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## Are There Secrets to Better Communication?

**Ephesians 4:29:** (NASB) *Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.*



We can talk in person or on the phone. We can Skype, conference, email, text, tweet, Instagram and Facebook. But are we communicating? Are we REALLY communicating? What role does communication play in our lives - is it simply a common tool of the human race or can it be transformational? Can better communication make your life and relationships better? Of course it can! How? We are glad you asked!

Today's approach to communication will not be a clinical study of the science of communication, nor will it be framed as a "self-help" study of the subject. Today we will share some simple observations and conclusions based upon Scripture and also upon six real life famous communications that had a massive impact on the world around them. We will discuss not just that they talked about but how they were delivered. Each segment of the program will feature one different observation of communication.

### POWERFUL COMMUNICATION IS BOLD BUT DOES NOT HAVE TO BE BLUNT

Bluntness is not necessarily the way to get a point across. Sometimes it is hard to tell the difference between being bold and being blunt.

When politicians gave speeches years ago the speeches were usually one to two hours long. One of the greatest speeches in history was The Gettysburg Address, which was *only* 237 words and written on the back of an envelope by Abraham Lincoln on his way to Gettysburg to dedicate the field of battle. His speech was short, but amazingly bold and powerful.

#### Part 1, *The Gettysburg Address, Johnny Cash*

- *"Fourscore and seven years ago..." so began the message of a war-weary President Abraham Lincoln. A message written on the back of an envelope on a train on the way to dedicate a battlefield where men from the north and south had died at Gettysburg Pennsylvania: "Four score and seven years ago our forefathers brought forth on this continent a new nation conceived in liberty and dedicated in the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we're engaged in a great Civil War testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as the final resting place for those who here gave their lives that the nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.*

This speech was one of the most powerful communications in American history. Abraham Lincoln was talking about something so solemn and he did not waste a lot of words or use flowery speech. He gets to the point that this is about life and death and human freedom. He is being very bold in his communication by avoiding the normal approach.

**The power of reasoning:** Acts 17:16-31: Paul is angry at the idolatrous words spoken. He communicated well enough to rouse curiosity and wisely enough to not insult! He reasoned with them and made them think. That is boldness without the bluntness!

**Now, as a result of wise communication, Paul has their undivided attention:** He makes them want to listen. That is bold communication, not blunt communication.

**Are there ways to tell people an unpleasant truth without them shutting it out?**

### POWERFUL COMMUNICATION IS TRUTHFUL AND TOUGH, NOT TRAUMATIZING

How do you get tough without traumatizing? Let's look at the example and challenges of the church in Galatia. They were being lulled into a faulty belief system that said keeping the Law Covenant was of primary importance for Christian faith.

**Paul begins his approach to the problem with a personal example of standing firm on principle no matter whom he stood before:** Galatians 2:11-14: The Apostle Paul said to Apostle Peter, "What are you doing? You're being a hypocrite and you're leading others down a hypocritical path. Why are you doing this?" He had the courage to stand up and speak and he also had the discernment to know what to say and how to say it. Peter could take the tough criticism because it was constructive.



**After such a strong example, Paul restates the truth of the matter from the ground up:** Galatians 2:15-21: (NASB) <sup>15</sup>We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; <sup>16</sup>nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. Faith is the Christian foundation for being made right before God, no matter your background. <sup>17</sup>But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! <sup>18</sup>For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. <sup>19</sup>For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. He makes the transition. Once you build on Christ, there is no longer any foundation of the Law. It's a new building, a new process. Don't go back to something that used to be. Plant yourself in Christ. Paul is reasoning with the people not to be complacent. <sup>20</sup>I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life, which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me. <sup>21</sup>I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly. The truth is firm! There is no room for half measures! You are either a Christian or you are not. Powerful communication is tough but not traumatizing. It has to be tough enough to make the point and has to change the hearts of men. How? You speak with them, not at them. A shouting match doesn't work.

**Knowing all that you know, what happened?** Galatians 3:1-5: Paul's communication proved to be a wakeup call to those who were foundering in this idea that the law was important to them.

