



ISSUE

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Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF
THE OL-
SEN PARK
CHURCH OF
CHRIST

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

9:30 AM

10:30 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Patrick Ledbetter

Brady McAlister

Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Walker McAnear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Justin Smiley

Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

“What Are You Doing?”

By Kyle Pope

Jesus taught, **“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets”** (Matt. 7:12, NKJV). Paul, through the Holy Spirit, taught the Christians in Philippi, **“Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others** (Phil. 2:4). He urged the Colossians, **“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one”** (Col. 4:6).

My wife Toni and I laugh about something I do to her from time to time. When I see her doing something and I’m not quite sure what she’s up to, I’ll say, “What are you doing?” I don’t mean anything by it. I’m just curious, but apparently, I sometimes use a tone of voice that makes it seem as if I’m getting on to her or scolding her as if she were a little child. That’s not my intention and that’s not what I want to communicate, but I am trying to work on doing better and not come across in that way.

Communication is hard! Expressing the thoughts in our head to another person in a way that accurately conveys our intentions but in a way that actually makes those intentions understandable is not always an easy thing. Sometimes we’re tempted to

just say, “well that’s not what I meant, so too bad if they don’t understand,” but that’s not communication—that’s a failure to communicate.

The words of Jesus call upon us to think about how we would want to be treated. The challenge is that human beings often see (and hear) things much differently. Would I want Toni to speak to me in a way that seems as if she was scolding me? No. Would I want to feel as if she was talking to me as if I were a child? No. So, regardless of my intentions Jesus calls me to put myself in her place, think about how my words (and tone of voice) come across

to her and try my best to act in a way that is how I would want to be treated.

How do we do that? What does the Bible teach us that can help us through this challenging work of communication? Let’s consider a few helpful principles:

1. Communication Requires Respect. Paul’s words to the Philippians challenge us to think beyond simply how things affect us. I love my wife. I don’t want her to feel bad. As her husband, God wants me to nourish and cherish her **“just as the Lord does the church”** (Eph. 5:20). To disregard or minimize how a tone of voice makes her feel would not be respectful. It would not be dwelling with her **“with understanding”** nor **“giving honor to”** her (1 Pet. 3:7). If we don’t respect the people with whom we are trying to communicate and care about the impact what we say has upon them true communication becomes impossible.

2. Communication Requires Empathy. Empathy is defined as “the ability to understand and share the feelings of another” (*New Oxford American Dictionary*). Jesus doesn’t use this word in Matthew 7:12, but **“do also to”** others **“whatever you want”** them **“to do to you”** demands empathy. Some people are better at this than others. For some, it is very difficult. If we don’t understand how someone

A photograph of a sunset over a field with trees. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm orange glow across the sky. The trees are silhouetted against the bright light of the setting sun.

Olsen Park Church of Christ

feels about something we have said or done, it might be easy to get defensive or angry. That doesn't lead to better understanding. It often stops all communication. Instead, we need to stop, take a breath, and listen. James commands, **“let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath”** (Jas. 1:19). Ask questions and accept what the other person tells you. Don't minimize or belittle his or her feelings but validate those feelings by expressing understanding.

3. Communication Requires Forethought.

The wise man wrote, **“The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil”** (Prov. 15:28). To the Colossians, Paul put it, **“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one”** (Col. 4:6). Grace involves a kind and considerate disposition that uses tact and thoughtfulness in the things we say. **“Seasoned with salt”** is not describing a cutting sarcasm, but a preservative and tasteful influence that tempers our words. Knowing how (or studying) **“how to answer”** is not just talking about readiness in evangelism (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15)—it's talking about thinking before we speak in general. Forethought doesn't guarantee good communication, but it certainly helps it occur more often.

4. Communication Requires a Willingness to Apologize.

Pride destroys good communication. We don't like being misunderstood and our pride can lead us to fight for our imagined honor rather than just acknowledging, “I should have said that differently” or “I'm sorry, I didn't say that right!” In our relationship with God, the Christian has the wonderful promise, **“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive**

us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Confession to God is more than just saying we're sorry. It is acknowledging we've done wrong and committing ourselves to genuine repentance. In our communication with others, some of the same principles need to govern our behavior. James wrote, **“For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body”** (Jas. 3:2). We must have the courage to own our own words and commit to do better in the future.

As I grow older, I am realizing that communication is a challenge in ways it wasn't when I was younger. I don't hear as well as I once did. Without even realizing it I can easily speak louder than I mean to and seem as if I am yelling at someone. That's not what I intend to do—but when I come across that way it affects communication. As an older man with gray hair (where I still have hair) when



I get excited or passionate about something, it sometimes doesn't come off as enthusiasm but with more of a "get off my lawn" kind of attitude to those who are younger than I am. That's not how I want to seem, but I must recognize that danger and work to overcome it.

Every generation develops new and shortened ways of expressing things. I can't quite get

used to some of the latest. Just about the time I got used to hearing some people say "sup?" (to express the greeting, "hey, what's up?") that fell out of use. Now every time I hear people say "100 percent" (to express the idea "I agree 100 percent") I want to ask "100 percent of what?" Communication is hard!

In spite of the difficulties, we must remember that communication is very important. Every time we engage in it, we are striving to connect with the heart of souls made in the image of God. That fact is why James urges us to be cautious in how we speak to those "**made in the similitude of God**" (Jas. 3:9). May we always do so with respect, with empathy, and with forethought. At times, we all will say the wrong thing, in the wrong way, but may we ever have a willingness to apologize, correct it, and change when that happens. "**A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver**" (Prov. 25:11).



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We are so glad that you joined us today.
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