



APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN

Counseling and Family Services

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Healthy Communication Principles

God has created us to be social beings. We live in a world focused on relationships, and we communicate daily with numerous people. Thankfully, the Bible holds a wealth of principles which can help to guide and instruct us in these interactions. Our responsibility, as the Word states in *Psalms 19:14*, is to have the words of our mouth “*be acceptable in Thy sight. . .*” Our opportunity regarding communication is to “*minister grace unto the hearers*” (*Eph. 4:29*). In this series of three articles we will review general healthy communication principles, explore ungodly communication in the form of gossip and discord, and instruct on a few key conflict resolution principles. It is our prayer we can grow together in healthy communication.

Seven Scriptural Principles of Communication

1. The power of communication and its impact on relationships is great.

Your communication can determine the course of many relationships by strengthening or weakening them. Therefore, you must closely watch your words and the way you communicate with each other. The power of the tongue is especially great.

Proverbs 18:8, “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.”

Proverbs 25:11, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.”

Matthew 12:35-37, “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.”

Colossians 4:6, “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”

2. Speak words of blessing and edification.

Your words should build up and strengthen those around you. To communicate in a Christ-like manner, the welfare of others must be more important than our own desires.

Proverbs 16:24, “Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.”

Romans 14:19, “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.”

Romans 15:2, “Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.”

Ephesians 4:29, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

3. Effective listening is one of the most important components of communication.

Through active listening, you communicate respect and honor others. Communication often goes awry when one or both parties are trying to speak before they have taken the time to understand the other.

Proverbs 18:13, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him."

Proverbs 29:20, "Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? There is more hope of a fool than of him."

Romans 12:10, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another."

4. Your words have the power to build up and bless or tear down and hurt.

Avoid making critical, hurtful, or demeaning comments to others. This is especially critical in a marriage relationship.

Ephesians 5:28, 29, 33, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. . . Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

James 3:5-10, "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."

1 Peter 3:10, "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile."

5. Be sensitive to the timing of your communication.

There truly is a proper time to speak and a proper time to be silent (*Ecclesiastes 3:7*). It is wise to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and use discernment concerning our communication, being willing to speak and be silent as necessary. Remember, listening is a form of communication in itself.

Proverbs 15:23, "A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!"

Proverbs 15:28, "The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things."

6. Self-control is essential in communication.

The discipline of self-control is needed at all times in communication. A few hasty words said in anger can create damage which can take years to undo. It is wise to stop, listen, and think before you speak.

Proverbs 17:28, "Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding."

Proverbs 18:19, "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle."

James 1:19-20, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

7. We must speak the truth in love.

In healthy relationships, we are open and honest with each other, but we use this "honesty" gently and in the spirit of love.

Ephesians 4:15, "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."

Ephesians 4:25, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another."

The Scripture challenges us to a high calling. David was wise when he prayed, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Psalm 141:3). Yet, God promises grace to enable us to learn these precepts and live them. It is good for us to dwell on these scriptural principles often and challenge ourselves and each other as to whether we are actually carrying them out in our daily lives. Next month, we will look at scenarios where communication can break down and become most destructive: gossip and discord.



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11 Rules of Respect and Open Communication in Relationships

ACCFS has adapted a resource which can help encourage our communication and relationships to remain open and honest. *11 Rules of Respect and Open Communication in Relationships* is a simple resource which can be used as a check to ensure our communication with others is filled with respect. This resource as well as several others focused on communication are available on our website at www.accounseling.org/understandingrelationships.