**INTRODUCTION**

**“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.” James 1:19 KJV**

**“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 TNIV**

Clear communication takes place when the message conveyed is understood in the way intended by the speaker. Effective communication involves the mutual sharing of information, knowledge and feelings in such a way that the relationship can undergo growth. Communication can be either effective or ineffective. We tend to refer to communication as “good” or “poor.”

1. **COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATION**
2. **THE MAJOR COMPONENTS OF COMMUNICATION ARE THE FOLLOWING:**

1. **Sender** (the one who transmits the thought)
2. **Message** (the thought intended to be transmitted)
3. **Channel** (phone, mail, face to face)
4. **Receiver** (the person to whom the message/thought is sent)
5. **Feedback** (action taken, the response of the receiver, anger, acceptance, the resulting state of the relationship, growth/decline of the relationship)

These components are essential to communication; and flaws in any of them can result in poor communication.

“Communication occurs in verbal and non-verbal form, but the goal in either case is to convey understanding. . . . When a person has an idea or message to share, an *encoding* procedure is begun. It involves taking the idea you have and putting it into words and/or gestures so that your partner can see or hear your idea. Once your message is received, a *decoding* procedure is initiated giving substance to the message. This encoding and decoding process, if left to stand alone without some form of clarification, will almost always result in misunderstanding and a breakdown in the communication process.” (Lima, *The Love Workbook. A Guide to Happiness in your Personal Relationships*. pp. 55, 56).

1. **FACTORS AFFECTING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**
2. There are definite factors that affect effective communication. One of the areas of importance is the **environment** in which the communication takes place. Is the temperature of the room too hot or too cold? Is there an acceptable privacy level for the conversation to take place? Lack of privacy could block conversation. The possibility of eavesdropping could also restrict open conversation.
3. Another factor that could stifle good communication is **interference**. Distracting noises such as blaring music or loud talking in an adjacent room can make communication difficult. If possible, ask that nearby noise levels be reduced, or use soft background music to mask it. It is also helpful if one is able to tune out distractions. Unfortunately, some persons are unable to do that because they are easily distracted.
4. **Frequent interruptions,** such as telephone calls or persons entering or leaving the room, can also short circuit the communication.
5. **Lack of clarity or poor articulation** is another factor that can impair communication. It is important to express oneself precisely and clearly. One’s speech should be clear and easily understood. Especially for public speakers, it is vital to speak loudly and to suit the presentation to the audience. This would avoid much misunderstanding. Ellen White advises, “Let everyone . . . qualify himself to speak in a clear, attractive way, enunciating his words perfectly.” (White. *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students.*  p. 247).
6. **Angry outbursts** and **a refusal to be objective** are also factors that hinder communication. In many cases, people may increase the volume of their voices in an attempt to win an argument or state their convictions. When people disagree, they tend to become angry and engage in name-calling. Those who believe that they are the only ones who are right and all others are wrong block understanding and cordiality. When their beliefs, ideas, points of view and opinions are challenged, some display intolerance for the other person and get angry.

**C. NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION**

“Mind not only what people say, but how they say it; and if you have any sagacity, you may discover more truth by your eyes than by your ears. People can say what they will, but they cannot look just as they will; and their looks frequently reveal what their words are calculated to conceal.” (Driver and van Aalst. *You Say More than you Think*).

Communication involves more than speaking. Only 7% of our communication comes from words; 38% is from our tone of voice; and 55% is from our body language. We can therefore see the importance of body language. The term *body language* refers to non-verbal communication by means of body posture, gestures, and facial expressions. Sometimes the body language is expressed by silence or hostile behavior. All of these manifestations are “wordless.” However, these non-verbals are often more eloquent than a thousand words. Adler and Proctor, in *Looking Out, Looking In,* succinctly stated that we need to understand that we cannot help but communicate, because we are like transmitters that cannot be shut off. We are always giving off information about ourselves.

