

HELPS MINISTRY PT. 2

LESSON 1

Communication and Unity

Life exists because of communication and every living thing communicates. Communication is the most necessary ingredient to any assembly's success, and yet, the one element that requires constant work to perfect. Whether it is the human body's brain communicating with its members, troops in the field communicating back with HQ, stores communicating with their distributors, husbands and wives, or the local church; without communication things quickly fall apart.

Communication is absolutely necessary to maintaining unity in the Kingdom of God. When communication fails, tasks are left undone, emotions are stirred, people are overlooked, and ultimately, lives are hurt. This lesson will look at what the Bible has to say about communication.

SOME OBSERVATIONS

- All five of our senses are designed to communicate.
- Man has developed numerous ways with which to speak: speech, writing, electronic, music, art, sign language, body language, etc.
- We cannot exist without communication.
- We cannot fellowship without communication.
- We share things through communication.
- Communication gives our lives expression and meaning.
- The social media explosion thrives on mankind's desire and need to communicate, share, and feel important.
- We communicate what is important to us in that moment of time.
- The Bible is God Almighty communicating to man. It is perfect.
- The Lord Jesus was/is God's will and love communicated to us. He is perfect.
- The Holy Spirit is God's avenue of current communication to us. He is also perfect.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF COMMUNICATION

- **The Word of the LORD-** There are many accounts of God speaking supernaturally to His leaders. Whether the Word of the LORD came for personal comfort or direction, as a prophecy for His people, or to write Scripture; God was communicating by His Spirit in this manner. His directions were always clear, even if they weren't always acted upon.
- **The Holy Scriptures-** The Scriptures contain history, poetry, the Law, prophecies, commandments, curses, blessings, and prayers. The Holy Scriptures are flawlessly recorded and given to us as an official communiqué from Heaven. The Epistles themselves were letters written to individual churches in order to communicate the will of God.
- **Israel's Trumpet-** Israel (and much of the ancient world) communicated with

trumpets (*shofar*). For Israel, the trumpet blast communicated danger, military action, the day of atonement, the return of the glory, the coronation of a King, praise, the Rapture, and ultimately the day of the LORD

- **Prayer-** Prayer is how we communicate back with God. Prayers are filled with the pressing issues of life at the moment of the prayer. We have not because we ask not (**James 4:3a**).
- **Preaching/Teaching-** Preaching and teaching are OT and NT actions. God calls His servant to stand before people to communicate through the spoken Word the divine will of God. It is through this foolish means that God has chosen to save and help mankind (**1 Cor. 1:21**).

WHY COMMUNICATION FAILS

Breakdowns in communication happen for numerous reasons.

- **Oversight.** We simply forgot to communicate.
- **Ignorance.** We didn't know communication was necessary.
- **Breakdown in command chain.** We didn't know who to communicate to.
- **Apathy.** We just didn't care enough to communicate.
- **Laziness.** We are just too lazy to communicate.
- **Attitude.** We don't want to communicate. Perhaps out of fear.
- **Distraction.** Something else was more pressing at the moment.

Regardless of the reasoning behind communication slips, communication must always be improved in order for goals to be accomplished, relationships to flourish, and life to be enjoyed.

THE THREE BREAKDOWNS IN COMMUNICATION

The chain of communication only has three links:

The Source—The Transfer Medium—The Receipt

A breakdown in communication can happen at any point along the chain.

1. The source fails to communicate or communicate accurately.
2. The transfer medium fails, e.g., email, text, letter, phone call, conversation, etc.
3. The receiver fails to understand, pay attention, or follow through.

1. Failure at the Source

These failures are what every leader and motivated person must always overcome if they ever want to succeed in their endeavor.

- Total oversight of communication.
- Assumption of communication. You erroneously assumed you had communicated.
 - "Never assume anybody knows what you know, though you may have told them a thousand times." -Dr. Mark T. Barclay
- Confusing or unclear information communicated.

- Constant change in the vision/mission. Communication must be consistent with the vision.

2. Failure at the Transfer

These failures are easy to understand.

