

Abiding Shepherd Lutheran Church (ASLC) Communications Workshop



Desired Outcomes of Communications Workshop

- ✚ Ensure communications are consistent with Biblical teachings
- ✚ Enhance our efforts to search for God's truth versus the opinions of men
- ✚ Discussing the necessity of faith (via Holy Spirit) and benefits of Biblical knowledge for a believer
- ✚ Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of individual and team communications, especially for spiritual edification and growth
- ✚ Create some common threads for ASLC communications
- ✚ Allow for an open dialogue related to communications among participants in multiple ASLC communication settings
- ✚ Provide supporting materials for Christian communications
- ✚ Discuss the guiding of a conversation – including when an inappropriate behavior or an unhealthy turn takes place
- ✚ Review the differences between telling the truth and telling the truth in love
- ✚ Reinforce the need to discuss both law and Gospel
- ✚ Encourage one another

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Purpose of Communication Workshop...

Why did God create the gift/blessing of communication?

- ☐ To convince others to see things our way?
- ☐ To honor Him?
- ☐ To help us to show others how smart we are (and how foolish they are)?
- ☐ To fill the silent moments of the day with noise?
- ☐ To not be alone and connect with each other?

Scriptural Guidelines of Communication

1> Ensure communications are consistent with Biblical teachings. (God created the mouth to glorify and honor Him. Sin attempts to thwart the godly purpose for communication.)

Colossians 3:17 - 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.

2> Enhance our efforts to search for God's truth versus the opinions of men. (Our sinful human nature at times tempts us to believe we are wiser, or human knowledge is superior to God.)

Isaiah 55:8-9 - "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. ⁹ "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Job 15:2-5 - "Would a wise man answer with empty notions or fill his belly with the hot east wind? ³ Would he argue with useless words, with speeches that have no value? ⁴ But you even undermine piety and hinder devotion to God. ⁵ Your sin prompts your mouth; you adopt the tongue of the crafty.

3> Review how to study the Bible including the proper principals of Biblical interpretation. (God's Word is the chief source for guidance. Improper use and understanding of Godly principles mislead people on sinful paths.)

2 Timothy 2:14-18 - Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. ¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. ¹⁶ Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. ¹⁷ Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, ¹⁸ who have wandered away from the truth.

Principles of Bible interpretation:

- (1) *Consider the context and the circumstances of each passage.* Most false teachings stem from taking passages out of context. Look carefully at the verses before and after each passage as well as the purpose and aim of the book it is in. Note the speaker, the ones spoken to, the reason for the statement, etc.
 - (2) *Take the Bible literally unless the Bible itself says otherwise.* Take the words in their simple, literal sense and don't go off seeking fanciful, figurative or "hidden" meanings. If the words are used in figurative or symbolical ways, the *context* or *parallel* passages will indicate it. Common sense will also make us aware of ordinary *idioms* (Metaphors, similes, hyperboles, etc.) as well as *figures of speech* common to all languages.
 - (3) *Consider parallel passages or cross references.* Let Scripture do the interpreting of Scripture. Less clear sections will be made more clear by the other Bible sections dealing with the same subjects. This further helps to safeguard Bible truths for us.
 - (4) *Consider all interpretations in the light of clear, chief truths.* No correct interpretation will contradict the often-stated and clear doctrines of the Bible (like man's sinfulness, salvation by grace through faith, the deity of Jesus Christ, etc.) Further study will make the true meaning clear if it is not seen right away. Parallel passages will again be of great value.
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4> Communication is to be a fruit of faith blessed by the Holy Spirit.

(Communication for a Christian is more than just words. It is an expression of one's faith).

Matthew 15:17-18 - "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? ¹⁸But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.'

Proverbs 12:18-19 - Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.
¹⁹ Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.

5> Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of individual and team communications, especially for spiritual edification and growth. (Efficiency in Christian communication is more than knowing words and how to use them. It is also the motivation of why we speak.)

1 Corinthians 10:31-33 - So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. ³² Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God — ³³ even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

James 3:3-10 - When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. ⁴ Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. ⁵ Likewise 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. ⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

⁷ All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, ⁸ but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.

6> Create some common threads for ASLC communications. (Sin makes me think that what I have to say is right and more important than what you have to say. It often is not.)

James 1:19-20 - My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, ²⁰ for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

Proverbs 11:2 - When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.
Proverbs 18:2 - A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.

Matthew 11:19 - But wisdom is proved right by her actions.