1. **EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

**A. LISTENING KEYS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

**“. . . let every man be swift to hear.” James 1:19KJV**

**“A wise man will hear and will increase in learning.” Proverbs 1:5**

The Bible stresses the importance of listening. Listening well is a difficult skill which is not automatic. It involves patience and a deliberate decision to cultivate this habit. Nichols delineates the following three aspects of effective listening:

Effective listening requires *attention, appreciation, and affirmation*. You begin the process by tuning in to the other person, paying attention to what he has to say. Put no barriers between you. Turn off the TV, put down the newspaper, ask the kids to play in the other room, shut the door to your office. Look directly at the speaker and concentrate on what she is trying to communicate. (Nichols. *The Lost Art of Listening.* p*.* 109).

1. **Practice these listening keys to effective communication.**
2. Have good eye contact.
3. Give focused, undivided attention.
4. Be careful with your body language (Give positive, respectful signals.)
5. Listen to the message behind the words. (Active listening)
6. Interject with remarks like, “I see what you mean,” or “Yes, I understand,” or “Really?”
7. When what the person is saying is not clear to you, clarify by asking questions such as “Are you saying that . . .?” or “Do you mean . . .?” (Do not try to interpret what you do not understand. It is perfectly OK to ask the speaker to explain to you.)
8. Put aside your biases and try to understand the other person’s point of view. (This means you have to listen with patience).
9. Do not prejudge or try to read the other person’s mind. Get the whole story first before attempting to make a judgment.
10. Be patient. Avoid interrupting and filling in remarks or details for the person.
11. Do not be anxious to defend yourself.
12. Listen empathetically. Sympathize with the feelings expressed.
13. Ask appropriate questions.
14. Ask open-ended questions. Avoid questions that elicit a “yes/no” answer.
15. Create trust and safety in the relationship.
16. Keep all information confidential if the speaker requests it or if the matter is highly sensitive. (If the speaker talks about wanting to harm himself/herself or wanting to harm someone else, this is not a matter for confidentiality. You are legally required to report this.)

**2. Ways to Improve Listening**

Many of the above skills are familiar to us. Miller, Miller, Nunnaly and Wackman, in *Talking and Listening Together,* condense them into the following five behaviors that can improve our listening ability:

a. **Attend.**  This means giving the speaker our full attention. We listen with our body, and mind. We resist the urge to let our minds wander.

b. **Acknowledge.** This means that we “let the person know verbally and nonverbally that you are with him or her, and that he or she is leading and you are following. . . . Examples of acknowledging include: ‘That sounds important; I can see you are really concerned.’” (p. 55).

c. **Invite more information.**  Respond with remarks like, “Tell me more.” “Is there anything more you would like me to know?”

d. **Summarize to ensure accuracy.** You would like to engage in shared meaning. You would like to understand exactly what the speaker is saying to you. So repeat what you have just heard to the speaker to be sure you are very clear and that you have the same understanding that the other person meant to share with you.

e. **Ask open questions.** These kinds of questions usually begin with words such as *who, what, where, when* or *how*. They give more information than just a “yes/no.” (pp. 52–63).

**B. REMEMBER THESE SPEAKING KEYS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

**“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” Colossians 4:6**

**“Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet and thy speech is comely.” Song of Solomon 4:3**

**“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of thy mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” Ephesians 4:29**

1. **Guidelines**

The following guidelines for speaking will help us in our interactions with others. Since we are familiar with many of these, we will focus on only a few of these important concepts.

* 1. Choose or set the right atmosphere—the right time, place or opportunity. (Proverbs 25:11)
  2. Think before you speak.
  3. Don’t resurrect dead issues. (When clearing up a misunderstanding, confine your conversation to the issues of the moment.)
  4. Do not talk too much. It is not good to monopolize the conversation.
  5. Do not put words into the other person’s mouth.
  6. Do not be quick to change the topic that the other person is speaking on.
  7. Try to be genuine and not artificial.
  8. Avoid interrupting.
  9. Use a pleasant tone of voice.
  10. Do not use remarks that will humiliate the other person.
  11. Avoid using generalizations. (“You never/you always.”)
  12. Use “I” messages instead of “You” messages.
  13. Be sensitive to the other person’s feelings.
  14. Talk about the other person’s interests.
  15. Be liberal with compliments and avoid criticism.
  16. Do not attack or use abusive language.
  17. “We should accustom ourselves to speak in pleasant tones, to use pure and correct language, and words that are kind and courteous. Sweet, kind words are as dew and gentle showers to the soul.” (White. *Christ’s Object Lessons.* p. 336).
  18. Control anger and other negative emotions.
  19. Speak the truth in love. (Ephesians 4:15).
  20. Read and study James 1:19, 20.
  21. Read and study Proverbs 1:5

1. **Three Excellent Pointers**

**Think before you speak.**  Sometimes we speak first and then we think. The result may be disastrous. It is a good idea to think before we speak. Many experience regret when their words precede thought. The following little poem is a good reminder.