**What is the difference between “commanding respect” and demanding attention?**


**POWERFUL COMMUNICATION IS INSPIRATIONAL, COMMANDING RESPECT - NOT PERSPIRATIONAL, DEMANDING ATTENTION**

There is a difference between commanding respect and demanding attention! Demanding attention - many celebrities, sports figures and politicians fall into this category - when they enter a room you know it, when they speak, people stop and when they move, people's eyes follow them. **This is not just a modern day phenomena:** Acts 8:9-13 In the midst of the hype, there was Phillip - preaching, doing, inspiring! Phillip was not demanding attention, but he was commanding respect. People were drawn to him. Even Simon believes. Commanding respect - leaders, true heroes, those who have accomplished or discovered truly magnificent things and those who set an example for us step up into this category. When they enter a room, you observe it, even if they are not drawing attention to themselves. When they speak, people listen - they truly listen and when they move, people's hearts follow them. Martin Luther King Jr. is another example of someone who didn't demand attention but commanded respect.

 **Longevity has its place, Martin Luther King's Last Speech, April 3, 1968**

- *And so just as I say we aren't going to let any dogs or water hoses turn us around, we aren't going to let any injunction turn us around. Well, I don't know what will happen now; we've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life-longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now.*

**Peter and John show up and miraculously bestow the Holy Spirit:** Acts 8:18-24: Simon said, “I want to do what you can do so I can really get people's attention.” True godly communication has no need of attention getting tricks and gimmicks - it is a byproduct of a heart and mind fixed on God's will and God's plan. Simon the sorcerer was humbled and afraid. Those who command respect can bring those who demand attention to their knees.

 **Mine eyes have seen the glory, Martin Luther King's Last Speech, April 3, 1968**

- *I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over, and I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. And so I'm happy tonight; I'm not worried about anything; I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.*

The day after Martin Luther King's speech he was assassinated. He left a focus and inspiration




by his dedication to a cause that was greater than him. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven. That is communication!


### POWERFUL COMMUNICATION IS INFORMATIVE AND NOT INFLAMMATORY

This is important because sometimes we are in a situation where being inflammatory is very easy. There are many issues that can easily serve as tinder to set ablaze the fires of disquiet and anger. True godly communication can set the tinder of strife aside and instead kindle a fire of fellowship!

There is one communicator that really stands out in learning how to be informative and not inflammatory. This takes place the day Martin Luther King, Jr. is assassinated. Robert F. Kennedy is out campaigning in Indianapolis and he hears about the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. He is in a black neighborhood and he needs to tell the crowd what happened. He is announcing the assassination of this great leader. There was great rioting throughout the country that night.

 **What is our direction, Robert F. Kennedy announcing the death of Martin Luther King, April 4, 1968**  
(Given standing in the back of a flatbed truck in a black neighborhood in Indianapolis) *I have some very sad news for all of you and I think some sad news for all of our fellow citizens and people who love peace all over the world, and that is that Martin Luther King was shot and killed tonight in Memphis, Tennessee. Martin Luther King dedicated his life to love and to justice between his fellow human beings, and he died in the cause of that effort. In this difficult day, in this difficult time for the United States, it is perhaps well to ask what kind of a nation we are and what direction we want to move in.*

In the early church, the tinder of strife also abounded! Diametrically different cultures were coming together under the banner of Jesus Christ and each carried with it the imbalances of its past. Romans 14:1-13: Paul informs us of the pitfalls of being strong or weak - for the strong, contempt is the danger zone - for the weak it is the harshness of judgment upon those who seem to look down on you. Which is worse? They are both bad. The Apostle Paul is saying, stay away from both sides. He is also saying they are all under that same umbrella. All the strong and the weak are standing convicted for God; so each is being faithful to their understanding of the principles of their calling and that is the important thing. Along similar lines, Robert F. Kennedy in announcing the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. had the same kind of a challenge to say, we are coming from different parts of society but we have a choice to make as a nation. How do we together want to react? What direction do we together want to go?