7> Allow for open dialogue and communication among participants in all ASLC settings. (In a safe Christian environment we should be able to share together God's wisdom. Adiaphora is a matter of opinion and preference.)

Cf. the council of Jerusalem – Acts 15:1-34

Cf. food sacrificed to idols – 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

8> Provide supporting materials for Christian communications. (Can you support not only what you say, but how you feel about specific communications from Scripture?)

Cf. giving offense vs. taking offense

Mark 6:1-3 - Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ² When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

"Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! ³ Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, [\[a\]](#) Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.

9> Guiding a conversation – including when an inappropriate behavior or an unhealthy turn takes place. (What's the best Christian response when sin seems to be seeping into the conversation?)

John 8:2-11 – woman caught in the act of adultery

- silence, leveling of the playing field, modeling forgiveness

Luke 10:25-26 - On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶ "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

- answer with a question

Mark 8:33 - But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

- at times a godly rebuke is necessary Cf. also Christian ground rules for groups

10> Review the differences between telling the truth and telling the truth in love. (Why did you just say that?)

Ephesians 4:15-16 - Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Philippians 2:3-4 - Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

11> Reinforce the need to discuss both law and gospel. (Appropriate to the situation, discern which is necessary for the conversation, not just for witnessing of one's faith.)

2 Corinthians 3:4-6 - Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. ⁵Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. ⁶He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 Timothy 3:16 - All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

Hebrews 4:12 - For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

12> Encourage one another. (If your words don't build me up – keep your mouth shut.)

Ephesians 4:29 - Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

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Guiding Communications

- † Use the Bible as your guide
- † Pray for personal guidance and communication support
- † Pray for others – Intercessor
- † Recognize and encourage appropriate communications
- † Be mindful and respectful of everyone's time
- † Set expectations for communications and meetings
- † Demonstrate appropriate and desired behaviors
- † Be willing to place yourself at risk or expose yourself
- † Be prepared to handle the “over-talker”, the “non-talker”, the “tangent-starter”, and the “insensitive person”
- † Remain humble
- † In small group Bible studies, use the pamphlet written by pastor(s) as a supporting guide



Using Nonverbal Communication

Receiving Nonverbal Messages

- ✎ Being aware of a person's use of the elements of nonverbal communication is helpful for a greater understanding of what they are trying to communicate.
- ✎ Especially if a person is having a difficult time verbalizing their thoughts and feelings, being aware of what they are communicating non-verbally can be of great benefit.
- ✎ It is also good to be aware that while there are basic elements for nonverbal communication, not everyone is able to communicate nonverbally in those ways. Especially in our world where things like Asperger's, autism, ADHD, and other social disabilities seem to be growing, there may be people who do not make use of general nonverbal communication elements.

Sending Nonverbal Messages

- ✎ Even more important than being aware of what a person is communicating nonverbally is being aware of what we are communicating nonverbally. Even if a person is not consciously paying attention to nonverbal signals, they naturally perceive them.
- ✎ Our nonverbal communication contributes greatly to the comfort level of a communication situation and therefore the quality of communication in that situation.
 - † For instance, if one person is towering over another, whether it be simply from a height difference or because one is standing and the other is sitting, the situation may be very uncomfortable or even intimidating.
 - † Not only is being at a similar height level important for communicating, but having a similar posture as the person(s) you

are communicating with can also help them to feel more comfortable. (i.e. sitting casually when they are sitting casually)

✎ Our nonverbal communication must match our verbal communication.

- ✚ It is one thing to tell someone that we are there for them; it is another thing to show that we are interested in what they are saying by the way that we position our bodies, give them eye contact, and actively listen through facial expressions.
- ✚ It is one thing to tell someone that something is sad, exciting, or important, but it is another thing to show those emotions nonverbally. If we talk about something that is supposed to be exciting but do not look excited, we will communicate exactly the opposite of what we are hoping to communicate.

✎ As with receiving nonverbal messages, it is beneficial to be aware that there will be people who simply do not receive nonverbal messages well. In those situations it is good to pay extra close attention to how they nonverbally communicate. In some cases it may be beneficial to be much more deliberate with nonverbal communication. In other cases it may be beneficial to minimize nonverbal communication and focus on verbal communication.



Creating an Environment Conducive for Great Communication

A) Goal of Verbal Communication. Why care about communicating? Why attempt to do it well?