Boys flying kites haul in their white winged birds.

You can’t do that when you’re flying words.

Thoughts unexpressed may sometimes fall back dead;

But God Himself can’t kill them

Once they’re said.

-*Will Carlton*

**Use “I” messages instead of “You” messages.**  An I-message is a direct statement of the problem without put-downs and without telling the other person what to do. I-messages identify your actual feelings and report them openly and honestly, yet kindly, rather than attacking or blaming.

**There are three parts to “I-messages:**

1. Statement of how the person’s unacceptable behavior makes you feel. (Use a descriptive feeling word.)

2. A non-blaming description of the person’s behavior. (It is acceptable to use the word *you* in this description.) Stick to facts.

3. An explanation regarding the tangible effect of that behavior on you. (Tell what you have to do as a result of the behavior.)

The “I”-message will sound something like this: I feel \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ when you\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. (This may feel unnatural at first, but you get more comfortable, and it works. Children can also learn to use “I”- messages.

**Here are some “I”-message examples: Wife whose husband won’t take her out to dinner.**

1. **Wife number** 1: “You’re so inconsiderate! You never think of anybody but yourself. All you want to do is watch TV. You make me sick!” What kind of response do you think she is likely to get?

2. **Wife number 2**: “I feel hurt when you won’t take me out to dinner because I really need to spend time alone with you so we can re-connect.” How would you respond to this?

Wife number 2 tells only how she feels, a fact her husband can hardly argue with. Wife number 1 blames, judges, and puts down her husband. This gives him ammunition for an argument and will probably cause him to become more stubborn and defensive. Furthermore, wife number 1 uses words that do not convey her message of wanting her husband to take her out to dinner.

**Speak the truth in love.**  While we should always tell the truth, it is important for us to consider the other person’s feelings. We need to blend our honesty with sensitivity. So thinking carefully and making the effort to construct our statements with thoughtfulness will preserve our relationships. It also shows our Christian responsibility.

**GROUP ACTIVITY 1:** Separate into groups of five. Read quickly **Proverbs Chapters 15 – 18.** Make a list of communication principles you discover in these chapters. Share these principles with your group.

1. **COMMUNICATING IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS**

**“Come, now, let us reason together,” saith the Lord. Isaiah 1:18.**

1. **CONFLICT**

A conflict is “a situation in which two or more human beings desire goals which they perceive as being attainable by one or the other but not by both.” (McSwain. *Conflict Ministry in the Church*. p. 25)**.** In every relationship, we will make mistakes and so will others. The fact that we are Christians does not rule out the possibility of conflict and disagreements. Conflict may exist in the home, on the job, and even in the church.

**Following are common reasons why conflict can exist:**

1. Reasons for the inevitability of conflict in relationships

* Different backgrounds
* Lack of information or wrong assumptions (Scott. *Disagreements, Disputes, and All-out War.* pp. 24–26*).*
* Different orientation
* Difficult people and personality clashes
* Different past experiences
* Different genders
* Lack of trust.

1. Strategies for communicating during conflict:

* Draw on your spiritual resources.
* Don’t judge the other person(s) too quickly or too harshly.
* Be patient under pressure. “When a storm of persecution and cruelty unexpectedly bursts upon you, the Lord did not suffer you to be overwhelmed . . . When railing accusations and taunts more cruel than spears and arrows have fallen upon you, the influence of the Spirit of God upon your heart has led you to speak calmly, dispassionately.” (White. *Testimonies for the Church,* Vol.2. *p.*270).
* Be mature even when others behave childishly.
* Be professional in all your dealings with colleagues, subordinates, or supervisors.
* Don’t let others dictate your behavior by responding in kind.
* “If impatient words are spoken to you, never reply in the same spirit. Remember that ‘a soft answer turneth away wrath.’ Proverbs 15:1. And there is wonderful power in silence. Words spoken in reply to one who is angry sometimes serve only to exasperate. But anger met with silence, in a tender, forbearing spirit, quickly dies away.” (White. *The Ministry of Healing.* p*.* 486).
* Be respectful even to the ill- mannered.
* Be ready to admit your mistakes and to forgive the mistakes of others.
* Be quick to apologize. “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other.” (James 5:16).
* Be ready to forgive. “Then Peter came to Him and said, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.’” (Matthew 18:21-22).
* Listen.
* Think before you respond or comment.

