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### Disciplemaking 2 Being His Witness

## COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL

*"Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person."* Colossians 4:5-6

**MORE THAN WORDS.** Good communication is Biblical. The Bible gives us many communication commands and principles. Communicating the Gospel message of Jesus is much more than just saying the words. It is multifaceted. Good communication requires the active use of your mind, ears, eyes, and mouth.

**UNDERSTANDING LOST PEOPLE.** A first step in communicating the Gospel is understanding non-believers. You need to understand their spiritual condition to help them move from where they are to Jesus. Non-believers are different than believers ... having different beliefs and opinions. Understanding lost people is very important to your effective communication of the words of the Gospel.

**DEMONSTRATING THE MESSAGE.** Who you are speaks louder than what you say. Your life overshadows your words ... adding to or taking away from your words. Your demonstration of the Gospel authenticates or depreciates your verbal presentation of the Gospel. Communicating the Gospel is show and tell time. It is a combination of your walk and your talk ... your works and your words ... your deeds and your seeds.

**EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION.** The obvious part of communication is the interchange of words. Think before you speak. Listen with your ears, eyes, and mouth. Develop continuing spiritual conversations with lost people. Make conversational progress. Show love and keep the door of opportunity open. And when the time is right, give the Gospel message to them (explained in the next chapter).

**AN ETERNAL INVESTMENT.** Make the effort and take the time to develop good communication skills. In addition, make the effort and take the time to develop good conversations. You will be investing in the eternities of lost people. To become a better witness ... become a better communicator.

## UNDERSTANDING LOST PEOPLE

There are many differences between believers and non-believers. Understanding the differences helps you be a better witness. This is a first step in communicating the Gospel ... it is your step. You are trying to help them move from point A to point B. How can you do that if you don't know where point A is?

**Their spiritual condition.** Non-believers are in serious spiritual trouble. They are in critical condition. Their condition is sad ... not scary. It is heart breaking ... not heart stopping.

They are blind to the light of the Gospel.

*"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." 2 Corinthians 4:3-4*

They are spiritually dead ... needing revival rather than repair.

*"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins." Ephesians 2:1*

They are robbed of the Gospel.

*"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road." Matthew 13:19*

They are held captive by Satan ... being victims rather than our enemies.

*"And they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will." 2 Timothy 2:26*

They are already judged ... not awaiting judgment.

*"He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:18*

They are separated from God.

*"But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." Isaiah 59:2*

They are lost without Jesus.

*"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10*

**Their different beliefs and different opinions** - Don't expect a non-believer to think or act like a believer. Understanding the differences between them and you will help you be a better communicator of the Gospel. Some areas of difference are listed below. In the chart below, record the differences between your Biblical beliefs and their beliefs.

Our beliefs/opinions		Their beliefs/opinions
	God	
	Man	
	Life	
	Death	
	Time	
	History	
	The future	
	Evolution	
	Truth	
	Morality	
	Marriage	
	Sex	
	Children	
	Divorce	
	Abortion	
	Homosexuality	
	AIDS	
	Church	
	Clergy	
	Bible	
	Religion	
	Cults	
	Occult	
	Satan	
	Humor	
	Entertainment	
	Money	
	Success	
	Failure	
	Employment	
	Unemployment	
	Illness	
	Old age	
	Israel	
	The Middle East	
	Dictators	
	Wars	
	Famine	
	Earthquakes	
	End of the world	

## COMMUNICATION COMMANDS AND PRINCIPLES

God has given us many how-to instructions on communication ... covering demonstration, listening, thinking, and speaking. Following His instructions will make you a better communicator of the Gospel ... and it is obedience. Not following them makes you a poor communicator. That is disobedience. That is sin.

**Demonstrate the message.** Who you are says more than your words. Your actions speak louder than your words. To communicate the Gospel effectively ... live it and give it.

**Your message is words plus works.** Communicate the Gospel with words and works. Words without the works to back them up is hypocrisy. Good works without the words of the Gospel is robbery ... stealing God's credit for the change in your life. *"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven"* Matthew 5:16.

**Prove your words with your life.** Your life authenticates or depreciates your Gospel communication. *"For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake"* 1 Thessalonians 1:5.

**How do you smell?** Your life is a fragrance of the knowledge of God in every place ... an aroma that permeates your world. *"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life"* 2 Corinthians 2:14-16.

**A wife's silent witness.** The believing wife of a non-believing husband has a difficult witnessing assignment. She is called upon to communicate the Gospel without words. *"In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. Your adornment must not be merely external--braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God"* 1 Peter 3:1-4. The words of the Gospel are necessary. The Gospel message could come from her in response to questions prompted by her behavior ... or could come from believing men in support of her witness to her husband.