To hear, understand and care about others and their concerns, communicate yourself clearly, honestly and kindly toward either:

1. An action – outcome, some change in understanding and/or behavior
2. Simple “knowing”, for the sake of intimacy, “connection”, just to know and be known.

B) Come prepared to a discussion

1. Prepare your heart

- A. Pray – for self and others
- B. Learn from scripture – God is the best communicator, study His word, study how and why Jesus communicated
- C. Clarify your intent - Be clear on and maybe state your intent/goals/hopes for the discussion
- D. Humble - maybe you can learn something too!!
- E. Kind - when have different views
- F. Patience
- G. Be authentic – be honest and yet kind, risk yourself, be open and vulnerable
- H. Give equal regard – to ideas and to time spent talking, allow the other person to talk
- I. Place value on active listening
Discuss “Do you value active listening? Do you believe it is a good thing to do? Why or why not? Do you have any internal barriers to actively listening to someone else?”

2. Distractions – internal and external

- A. Fatigue/illness
- B. Noise/commotion/disruption/feeling rushed or busy
- C. Strong emotions
- D. Inflexible pre-conceived notions

3. Respect the other person's:

- A. Time
- B. Way/style of communicating - it may be different than yours
- C. Confidences they share
- D. Periods of silence
- E. What the other person/people are hoping to gain from the discussion
- consider even asking that question, be ready for a very positive response!

C) Discuss- Creating trust and openness within verbal communication.

When these things mentioned here are present in a discussion/conversation, will you feel the environment is a “trusting and open” environment? What else – if anything - needs to be present?



Asking Questions

The types and sequence of questions asked can often be used to guide conversations.

Open-Ended Question:

A question that is answered using more than “yes” or “no”. For example, “What is the weather like today?”

Closed-Ended Question:

A question that must be answered with “yes” or “no”, or by choosing from a list of answers. For example, “Is it hot today?”

- † When seeking a rich and robust dialogue, open-ended questions are preferred. In this situation closed-ended questions may, and often do, stifle dialogue.
- † Asking an open-ended question, however, does not mean asking a vague question.
- † A question ought to be open enough to provide room for various answers, but limited in scope enough so that those responding can feel comfortable that their response answers the question.
- † To get a timid individual to respond without inducing anxiety, a series of closed-ended questions may be helpful. An alternative approach is to ask an open-ended question on a topic of great interest to the individual.
- † Providing questions in advance of a scheduled discussion can assist expected participants' preparation and reduce the anxiety of answering. There are, however, times when the visceral answer is desired and advanced warning may be counterproductive, e.g. an opening ice breaker.
- † Allowing proper time for a question to be answered is essential. While allowing silence after asking a question may feel awkward, a thoughtful question will often require some time for consideration before it is answered. Filling the silence with statements like, “This is the participation part you know,” or immediately answering the question yourself frustrates the others in the group and prevents them from thoughtfully considering the question. If it is taking too much time for the question to be answered, it is much more beneficial to restate the initial question or ask a follow up question that helps move the thought process along.

- † Responding in an encouraging and supportive manner creates an environment where parties to a discussion feel safe to participate. Labeling, belittling, discouraging, berating, embarrassing or similar reactions will destroy a safe communication environment.



Classic Communication Model Components

Sender: Initiator of a message.

Receiver: The one who receives the message.

Message: The idea, concept or communication that the speaker conveys via verbal and nonverbal means.

Channel: The medium through which the message travels such as oral, written, electronic, radio, television or phone.

Behavior: How a person acts or conducts themselves.

Feedback: The receivers' and senders' verbal and nonverbal, and internal and external responses to a message.

Encode: Putting an idea or message into written or spoken language often while putting one's own meaning and feelings into the word(s) and overall message.

Decode: Translating a sender's written or spoken language into an idea or message as understood by the receiver using the receiver's knowledge of and reaction to language from personal experience.

Noise: Noise includes anything that can distract from communications.

- External physical objects and sounds such as appearances of objects, startling sounds, someone talking loudly, etc.
- Internal physiological noise that may distract you from communicating competently such as sweaty palms, a pounding heart and butterflies in stomach.
- Psychological noise such as a surge of extreme emotion, fear, doubt, sadness, anxiety, joy, etc.
- Semantic noise is word choices that are confusing. For example, using the word "utilize" versus "use", "hubris" instead of "arrogance", or "tri-syllabic" versus "three syllables".



Communication Courtesy

What constitutes communication courtesy?

