

B. Charity seeks not her own (**1Co 13:5; 1Co 10:24; Php 2:4**).

C. The desire of a man is his kindness (**Pro 19:22**).

- i. If you are kind to others and show genuine interest in them, they will desire you.
 - a. “We are interested in others when they are interested in us.” (Publius Syrus)
 - b. “...one can make more friends in two months by becoming genuinely interested in other people than one can in two years by trying to get other people interested in him.” (Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, pp. 57-58)
- ii. If you don’t care what others have to say, they will not be interested in you.
- iii. “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” (Theodore Roosevelt)
- iv. “...the royal road to a man’s heart is to talk to him about the things he treasures most.” (Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, pp. 89)

D. Be humble.

- i. God resists the proud (**1Pe 5:5**), and so do other people.
- ii. “We ought to be modest, for neither you nor I amount to much. Both of us will pass on and be completely forgotten a century from now. Life is too short to bore other people with talk of our petty accomplishments. Let’s encourage them to talk instead. Come to think about it, you haven’t much to brag about anyhow.” (Ibid, p. 144)
- iii. Ask questions instead of always talking about yourself.
- iv. “If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person’s point of view and see things from his angle as well as your own.” (Henry Ford, quoted by Dale Carnegie in *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, pp. 42-43)
- v. If you start paying attention to most conversations, you will notice that they are a long series of declarative sentences with few, if any, questions ever asked.
- vi. Approach a conversation with the attitude of learning something from or about the other person (esteem others better than yourself) (**Php 2:3**).
- vii. “Remember what Emerson said: ‘Every man I meet is in some way my superior; and in that I can learn of him.’” (Ibid, p. 96)

2. Learn to listen attentively.

A. “Isaac F. Marcossou, who is probably the world’s champion interviewer of celebrities, declared that many people fail to make a favorable impression because

they don't listen attentively. 'They have been so much concerned with what they are going to say next that they do not keep their ears open. . . . Big men have told me that they prefer good listeners to good talkers, but the ability to listen seems rarer than almost any other good trait.'" (Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, pp. 86)

B. Be swift to hear and slow to speak (**Jam 1:19**).

- i. Listen when the other person talks instead of impatiently waiting for him to stop talking so that you can say what you want to.
 - a. "People love to talk but hate to listen. Listening is not merely not talking, though even that is beyond most of our powers; it means taking a vigorous, human interest in what is being told us. You can listen like a blank wall or like a splendid auditorium where every sound comes back fuller and richer." (Alice Duer Miller)
 - (i) After someone finishes telling you something, repeat back to him what he said: "What I hear you saying is..."
 - (ii) This will do two things: 1) it will help you to understand and remember what the person said, and 2) it will show him that you are interested in what he has to say.
 - (iii) Don't overdo it to the point of being annoying though.
 - b. "Listening is a magnetic and strange thing, a creative force. The friends who listen to us are the ones we move toward, and we want to sit in their radius. When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand." (Karl Menninger)
- ii. When someone finishes telling you about something that he recently accomplished or something that he is interested in, rather than responding by talking about one of your accomplishments or something you're interested in, instead ask him questions about what he just mentioned.
 - a. "When someone is relating an important event that's happened to them, don't try to top them with a story of your own. Let them have the stage." (H. Jackson Brown Jr, *Life's Little Instruction Book*, #133)
 - b. "That is the happiest conversation where there is no competition, no vanity, but a calm quiet interchange of sentiments." (Samuel Johnson)

3. Don't talk too much.

- A. A fool is full of words (**Ecc 10:11-14**).
- B. Wise men spare their words (**Pro 17:27-28; Pro 29:11**).
- C. "The real art of conversation is not only to say the right thing in the right place but to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment." (Dorothy Nevill)
- D. Wise observations about talking too much
 - i. "In fact, it is generally found, that those who have the most discourse have the least knowledge. Words are too often the substitute for thinking, rather than the medium of thought." (Charles Bridges, *Ecclesiastes*, p. 251)
 - ii. "Empty wagons make more noise than full and weighty ones." (Elder Leon Clevenger)

- iii. “Most of the successful people I’ve known are the ones who do more listening than talking.” (Bernard M. Baruch)
 - iv. “Wise men speak because they have something to say; fools because they have to say something.” (Plato)
 - v. “Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and to remove all doubt.” (Unknown)
 - vi. “When I think over what I have said, I envy dumb people.” (Seneca)
 - E. Talking for long periods without pausing to give the other person a chance to respond will weary and irritate him.
 - F. This is especially true if the person you’re conversing with is an introvert or a person with manners who doesn’t like to interrupt.
4. Don’t talk about yourself too much.
- A. Fools are only interested in themselves (**Pro 18:2**).
 - B. “If you want to know how to make people shun you and laugh at you behind your back and even despise you, here is the recipe: Never listen to anyone for long. Talk incessantly about yourself. If you have an idea while the other fellow is talking, don’t wait for him to finish. He isn’t as smart as you. Why waste your time listening to his idle chatter? Bust right in and interrupt him in the middle of a sentence.” (Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, pp. 87)
 - C. “The man who talks only of himself, thinks only of himself. And ‘the man who thinks only of himself,’ says Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University, ‘is hopelessly uneducated.’ ‘He is not educated,’ says Dr. Butler, ‘no matter how instructed he may be.’
- “So if you aspire to be a good conversationalist, be attentive listeners. As Mrs. Charles Northam Lee puts it: ‘To be interesting, be interested.’ Ask questions that the other man will enjoy answering. Encourage him to talk about himself and his accomplishments.
- “Remember that the man you are talking to is a hundred times more interested in himself and his wants and his problems than he is in you and your problems. His toothache means more to him than a famine in China that kills a million people. A boil on his neck interests him more than forty earthquakes in Africa. Think of that the next time you start a conversation.” (Ibid, pp. 87-88)
- D. “‘Stop a minute,’ says Kenneth M. Goode, in his book, *How to Turn People into Gold*, ‘stop a minute to contrast your keen interest in your own affairs with your mild concern about anything else. Realize then, that everybody else in the world feels exactly the same way! Then, along with Lincoln and Roosevelt, you will have grasped the only solid foundation for any job other than a warden in a penitentiary: namely, that success in dealing with people depends on a sympathetic grasp of the other man’s viewpoint.’” (Ibid, p. 151)
5. Don’t interrupt.
- A. “Listen or thy tongue will keep thee deaf.” (American Indian proverb)
 - B. Interrupting someone is rude.
 - C. It implies that what he has to say is not important, or at least not as important as your thoughts.