- An email or text isn't delivered.
- A letter is never received.
- A phone call is dropped or garbled.
- A conversation never takes place. A meeting is not attended.
- A strong nor'easter ruined the smoke signal.

3. Failure at the Receipt

These failures are often frustrating for leaders, proactive people, and wives. It is assumed that the Source has successfully communicated accurate information. They have successfully attempt communicating, but:

- The Recipient doesn't check their emails, texts, voicemails, or post mail.
- The Recipient does not act on the communication.
 - Doesn't know to act—*ignorance*.
 - Doesn't want to act—*insubordination*.
 - Doesn't care about the action—*apathy*.
 - Doesn't remember to act—*needs a smartphone with alerts*.
- The Recipient does not understand the information or what to do with it.
- The Recipient is confused or discouraged by the constant change of direction coming from the Source or is getting mixed signals.

Communication is vitally critical to the unity of the local church. Communication is important to maintain unity of heart, vision, and action. All three must be maintained.

1. **Unity of Heart**- This describes the love, joy, and peace working in a local body (**Acts 4:32; Phillipians 2:2**), e.g., forgiveness, repentance, encouragement, prayer, etc.
2. **Unity of Vision**- This describes the mission or assignment the local body is called to accomplish (**Habakkuk 2:2; Phillipians 2:2 Amp.**), e.g., meetings, preaching, teaching, planning, etc.
3. **Unity of Action**- This describes how the local body will go about fulfilling the vision (**Romans 15:30; Phillipians 1:27c, 3:17**), e.g., texts, meetings, emails, verbal, etc.

Without communication, this critical trinity will deteriorate. May the Lord help us to communicate. Amen!

HELPS MINISTRY PT.2

LESSON 2

Loving Your Labor

Back in college, at the height of my reckless zeal, the LORD spoke to me and said, “You don’t serve me out of love. You serve me out of duty and obligation.” At first, I took that as a compliment. Then I realized it was not. We must be cautious to allow our love for Jesus Christ to be our greatest motivator.

- **We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love [agape], and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.**
1 Thes. 1:3 NIV

The trio of faith, hope, and love is found here in 1 Thessalonians; producing, prompting, and inspiring the believer to work, labor, and endure.

1. Work is produced by faith. **Work (*ergon*):** *undertaking, action.*
 - So then, a lack of faith will produce a lack of works.
 2. Labor is prompted by love. **Labor (*kopos*):** *a beating, intense labor united with trouble and toil. The root meaning is to cut, to strike, to smite, to wail with grief.*
 - So then, a lack of love will produce a lack of labor.
 3. Endurance is inspired by hope. **Endurance (*hypomone*):** *constancy, perseverance, steadfastness. In the NT the characteristic of a man who is not swerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings.*
 - So then, a lack of hope will produce a lack of endurance or perseverance.
- **And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.**
I Corinthians 13:13

The greatest of the power trio is love—the God kind of love. According to 1 Thessalonians, this God kind of love working in us will prompt us to labor for Jesus Christ. How can you claim to love Jesus Christ and not want to serve Him?

THE CRITICALITY OF LOVING YOUR LABOR

We labor like mules for Jesus. But do we love it? Are we honored to serve, or are we put out? Does the burden of service excite us, or does it produce heart murmurs?

- **Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.**
Psalm 32:9 NIV

Mules labor reluctantly. They are capable of so much as a beast of burden, but they are also notoriously stubborn and belligerent. Obedience is good, but the good of the land requires obedience and *willingness* (**Isa. 1:19**). Love is not stubborn against God.

- **For God is not unrighteous to forget your work [*ergon*] and labour [*kopos*] of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.
Hebrews 6:10**

God does not forget labors of love. What about labors that are not loved? Does He forget those? Love for Christian service is what turns our necessary works into good works. A love for serving is what keeps our good works from becoming dead works. We all work for Jesus, but how much of it will He remember? These Hebrew believers had the testimony that they “had ministered to the saints,” and they still currently did. Their past was not better than their present.