 **Polarize or join, Robert F. Kennedy announcing the death of Martin Luther King, April 4, 1968**

- For those of you who are black, considering the evidence there evidently is that there were white people who were responsible, you can be filled with bitterness, and with hatred, and a desire for revenge. We can move in that direction as a country, in greater polarization, black people amongst blacks, white people amongst whites, filled with hatred toward one another. Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand and to comprehend, and replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that has spread across our land, with an effort to understand compassion and love.*

He took this inflammatory circumstance and informed with great compassion and kept the area from rioting. There is a monument at that spot where he gave his speech. It is a remarkable testimony to great communication! Sixty days later, Robert Kennedy was also assassinated.

Romans 14:10-12: Paul is saying, save your energy! You and the one you judge both stand before God! So, the Apostle here communicates with power the needed understanding to diffuse strife. Do WE communicate with such grace when under pressure? It's so easy to be reactive instead of proactive. Romans 12:9: (KJV) *Let love be without dissimulation (hypocrisy). Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*

**What about communication when all that we stand for is at stake?**

### POWERFUL COMMUNICATION IS FOCUSED BUT NOT FORCEFUL

The previous four communicators spoke of the freedom of humankind. Sometimes we need to communicate to save a cause. Circumstances, predetermined perspectives and social pressures can pull apart even the most promising undertakings. The pressures on the early church were so strong that there needed to be a coming together of the various groups to hash out their





differences and come to an understanding to not only be able to co-exist but to co-labor. Acts 15:1-31: Twice in this Scripture reading Paul and Barnabas had great dissention and debate with many about where the law fits with Christianity. They all get together and talk it out. This is communication! After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said something. True focus allows for all parties to be focused - and *heard*. **True focus hallows its origin and uses that origin to re-establish the direction of its true course:**

Peter's observation was that there was no distinction between Jew and Gentile because they are all under Christ. He cleansed their hearts by faith. There is reasoning and strength here, but he is not forcing the issue. Peter is saying, "What are we doing putting the yoke of the law around their necks when we cannot even bear the yoke of the law? Why would we introduce that when we see God has already blessed them?" He realized there were preconceived ideas. He was reasoning them through it. There is such great wisdom in the communication.

Powerful communication can reveal truth in a persuasive but not forced way, so the hearers can remain open to absorb and accept it!

Great communication can push through the imperfection of our circumstances and get to a place where we can all coexist and then co-labor. Victory is achieved when all parties really want truth!

**Who was the world's greatest communicator  
and what did he tell us about leading a fulfilled life?**

Jesus! The Sermon on the Mount was the number one communication.

**POWERFUL COMMUNICATION EMPOWERS AND DOES NOT SEEK TO ENTITLE**

Matthew 5:1-16 and Matthew 5:3: True happiness begins by acknowledging who and what we are. Matthew 5:4: Sorrow can be a doorway to true happiness. True happiness recognizes the real pain in life, caused by loss and imperfection and knows that comfort in God will come - therefore true happiness produces peace. Jesus is communicating how to live a truly happy life. This is about personal fulfillment in Christ. Matthew 5:5: True happiness is the emptying of self so that one may be filled with the treasure of Christ-likeness and thereby inherits the earth! It is about what can I learn to be. Matthew 5:6: True happiness is the deep pursuit of and focus on truth - pure truth - to understand it and teach it! Matthew 5:7: True happiness revels in the display of mercy for it knows that our need for heavenly mercy can only be met in proportion to our desire to give mercy freely! Jesus is saying this is how to live a fulfilled life. Matthew 5:8: True happiness - true deep and abiding happiness can only truly be cultivated in a pure heart, for there it will never fall into contradiction! Matthew 5:9: True happiness deeply desires peace among all, for then happiness can reign over all - and there is no better happiness than happiness shared! Matthew 5:10-12: True happiness can actually be expressed in persecution, if it is founded in the love and sacrifice of Christ, for our happiness emulates his "for the joy set before him..."

We have learned this by observing those who have communicated in history and changed the lives of people. We have the same ability to change lives of people, especially from the standpoint of Christianity and to be able to stand for something. Communication is a key secret to better lives for all. Great communication starts with you, starts with your heart and mind. What you do with that is your choice.

***So, are there secrets to better communication?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!***