**Listen to lost people.** Be a ready listener. Much of good communication is responsive ... listening before you speak. Learn to be a good listener. Develop your listening skills. God gave you two ears and one mouth ... use them proportionately.

**Be ready, willing, and able to respond.** *"But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence"* 1 Peter 3:15. Submit to the Lordship of Christ. Be ready in heart and mind to witness.

**Understanding or understood?** Seek to be understanding before being understood. Don't be all mouth and no ears. *"A fool does not delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own mind"* Proverbs 18:2. Have you ever left a witnessing encounter saying, *At least he (or she) knows where I'm coming from?* If you have ever said that, then take this verse to heart.

**Ears before mouth.** Listen and understand before you give an answer. Listen with your ears and your mouth ... ask questions. Don't assume that you understand their words. Hear what is really being said ... then answer their questions. *"He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him"* Proverbs 18:13.

**Quick ears and a slow mouth.** Use your ears before your mouth ... and use them more frequently than your mouth. *"But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger"* James 1:19. Don't let anger provoke you to have slow ears and a fast mouth. Listen more than you speak. Weigh your words carefully. And don't argue. Sprout antennae ... not horns.

**Think before you speak.** Your mind should be very active in communication. Think before you speak. Think before you enter a conversation ... think during it ... and think after it. Plan and prepare for witnessing conversations. Use your mind to participate meaningfully in a conversation. Think about the effective use of your conversation.

**Think before you answer.** Think about the how and what of your answers. *"The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things"* Proverbs 15:28.

**Maximize the opportunity.** Be effective. Think about making progress toward the Gospel. *"Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity"* Colossians 4:5. Don't sinfully manipulate ... but be shrewd. Jesus said, *"Be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves"* Matthew 10:16. In your witnessing ... be clever, discerning, wise, artful, using every advantage.

**Speak correctly.** Your words should be a gracious representation of your message. Let your words be kind, interesting, helpful, convincing, gentle, fitting, timely, right, and correcting.

**Feed them salt.** You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink ... but you can feed him salt. Make non-believers thirsty for spiritual discussion. Be gracious and spiritually interesting. Prompt thought by your words. Make them curious. *"Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person"* Colossians 4:6.

**Be helpful ... not hurtful.** Let your words be a salve rather than a sword. *"There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing"* Proverbs 12:18. *"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger"* Proverbs 15:1.

**Be convincing.** Persuade people to believe in Jesus. *"The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools spouts folly"* Proverbs 15:2. Give them the answers they need to help them move toward belief in Jesus. *"A man has joy in an apt answer, and how delightful is a timely word!"* Proverbs 15:23. *"He kisses the lips who gives a right answer"* Proverbs 24:26.

**Gently correct.** Skillfully help them understand the Gospel. Give them the information they need. Kindly and gently correcting their misconceptions about the Gospel. *"But be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition"* 2 Timothy 2:24-25.

**Don't talk too much.** Be restrained ... even when provoked. Too few words can be better than too many. *"Yet the fool multiplies words"* Ecclesiastes 10:14. *"Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is considered prudent"* Proverbs 17:28.

**Don't offend them.** Don't be rude, crude, or obnoxious. *"A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a citadel"* Proverbs 18:19.

**Don't argue ... don't argue ... don't argue.** You can't argue or fight someone into the Kingdom. Give a defense of your faith. Be convincing and corrective ... but don't argue. *"The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so abandon the quarrel before it breaks out"* Proverbs 17:14. *"Scorners set a city aflame, but wise men turn away anger"* Proverbs 29:8. *"Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers"* 2 Timothy 2:14. *"But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome"* 2 Timothy 2:23-24.

## COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

Obeying God's commands and principles makes us better communicators of the Gospel. Good communication skills need to be learned. The following guidelines can help you become a better communicator. Study them. Think about them. Evaluate your own communication skills. Identify your weak areas. Make any needed changes. Ask a kind and truthful friend to evaluate your communication skills with these guidelines. Be receptive to constructive criticism ... and make any needed changes. Re-evaluate yourself periodically. And again, make any needed changes.

### Create a listening environment.

Decide to listen ... and listen.

Take the initiative in conversation ... ask questions early.

Indirectly direct the conversation toward them.

Set the tone with your words.

Care for them more than for their words.

Accept and respect them.

Earn the right to listen.

Earn the right to be heard.

### Listen attentively.

Look at them.

Don't just listen ... look like you're listening.

Pay attention ... don't daydream.

Don't listen to ... and don't enter a different conversation.

Consider the overall context ... micro-listen and macro-listen.

Remember what was said ... develop a listening continuum.

Listen for opportunities, progress, and turning points.

### Ask questions

Be on their side.

Don't be a prosecuting attorney.

Ask clarifying questions to gain understanding.

Draw them out.

Ask questions that cause thought and evaluation.