- **I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, . . . And hast borne [*to carry a burden*], and hast patience [*constancy*], and for my name’s sake hast laboured [*kopiaō*], and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.
Revelation 2:2a,3-5**

The Ephesian church was clean, holy, spiritually discerning, doctrinally sound, fearless, burden-bearing, hardworking, toiling, and inexhaustible, but they had lost their love for the work of the Gospel. This loss of love endangered their very spiritual existence. They were serving Jesus without a servant’s heart. Their remedy was repentance.

- **I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen [*make stable your mind*] the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect [*not filled up, therefore half empty*] before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent . . . Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments;
Revelation 3:1c,2,3a,4a**

The Sardis Church was coasting on their past reputation. They were still known for their past fervor, but God saw that their hearts had cooled off toward His work. The few remaining works they did have were done half-heartedly. Their remedy was repentance. This was to be repentance from dead works (**Hebrews 6:1**) and not just going through the motions.

INDICATORS OF LOVELESS LABOR

There are several indicators of a loveless labor, and most of them are internal. You can judge yourself using the following list of indicators:

- Complaining about more work. Love rejoices at the opportunity to serve.
- Afraid God might ask you to do more. Perfect love casts out fear.
- Fighting for and justifying more down time. Love desires to do more.
- Justifying why you “can’t.” Love looks for the possibility.
- Always making excuses. Love looks for excuses to do more. Excuses cannot be overcome—they must be repented of.
- Doing things half-heartedly. Love does things with all of its heart.
- Cringing at the assignment. Love embraces the assignment as another opportunity to serve the King of Heaven.
- A desire to do less. Love looks to do more.
- Forgetfulness concerning a task. Love doesn’t forget.
- Neglect of an assignment. Love doesn’t neglect.
- Apathy. The ever-powerful “Meh”. Love is not apathetic.
- Disinterest. Love is not disinterested.

INDICATORS OF A LOVE-FILLED LABOR

There are several indicators of labors that have the crucial ingredient of love.

- A great sense of joy and excitement to serve. Joy in your heart to serve is what makes you a servant.
- A great sense of honor at being asked. You’re just thankful to be saved, much less to be asked to help.
- Chomping at the bit to do more.
- You’re not looking to hurry up and go home all the time.
- An eager anticipation for the next assignment.
- A faith like Caleb and Joshua: “Let us go up at once, for we are well able.” Faith works by love.
- Excellence is evident (to your fullest knowledge and ability).
- Your zeal is contagious and it provokes others to good works.

OTHER THOUGHTS

- It is possible to be saved and not love Jesus.
- It is possible to serve God and not love it.
- Love and joy in the believer’s heart to labor for God is what makes them a servant.
- Servants are not picky about their endeavors.
- God doesn’t need just laborers, He wants servants.
- Laborers control their work hours. Servants wait upon the LORD.
- When you have a servant’s heart, you feel useless unless you are doing something for the Kingdom.
- Love revives dead works and makes them good works.
- There is a huge difference between good works and labors of love. Most Christians do good works. Very few Christians actually have labors of love.

May we guard our hearts and return to our first love and do our first works for Jesus Christ!

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LESSON 3

Sweet Reasonableness

During the course of serving God, serving with and for your fellow Christian, you will encounter many an opportunity to give and receive offense. This opportunity can easily be neutralized through the understanding and use of “sweet reasonableness.” This sweet reasonableness is the Greek word *epiekes*. It is one of the most untranslatable words in the Greek language. Let us first look at its use in the New Testament.

- **Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness [*epiekes*] be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

Philippians 4:4-6 ESV

The first use of sweet reasonableness in the Bible is in a passage of text concerning the maintenance of internal peace. The process is clearly spelled out: 1) rejoice, 2) be reasonable, 3) pray, 4) give thanks, and 5) make your requests. Short-circuit any one of these and peace will be hard to come by.

