

session 1 study guide

good communication

message

Communication is the cornerstone of most relationships. Our relationships with friends, classmates, siblings and parents are shaped and developed by the words we use and the conversations we have. Different communication styles may impact how we like to speak or be spoken to, but one truth remains: Regardless of our communication style, God commands us to speak with love.

Read the following passage from Colossians 3:12-17. As you read these verses, consider the following questions: (1) Which traits does God want us to embody in our conversations? (2) Which parts of this passage describe your conversations? (3) Which parts of this passage describe areas you need to work on?

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

dig

1. Look back at the Colossians 3:12-17 passage. What descriptors do you see in this passage that should characterize your conversations? Write them here.

2. Which of these traits is easiest for you? Which is hardest?

3. Look back to the first question in this section. What are the differences between how you defined good communication and how God defines it?

4. Think of someone in your life with whom you have great communication. What makes your communication with that person easy and successful?

5. It can be tempting to blame difficult communications on the other person. “If only he’d listen more . . .” “If she would just try to understand . . .” But God calls us to be accountable for *our* actions and behaviors. Think of someone in your life with whom you have difficult communication. What could *you* do to improve your conversations?

6. Write three words that currently describe your communication with your family.

1.

2.

3.

7. Choose one trait from the Colossians passage that you could work on to improve your communication with your family, and then write some specific steps you can take to improve in this area.

I could improve my communication with my family by working on _____ . I could improve this trait by . . .

apply

1. How would you describe your communication with your parents? With your siblings?

2. There are many barriers that can prevent good communication from occurring. Check any of the following that might be inhibiting you and your parents from having better communication.

- ☐ Lack of time
- ☐ Failure to make communication a priority
- ☐ Spending too much time watching TV, listening to music, texting friends, talking on your cell phone, and so forth
- ☐ Lack of listening

- ☐ Lack of respect
- ☐ Guilt
- ☐ Anger
- ☐ Stubborn natures
- ☐ Memories of past rejection
- ☐ Feelings of inferiority, low self-esteem and worthlessness
- ☐ Misplaced anger—taking out anger at others on those closest to you
- ☐ Drugs and alcohol
- ☐ Other: _____

3. Do you think it's important to have good communication with your parents and siblings? Why or why not?

4. What benefits could come from having better communication in your home?

5. Read each of the following situations, and then consider ways the family could improve their communication.

Situation 1: *Braden and Maya's dad comes home from work every evening and immediately slumps into his chair. He turns on the TV, playfully wrestles with the dog, and then settles in to read the newspaper. Braden and Maya believe he pays more attention to their dog than to them. What advice would you give Braden and Maya?*

Situation 2: *Christina talks all the time. She loves to be the center of attention and always gives people her two cents' worth. Her younger brother Steve, however, rarely shares his thoughts or opinions. What advice would you give to Christina and Steve's family to create better communication between all members?*

Situation 3: *Miles doesn't like to share things with his family and clams up whenever his parents ask him questions. When his mother questions any of his behavior, he immediately gets defensive and yells at her. What advice would you give their family?*

6. Communication is a key to any relationship and a must for quality family relationships. But good communication takes work. One way to improve your communication with your family is to *spend time together*. Spending time together will allow you and your family to get to know one another better (which is vital for creating understanding) and will enable conversations—real conversations—to happen. So, when was the last time you hung out with your parents? What did you do together?

7. How many minutes/hours each week do you spend with your parent(s)? What are three activities that you could enjoy together with one or both of your parents that would allow for conversation (for example, taking the dog for a walk, going out for coffee, game night, running errands together, having family dinners)?

8. Another way to improve communication with your family is to *listen more*. Ironically, our communication becomes better when we speak less and listen more. When we talk, we often tend to focus on *our* needs, *our* problems and what *we* are getting out of a relationship. Clear, quality communication only occurs when two people meet at the same place, on common ground, and find understanding. How would you rank yourself as a listener?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Hard for me to					Easy for me to				
listen to others					listen to others				

9. What can you *do* to show someone that you are listening?

10. A third way to improve communication with your family members is to *build trust*. Good communication has to be rooted in trust. Each person has to trust that the other person is being honest, sincere and isn't trying to cause harm. Trust is something that is earned and deepened over time. Think about your relationship with your parents, and then answer the following questions.

Do you trust your parents?

Yes No *I don't know*

Do you feel like your parents trust you?

Yes No *I don't know*

Are you honest with your parents?

Always Usually Occasionally Rarely

Do you say what you mean and mean what you say with them?

Always Usually Occasionally Rarely

Do you believe your parents have your best interests in mind?

Yes No *I don't know*

What is one thing you could do that would help develop your parents' trust in you?

11. Read through the following skills, actions and behaviors that help build strong communication. Think about them in terms of your relationship with your parents. Which of these are you good at? Which of these need more work?

Pretty Good at

Needs Work

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wanting to talk with my parents. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Listening attentively. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Looking a person in the eye. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being trustworthy. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Viewing the situation from the other person's perspective | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taking the time to understand the other person. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being honest. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staying focused on one issue at a time. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being myself. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not interrupting. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Pretty Good at

Needs Work

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being willing to say, "I don't know." | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being willing to say, "I'm sorry." | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being willing to say, "I was wrong." | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being willing to say, "I love you." | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asking questions. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being sincere. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having a caring attitude. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Believing in the worth of the other person. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being humble. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding exaggerations like "You <i>always</i> " or "You <i>never</i> " | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taking responsibilities for my actions, behaviors and attitudes | <input type="checkbox"/> |

12. What is your strongest skill as a communicator? What area do you struggle the most in?

reflect

1. We tend to only work on those things that we value. Do you believe that having good communication with your parents and siblings is a worthwhile goal? Why or why not?

2. Do you think the way in which you communicate with your parents can please and honor God? How?

3. Think about someone you know who has great communication with his or her parents. What do both sides do to make the communication work so well?

4. How does your family usually communicate with each other? What, if anything, would you change?

5. What are ways your family has solved a communication problem?

6. Think about a time you felt put down in a conversation with someone. What did the person do to make you feel that way? How did it impact your communication?

7. Imagine watching two people having a conversation. How would you know if they were respecting each other?

8. Do you show your parents respect in your conversations? Do you feel that they respect you?

meditation



He who guards his mouth and his tongue,
guards his soul from troubles.

PROVERBS 21:23, NASB