- D. Interrupting is especially offensive to introverted people.
- E. Extroverted people are used to interrupting and they often don't mind being interrupted.
 - i. There are some people who talk incessantly and will NEVER stop unless interrupted.
 - ii. With such people, you have to learn to interrupt them, or you will be attending a lecture, not participating in a conversation.
- 6. Remember the other person's name and use it in conversation occasionally.
 - A. "Remember that a man's name is to him the sweetest and most important sound in any language." (Ibid, p. 79)
 - B. Remembering a man's name after first hearing it requires effort, but it pays huge dividends.

VIII. The art of conversation

1. Good conversation is an art.
2. In my view, the following elements are necessary for good conversation:
 - A. Some degree of common background or interests
 - i. The people with whom I have the best, most enjoyable conversations are those with whom I share the most values and principles.
 - ii. The more values and principles that two people share, the more they will be able to freely talk about.
 - iii. The fewer values and principles that two people share, the fewer things they will be able to freely discuss.
 - B. A seamless back-and-forth exchange of ideas
 - C. A good ratio of talking and listening, and questions and declarations
 - D. A brief to moderate time of speaking, followed by a natural pause which gives the other an opportunity to respond
 - E. Knowledge of the subject matter of the conversation
 - F. A broad knowledge of many areas of life and study which enables a person to know at least enough to have something of value to add or to be able to ask informed questions
 - G. A genuine curiosity about people and ideas
 - H. A willingness to open up and share one's inward thoughts and feelings
3. Let your speech be always with grace and seasoned with salt (**Col 4:6**).
 - A. "Let your speech be always with grace, Col 4:6. Let all your discourse be as becomes Christians, suitable to your profession - savoury, discreet, seasonable.' Though it be not always of grace, it must be always with grace; and, though the matter of our discourse be that which is common, yet there must be an air of piety upon it and it must be in a Christian manner seasoned with salt. Grace is the salt which seasons our discourse, makes it savoury, and keeps it from corrupting." (Matthew Henry's Commentary, Col 4:6)
 - B. "it should be in the exercise of grace; it should be in truth, faithfulness, and sincerity, without lying, dissimulation, and flattery; it should be in consistence with the grace of love, therefore evil should not be spoken one of another; nor should there be whisperings, backbitings, or anything said that is injurious to the character, credit, and reputation of another; for this is contrary to love, and so not with grace:

and whatever is said should be spoken in the fear of God; the reason why so many evil things proceed out of the mouths of men is, because the fear of God is not before their eyes. Moreover, the speech of the saints ought to be in a graceful way, with a cheerful and pleasant countenance, in an affable and courteous manner, and not after a morose, churlish, and ill natured fashion:" (John Gill's Commentary, Col 4:6)

- C. "grace being that to speech, as salt is to meat; as salt makes meat savoury and agreeable to the palate, so grace, prudence, and holiness, which may be meant by salt, see Mar 9:50, make discourse savoury, pleasant, and acceptable to a spiritual man, who savours the things that be of God, as all such things are that relate to the grace of God, the work or doctrines of it; and as salt preserves flesh from putrefaction and corruption, so when grace goes along with speech, it makes it pure and incorrupt, sound speech which cannot be condemned: and the apostle's view is, in this exhortation, that nothing unsavoury and corrupt proceed out of the mouths of believers; see Eph 4:29," (Ibid)

IX. Introverts vs extroverts

1. Introversion and extroversion are not necessarily synonymous with quietness and loquaciousness.
2. Introverts
 - A. Introverts spend a lot of time in their own heads.
 - B. They are energized by spending time alone.
 - C. An introvert must expend much energy when conversing with others.
 - D. During a conversation, energy is lost for him.
 - E. After spending time in conversation, he must retreat to his quiet place to think, rest, read, and recharge.
3. Extroverts
 - A. Extroverts don't require a lot of alone time.
 - B. They are energized by talking with other people.
 - C. Conversation not laborious for them.
 - D. They gain energy in a conversation.
 - E. After conversing with a roomful of people, they are revitalized.
4. Keep these things in mind when conversing with different people.
 - A. Be careful to not automatically assume that a person who doesn't talk a lot is either shy or unsocial.
 - B. He may just be introverted and prefers quality conversation in an intimate setting rather than socializing in groups.