1. Steps in settling conflict

There is hardly anyone who welcomes the challenge of conflict or trying to settle conflict. However, remember, “You can get through to most people, even on difficult subjects, by first listening to their side of the issue and then, in a low-key but firm manner, insisting that they at least listen to your side of things.” (Nichols. *The Lost Art of Listening,* p. 132).

* Try these steps for settling conflict:
* Admit that there is a conflict. Conflicts do not go away by denying they exist or by ignoring them.
* Identify who has the need. The person who has the need is the one who is bothered by the situation. Address the situation instead of internalizing the hurt.
* Brainstorm to find as many solutions as possible. Just write the list of possible solutions without processing them.
* Discuss the possible solutions and pick the best one.
* Follow through with the solution you and the other person(s) have chosen.
* Reassess to see if the solution is working. (If the solution is **not** working, try another solution).
* “Perfection of Christian character can be obtained only through labor, conflict and self-denial. God . . . brings us into positions which are the most trying, to reveal what is in our hearts. To further the development of Christian graces He will place us in circumstances which will demand increased exertion on our part to keep our faith in lively exercise.” (White. *Our High Calling,* p. 313).

1. **CONFRONTATION**

Sometimes there is the need to confront a person who has greatly contributed to problems in a relationship. Or there are times when a simple and apparently benign conversation turns into a crucial one. In the book *Crucial Conversations*, the authorsadvise that it is important to recognize when the conversation becomes crucial. We may find that we are experiencing physical signals (Perhaps we feel a tightening of the stomach muscles). We may feel emotional or behavioral tensions (anger, fear, raising the voice or glaring at the person).

When we have a confrontation, we must remember that the apostle Paul urges us to speak the truth in love. (Ephesians 4:15.) Here are some tips when involved in a confrontation:

* Study the situation carefully.
* Pray for wisdom.
* Begin with a statement of affirmation. (“There are a number of things I admire about you. However, something has happened recently that threatens our relationship. I feel compelled to discuss it with you. Can we talk about this now?”)
* State the issue clearly. State facts without being judgmental.
* Use a calm voice.
* Do not make accusations.
* Choose your words with care.
* Be respectful and exercise self -control.
* Walk away from a situation that becomes too heated. Your safety is important. (“I am sorry that things are beginning to get out of control. How about if we pause this conversation now and resume discussion at another time?”)
* Use “I” messages.

1. **CRISIS**

**“Bear ye one another’s burdens.” Galatians 6:22**

A crisis is a turn of events, expected or unexpected, that threatens our happiness, our security and our peace of mind. Sometimes our health suffers during a crisis. Everyone at one time or another will face a crisis. Care and tact in communicating with persons in crisis are important skills.

1. Things **not** to say/do when communicating with the **bereaved:**

* Don’t try to cheer up the person prematurely. Avoid remarks like, “His sickness was really hard for you. Now you can go on with your life.” Or, “Well, now as a Christian, you can pick up the pieces and move on.”
* Don’t question or pry into the deceased’s assets, financial position or the details of the illness, unless the relatives initiate this kind of discussion.
* Don’t attempt to evaluate the deceased’s relationship with God. Do not say things like, “If only he/she had made a commitment to the Lord, we would have felt better.” Remember the thief on the cross?
* Resist the temptation to sermonize.
* Refrain from giving false assurance. “You will be up and yourself again in a few weeks.”
* Don’t struggle to find words. It is OK to sit there quietly and say nothing. People in distress can be satisfied with just a pat or a hug.
* If the person expresses anger at God, be patient and understanding. God understands.
* If the person has had a miscarriage, or has lost a child by death, don’t try to comfort by saying, “Never mind. You are young and soon you will be able to have another baby.” Or, “Thank God you have \_\_\_ more kids.”