Communication courtesy involves awareness of and respect for the communication environment and the perspectives and feelings of all parties to the communications. Communication courtesy also involves demonstrating politeness in one's attitude and behavior toward others. In far fewer words, it is manners.

Key Elements

There are many key elements to being courteous, but there are a few that stand out:

- † Be on time
- † Be prepared
- † Pay attention to what everyone has to say
- † Sincerely and honestly thank, encourage and compliment one another
- † Consciously decide before each communication opportunity to be patient and kind toward –even to love – every other person. Even and especially those who are more difficult for you to love.
- † Be patient, be kind and love
- † Appropriately acknowledge thanks, encouragement, compliments, patience, kindness and love
- † Have the integrity to discuss problems, concerns, and perceived or real slights or wrongs in a biblical manner
- † Maintain team and individual confidences
- † Take turns
- † Consciously manage speaking to listening ratios
- † Express thoughts and feelings clearly

- † Practice brevity
- † Create and encourage a safe environment
- † Create favorable ambient conditions – address lighting, space, comfort, temperature, hunger, child care, etc. factors
- † Accept silence and respect another's right to delay or avoid participation, while simultaneously encouraging everyone to participate
- † Demonstrate courage in sharing and exposing your thoughts, concerns, fears, etc.
- † Be aware of your gestures and how your body language might be perceived by others

What are some things that we should not do?

- 🌐 The opposite of each key element
- 🌐 Interrupt others
- 🌐 Judge, attack or challenge others
- 🌐 Participate in side conversations
- 🌐 Engage in cross talk



Active Listening

What is Active Listening?

- 👂 Active listening is a communication technique where the listener consciously listens and then feeds back what is heard, by re-stating in the listener's own words what the listener believes the speaker has said, to confirm the understanding of both parties. The nutshell version – listening attentively and providing feedback versus waiting for your turn to speak.

Key Elements

There are three key elements that make up active listening: comprehending, retaining, and responding.

👂 Comprehending

- 👉 Comprehension means that everybody in the group understands what is being said, or that they are all “on the same page”.

👂 Retaining

- 👉 Because the information we obtain from listening is how we create meaning from words, we rely on our memory to fill in the blanks. However, we cannot remember everything we have ever listened to and there are several main reasons for this:

👂 Cramming

- 👂 Overloading your brain with too much information too quickly enters it into your short-term memory, which for most people is discarded before it can be transferred to your long-term memory.

👂 Inattentiveness

- 👂 Not giving your full attention when listening means your brain is not attaching importance to the information being given, so it loses its meaning and gets discarded as short-term memory.

👂 Responding

- 👉 Listening is an interaction between speaker and listener. The speaker looks for verbal and nonverbal responses from the listener to determine if he or she is getting the message across, and the speaker may choose to adjust his or her communication style.
- 👉 It is always good when the listener responds verbally and nonverbally to the speaker including asking questions because using feedback immediately after receiving it enhances retention. This way, the speaker and listener are both involved, creating meaning for both parties.

Barriers

Both speaker and listener can become distracted by barriers that can impede the flow of conversation. These barriers can be internal, external, psychological (e.g. emotions) and physical (e.g. noise, smells, pain, touch or visual distractions). Cultural, demographic, educational, experiential and other differences are common sources of listening barriers. In addition accents, vocabularies, local idioms and misunderstandings due to personal or cultural assumptions and biases can all be or create barriers.

Overcoming Barriers

There are numerous ways to overcome listening barriers, including the following:

- 👉 Communicate at the appropriate time
- 👉 Communicate in the appropriate environment
- 👉 Speak clearly
- 👉 Speak at an appropriate pace
- 👉 Speak with an appropriate volume
- 👉 Listeners should make eye contact with the speaker and pay attention to body language
- 👉 Speakers should make eye contact with the listener and pay attention to body language
- 👉 The listener should focus on the message the speaker is trying to convey
- 👉 Gather and organize your thoughts, as necessary, before speaking
- 👉 Be mindful of increasing frequencies of others hearing what you said but not what you meant. Learn. Seek feedback for improvement purposes.
- 👉 Take notes
- 👉 Give thought to the distribution timing, sequence, volume, magnitude and format of communications other than those of the speaker and listener
- 👉 Put aside personal emotion if it is impeding listening or arrange for a different time to communicate
- 👉 Listeners should ask questions and paraphrase back to the speaker to clarify understanding
- 👉 Put aside personal biases and refrain from judging and arguing, especially during the communication process