Ask open-ended questions ... *How? ... Why? ... In what way?*

Ask third-party questions ... *What do most people think about \_\_\_\_?*

Ask for opinions rather than facts?

Ask for definitions ... *What do you mean?*

Ask questions paraphrasing their statements ... *Do you mean \_\_\_\_?*

Ask complicating questions ... *If that's true, then how can \_\_\_\_\_?*

Ask questions that cause doubt?

Ask for conclusions?

### Cultivate the conversation

Be friendly.

Make small talk.

Ask about them?

Keep things simple.

Make thought-provoking statements.

Keep the door open for continuing conversations.

Continue the conversation.

Allow for disagreement without argument.

Correct ... but do so non-confrontationally.

### Move toward the important

- Move from the trivial to the important.
- Move from the general to the specific.
- Move from the impersonal to the personal.
- Move from the indirect to the direct.
- Move from the theoretical to the practical.
- Be selective ... focus on key issues.
- Use the Bible ... but don't spout memorized verses.
- Emphasize understanding over belief.
- Bring eternity into the conversation.
- Stay focused as long as they do.

### Speak graciously

- Be humble.
- Be sincere.
- Be truthful *and* credible.
- Be kind, considerate, and sympathetic.
- Be as open, agreeable, and flexible as possible.
- Be respectful.
- Be complimentary.
- Be interesting.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Be human ... be real.

### The don'ts of communicating the Gospel

Don't use Christian jargon.

Don't talk too much.

Don't talk too long.

Don't keep talking when they've stopped listening.

Don't preach.

Don't be pushy.

Don't guess at answers.

Don't interrupt.

Don't finish their sentences.

Don't assume you understand their words, questions, or answers.

Don't act holier-than-thou.

Don't be condescending.

Don't overreact.

Don't be defensive.

Don't argue.

Don't criticize.

Don't prosecute.

Don't judge ... don't condemn.

Don't get angry.

Don't get even.

Don't embarrass.

Don't belittle.

Don't entrap.

Don't manipulate.

Don't get to the Gospel too soon, too late, too often, or too seldom.

## READING BODY LANGUAGE

Face-to-face communication involves so much more than the words spoken. Tone of voice, context, and body language can say more than the words. Your posture, position, expression, and mannerisms communicate ... often overriding or redefining your words. Your body often expresses your heart more clearly than your words do. Pay attention to your own body language. In addition, learn to read the body language of others. Listen with your eyes. However, be careful ... body language can vary individually and culturally. And combined or mixed signals can be difficult to interpret. Be a student of nonverbal communication.

### Signs of openness, interest, and thought.

The head nodding indicates agreement.

Head nodding with pursed lips indicates probable agreement.

Head tilted to side and nodding indicates a definite maybe.

A finger held to the cheek indicates evaluation.

Both eyebrows lifted shows surprise.

Eyebrows lifted and head nodding indicates surprised agreement.

Leaning back in chair, hands behind head, indicates thought.

The body leaning forward indicates openness.

Legs crossed toward you shows openness.

Sitting down may indicate openness.

### Signs of indifference and disinterest.

Loss of eye contact indicates loss of attention.

Finger tapping or pencil drumming shows nervous impatience.

House cleaning or body grooming shows disinterest.

Shrugging shoulders says, *I don't know and I don't care.*

Yawning and/or rubbing eyes shows indifference.

**Signs of disbelief, rejection, or hostility.**

Shaking head side-to-side expresses disagreement and rejection.

One eyebrow lifted indicates disbelief.

Both eyes squinting, head turned to side, indicates greater disbelief.

Lips up on one side and head tilted to opposite side shows doubt.

Forehead wrinkled down shows puzzlement or dislike.

Arms folded across chest shows defensiveness, hostility, or fear.

The chin thrust out or up expresses hostility.

**Signs of untruthfulness and restraint.**

A hand partially covering the mouth indicates untruthful speech.

Ankles around the chair legs shows restraint ... holding back.

Looking away while speaking indicates insincerity or deceit.

**Signs that a conversation is over.**

Your conversation is over when

... the other person stands up if you have been sitting.

... he or she keeps looking at their watch.

... he or she starts doing something else.

... the other person dozes off.

... the other person turns the TV, radio, or stereo on or up.

... he or she takes out the car keys and starts playing with them.

... the other person starts walking away.

... the other person goes to the door ... or opens it.

... he or she starts shutting the door between you.

## A PERSONAL REVIEW WORKSHEET

1. Describe your reaction to the spiritual condition of lost people (4-2).
2. How is your demonstration of the Gospel (4-4)?
3. Which verses on listening (4-4) address your weaknesses?
4. Do you need to think more before you speak (4-5)?
5. Which instructions on speaking correctly (4-5 and 4-6) do you need to work on more?
6. Which communication guidelines (4-7 through 4-10) do you need to master?