

International Conversation Café

Bible Topic: Biblical Communication

Communication is essentially about speaking and listening in ways that benefit ourselves and those around us. The Bible has a lot to say about how we speak and how we listen. Obviously, the Bible knows nothing about current technology, but the principles of communication found in the Bible apply to every form of technology.

Listening

To be a good communicator, one must know how to listen. In fact, if you don't listen well, you will not communicate well. "To answer before listening, that is folly and shame." ~ Proverbs 18:13. Also consider what Proverbs 18:15 says, "Wise men and women are always learning, always listening for fresh insights."

James says a similar thing. "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry..." James 1:19

What is enjoyable about listening to another person and what is difficult?

Why do you think listening is such an important skill?

In conflict, a good listener restates what the other person said without defending oneself or blaming the other person. What are some other ways you can be a good listener?

Speaking

Much more is written in the Bible about speaking than listening. How we speak, what we say, when we say it and why we say it are all addressed in the Bible. James writes the following in his letter.

The tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

Restate these thoughts in your own words and define any new words.

What is the author's main idea?

Give an example of how damaging words can be.

Besides saying things that are terribly harmful to others, people have a tendency to be hypocritical, that is to say, one thing but to do another. Consider how James concludes his thoughts about the tongue.

With the tongue, we praise our Lord and Father, and with it, we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water. ~James 3:5-12

*James suggests that it is impossible to love God and hate people.
What do you think?*

James expanded on a thought that Jesus earlier expressed. Notice that when Jesus spoke, he identified why we say such evil things.

No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thorn bushes, or grapes from briars. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. ~ Luke 6:43-45

*The term heart in the Bible has to do with our thoughts and feelings.
A person can "store up," evil or good things in their hearts. How do you think a person stores up thoughts and feelings?*

The problem seems to be with our tendency to hold on to certain attitudes and thoughts that are harmful which then lead us to problems in our communication. The Bible offers us a way to align us with the truth, which then can change our attitudes and perspectives. It comes through the reading and understanding of God's Word, the Bible. Psalm 119:130 says, "The unfolding of your word brings light." But words come from a person. The New Testament calls Jesus Christ the light of the world. Through a relationship with him, he can help us see life in a whole and proper perspective. Knowing the truth sets us free from evil and error.

For example, knowing that people are made in the image of God should allow us to accept and love all people, no matter our differences in skin color or racial identity.
How then would a Biblical attitude of people affect our attitudes and our speech?

How would these principles of Biblical communication apply to our use of social media?

What are some of the ways social media can be harmful and helpful?