“A soul filled with the love of Jesus lends to the words, the manners, the looks, hope, courage, and serenity. . . .Souls ready to faint are strengthened; those struggling against temptation will be fortified and comforted. The words, the expression, the manners throw out a bright ray of sunshine and leave behind them a clear path toward heaven . . . .Every one of us has opportunities of helping others. . . . Words of love, tenderness and charity, sanctify our influence over others.” (White. *Our High Calling,* p*.*175).

B. Things to say/do when communicating with the **bereaved:**

* Begin where the bereaved is, and not where you think they ought to be now.
* Try to understand and help the bereaved express their feelings: “I know you are a strong person; but if I were in your shoes, I would be screaming too.”
* Empathize with the person. Feel his/her pain.
* Be sensitive to his/her feelings.
* Be sure that you yourself have a clear understanding of death, dying, grief, etc. Reacquaint yourself with the “state of the dead” doctrine.
* Watch the body language of the bereaved and know when to keep silent. Remember that silence is sometimes the best eloquence.
* Practice some key comments in private, so you will have an idea of some things you could say:
* “I am here for you, no matter what happens.”
* “I cannot fully understand what you are going through, but our heavenly Father does, and I care a lot for you.”
* “Do not hesitate to call me. I am going to be checking on you.”
* “I would like to watch the kids for you for a few hours. Please let me know when we can arrange it.”
* “Satan is such an enemy; but God is in control. Would you like to talk about it?”
* Maintain confidence when the bereaved shares sensitive, personal information with you. You are morally bound to keep it confidential unless he/she talks about plans to harm himself/herself or others.

“Christ . . .was ever helpful, ever ready to speak words of hope and sympathy to the discouraged and the bereaved. . . .When He met a funeral, He did not pass by indifferently. Sadness came over his face as He looked upon death, and He wept with the mourners.” (White. *Lift Him Up,* p***.*** 90).

C. Communicating with one who has recently been **divorced**

People who have experienced a divorce usually suffer pain. There are many issues that they have to deal with. They need an understanding ear and some attention. Here are some things that one can say to the person:

* “I am so sorry that things turned out this way.”
* “I want to assure you that I will be praying for you.”
* “I know that you will need some help now that you are taking care of your family alone. When it is convenient for you, I would be happy to discuss ways in which I may be of help to you.”
* “I will be checking on you regularly”
* “Here is a Bible verse I think will give you comfort.”

It is important to maintain contact with those who are experiencing divorce, and to avoid taking sides, no matter what we may think we “know.” They are suffering loss, insecurity and a lack of social confidence. They often feel like failures and are ashamed to face the world and even their friends. The “freedom” they anticipated is not as real as they had hoped for. It is in times like these that friendships and Christian caring should be available. It is crucial that we never repeat gossip or even supposed “facts” about those experiencing this trauma.

“Mercy is an attribute that the human agent may share with God. . . . Mercy is kind, pitiful. Mercy is a manifestation of divine love and is shown by those who, identified with God, serve Him by reflecting the light of heaven upon the pathway of their fellow creatures. . . . Christians, in dealing with one another, are to be controlled by principles of mercy and love. They are to improve every opportunity for helping fellow beings in distress.” (White. *In Heavenly Places,* p. 238).

**GROUP ACTIVITY #3:** Divide into groups. Choose one of the following scenarios. Discuss how you would handle the situation. Be prepared to role play using the principles just presented:

**Case #1.** A co-worker has been spreading unpleasant rumors about you. This makes you angry and unhappy. Demonstrate how you will confront him/her.

**Case #2.** Your teenage son has been in the habit of keeping his room very untidy. In vain, you have tried many different methods to help him. Discuss this situation with him using an “I” message.

**Case #3.** Mrs. Jones’ husband has just died after a long illness. What would you say to her when you visit her?

**OR**

The youngest child of one of your church leaders has been killed in an accident. What are some of the things you would say when you visit the family?

**Case #4.** A young woman in your church has just been divorced. She has three young children and has never worked outside the home. What would you tell her?

1. **COMMUNICATING WITH MALES**

Communicating with males involves different dynamics than communicating with females. This is, of course, because of gender differences. While we naturally accept that males and females are different, we are likely to overlook that there are definite differences in their communication styles. Being aware of the male communication style may contribute to successful communication.

**1. The popular topics of conversation are different**. Women prefer to talk about their families, their feelings, fashion, etc. Women tend to express their ideas in terms of feeling. Men are bound to facts. Men enjoy conversations about sports, cars, money, and their jobs.

1. **Men are generally more concise** **than women**. Women often tend to use more words. In discussions with men, women need to remember this. Although men may engage in lengthy conversations in committees, these same men are impatient if a woman gives multiple details when making a point. The secret to a woman’s communication with males is for her to be clear, direct, confident, relevant and factual.

He looks at the facts, checks the figures and directs his eyes to the bottom line. Women may consider emotions and the personal.

1. **Men and women have different approaches to problem solving.** While men withdraw into solitude in order to solve problems, women prefer to talk and share their problems.

A study by Dr. Cheris Kramarae of the University of Illinois illustrates that “male speech” was characterized by both sexes as being more forceful, dominating, boasting, blunt, authoritarian, and to the point than female speech, which was perceived as friendlier, gentler, faster, more emotional, and more enthusiastic. Both genders felt it [women’s speech] tended to focus on more trivial topics than men’s speech. (Glass. *He Says, She Says,* p. 74).

1. **INAPPROPRIATE SPEECH**

Women, in communication with males, must maintain decorum and decency. Inappropriate remarks and allusions to one’s body, or any other reference that implies sexual harassment should be abruptly halted by the female. Mutual respect must be the ground rule. “There was no circumstance that Jesus met daily that could rob Him of His self-possession . . . He never overstepped the bounds of decorum.” (White. *Lift Him Up,* p.167).

1. **COMMUNICATING WITH GOD**

**“O God, thou art my God; early will I seek Thee.” Psalm 63:1.**

An interest in spiritual things is a gift that God intends women to use to minister to themselves and to others. This gift can be developed through communing with God. This is what a woman’s devotional life is all about. Every woman needs to have a devotional life. This is a most effective way of communicating with God. There are many advantages to this kind of communication:

1. **Benefits**

**1. Wisdom for daily challenges.** When we face the day, how often have we felt overwhelmed! There are problems that need solutions. There are people who need emotional and spiritual support. How can we cope with these challenges? We first have to fill our own spiritual tanks, in order to fuel those who are empty. When we are connected to the Source, and when we receive power from our heavenly Father, we are then fully equipped with the needed wisdom.

**2. Help to cope with expectations.** We are flooded with expectations from our family, friends, and colleagues. Expectations can be thoughtless and unreasonable. We feel the pressure. When we realize that God is the only One who can supply all our needs, we are able to sift the expectations and cast everything on God. God is the “shield of your help.” (Deuteronomy 33:29).

**3. Personal strength.** As leaders, we are expected to be a tower of strength for many**.**  Our personal devotional life gives us uncommon strength, renewal and refreshing. We have to get our strength from God. Also, we must beware of persons who cling to us and sap our spiritual, emotional and physical energy. As we experience personal strength from God, we need to point them to the Source of strength and encourage them to release their dependence on us.

4. **Ability to minister.** The ability to minister does not lie within us. It is God who gave us this gift. Therefore, without being connected to Him, our ministry will be in vain. We may feel unable or incapable at times. It is by remembering wherein our help lies that our ability can be revived. It is Jesus who reminds us, “Without me ye can do nothing.” (John 15:5).

**5. Fills a void.** There seems to be a natural yearning in the hearts of women to connect with God. We have often heard of praying mothers and other women who are involved in many witnessing projects. We women crave a connection with God. This can be realized by a personal devotional life.

**6. A chance for introspection** (Ps. 139:23).While we will not “forsake the assembling of ourselves together,” and therefore engage in corporate worship, it is in personal devotional periods that we can have a time of introspection. We can turn the light inside and honestly accept what God reveals to us. We need privacy for this.

7. **Building our relationship with God.** This is the summary of our benefits derived from personal devotions. If we want to be truly connected to God, we must talk with Him and listen to Him. In other words, like other relationships, communicating with God brings an unspeakable closeness.

**B. Establishing Communion with God**

Here are some ways in which we can establish communion with God;

* Personal devotions
* Family devotions
* Prayer partners
* Discerning God’s will through a study of His Word
* Developing a sensitivity to sin and claiming Christ’s power to overcome
* Thinking on the pure and lovely. (Philippians 4:13)
* Talking to God about even the “little things.”
* Talking with Him all the time. “Pray without ceasing.” (1Thessalonians 6:17)
* Praising God habitually. (Psalm 119:163)
* Accepting the gift of God’s grace. (Ephesians. 2:8; Isaiah. 53:5,6)
* Trusting in God’s sustaining power (Jude 24)
* Forgiving others as Christ forgives us. (Matthew 6:12-15; Ephesians 4:32)

By making a personal devotional covenant, one can gather the strength and willpower to keep the connection with God. “No man high or low…can steadily maintain before his fellowmen, a pure forceful life unless his life is hid with Christ in God.” (White, *Testimonies for the Church,* Vol. 7, p. 194).

**V. COMMUNICATING THE LOVE OF JESUS**

**Our speech.** In telling others about Jesus, we can be more effective by the way we **live** than with our **words.**  By our speech, others can tell whose we are. Do we belong to Jesus? While our grammar may be impeccable, our tone of voice, the content of our speech as well as our motives, can be a source of hurt or healing. “Let not one evil word escape our lips, because our lips, our voice, belong to God and must be consecrated to the Lord and to His service. These lips must not dishonor Jesus, for they belong to Him. He has bought them*.” (*White. *The Upward Look,* p.237).

**Friendship**. It is a goodidea for us to choose to have our friendships precede our attempts to evangelize. Too often it is the opposite. Through our friendship, we can greatly influence those we meet from day to day. Note the method of Jesus when He was on this earth:

“Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching people. The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow me.’” (White. *The Ministry of Healing,* p. 143).

**Interpersonal relationships.** Another way to communicate the love of Jesus is by being careful with our relationships. By our actions, we reflect Jesus. With this as our strong realization, we can be guided in our actions as we relate to people*.* “Like the different parts of a machine, all are closely related to another. . . .He who claims to be a Christian should examine himself and see if he is as kind and considerate of his fellow beings as he desires his fellow beings to be of him. . . .Christ taught that rank or wealth should make no difference in our treatment of one another and that in the light of heaven all are brethren.” (White. *In Heavenly Places,* p. 287).

**Living the Word.** Above all, living the Word is of greater importance than merely speaking the Word. We have heard many times, “Actions speak louder than words.” It is far better to preach with our way of living. “[I]f any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words, by the behavior of their wives.” (1 Peter 3:1 TNIV)

**CONCLUSION**

We have studied some important strategies for effective communication. Successful communication is a skill. Like any other skill, it must be practiced regularly and conscientiously if there are to be no misunderstandings. The Bible is laden with admonition relating to communication. A sincere study of God’s Word as well as contemporary materials on this subject will help us to become effective communicators and leaders.

**I’D RATHER SEE A SERMON**

I’d rather see a sermon

than hear one any day;

I’d rather one should walk with me

than merely tell the way.

The eye’s a better pupil

and more willing than the ear,

Fine counsel is confusing,

but example’s always clear;

And the best of all preachers

are the men who live their creeds,

For to see good put in action

is what everybody needs.

I soon can learn to do it

if you’ll let me see it done;

I can watch your hands in action,

but your tongue too fast may run.

And the lecture you deliver

may be very wise and true,

But I’d rather get my lessons

by observing what you do;

For I might misunderstand you

and the high advice you give,

But there’s no misunderstanding

how you act and how you live.

Edgar A. Guest

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**Jean Thomas** moved to Texas with her husband Fred Thomas when he retired from his position as Undersecretary of the General Conference and she left a position in North American Division’s Church Ministries department. Soon Mrs. Thomas went back to work and served as editor of the Southwestern Union *Record*magazine for ten years. She has conducted many seminars about communication and leadership throughout Texas, New Mexico, Louisiana, and Arkansas.

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