The Best Definition Possible

Often, to understand a new word, one must use many words to paint the picture. Sweet reasonableness requires such a painting. The Greek idea of *epiekes* includes the following:

What it is:

- The Hebrew equivalent is used of God as being “good and forgiving; not exacting the punishment deserved to those who call upon His name.”
- The spirit that enables a man to bear injuries with patience, and not demand all that is rightly his due, for the sake of peace.
- Gentle tolerance for others, in spite of having a justification for intolerance.
- Clemency, mercy, leniency (**Acts 24:4**).
- The power of yielding.
- To ability to give way to the wishes of others.
- The poise of soul, which enables one to sacrifice his own rights, not by necessity, but out of generosity and sympathy.
- Generosity
- Goodwill toward others.
- Friendliness and bigheartedness.
- Mercy toward the failures of others.
- *Agape* towards the faults of others.
- Leniency

- Contentment

What it is not:

- Not hasty in retaliation.
- Not contentious.
- Not rigorous or difficult.
- Not severe.
- Not prideful and stubborn.
- Not thoughtless.
- Not hasty in punishment.

NEW TESTAMENT USE

- **Not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle [*epiekes*], not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.**
1 Timothy 3:3 NIV

Here, sweet reasonableness is contrasted with violence and quarrelsomeness.

- **Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle [*epiekes*], showing every consideration for all men.**
Titus 3:2 NASB

Here, sweet reasonableness is shown to be synonymous with submission, peaceableness, and consideration; and is the opposite of malignant.

- **But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle [*epiekes*], and easy to be intreated [*reasonable, easily obeyed, open to reason*], full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.**
James 3:17

Again, sweet reasonableness is shown to be in the same vein as peaceableness, reasonable, and mercy.

- **Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle [*epiekes*], but also to those who are unreasonable [*skolios: unfair, surly, crooked*].**
1 Peter 2:18

Here, sweet reasonableness is shown to be the opposite of unreasonable, unfairness, surliness, and crookedness.

The Fruit of Sweet Reasonableness

- It reduces friction between people.
- It is key to fulfilling **Ephesians 4:1-3**, and the endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- It contributes to the peace of a family, business, ministry, or community.

- It overlooks offenses and extends mercy.

May the LORD help us to walk in and develop this sweet reasonableness.

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LESSON 4

Conflict and Its Sources

The Bible commands us to seek peace and pursue it (1 Peter 3:11). We are also commanded to “**keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**” (Ephesians 4:3). However, there will inevitably come a time when conflict will arise, even among the brethren. This lesson is designed to expose the sources and causes of conflict and strife.

Conflict: a prolonged armed struggle; incompatibility between two or more opinions, principles, or interests; a serious disagreement or argument, typically a protracted one.

Conflict and Strife

A few general things must be said about conflict.

- **Where there is strife, there is pride,** **Proverbs 13:10 NIV**

Strife is the result of pride. When strife is one-sided, it is called bullying. When the victim pushes back, it is called self-defense. When the pushing back surpasses self-defense, it's called strife.

- **Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.** **Proverbs 17:14 NIV**

Conflicts only grow. It is biblical and proper to “just drop it.”

- **The lips of fools bring them strife, and their mouths invite a beating.** **Proverbs 18:6 NIV**

The Bible calls the strife-monger a fool. He is just asking to be beaten up.

- **Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended.** **Proverbs 22:10 NIV**

The Bible calls those that cause conflict mockers. They are also the source of insults and quarrels.

Other Conflict Scriptures

- **A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.** **Proverbs 15:18 NIV**
- **A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends.** **Proverbs 16:28 NIV**

- **He loveth transgression that loveth strife: and he that exalteth his gate seeketh destruction.** Proverbs 17:19
- **It is an honour for a man to cease [*avoid*] from strife: but every fool will be meddling [*quick to quarrel*].** Proverbs 20:3
- **He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat.** Proverbs 28:25
- **An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious [*hot-tempered*] man aboundeth in transgression.** Proverbs 29:22

No One is 100% Right

Brother Hagin was fond of saying, "There are always three sides to every story." We must be mindful that our side of the conflict or argument is only that—our side.

- **In a lawsuit the first to speak seems right, until someone comes forward and cross-examines.** Proverbs 18:17 NIV
- **The first to speak in court sounds right—until the cross-examination begins.** NLT
- **The first one to plead his cause seems right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him.** NKJV

Often whoever can spread their propaganda first can win the hearts and opinions of anyone who listens. Keep your conflict between you, the judge, and the defendant.

- **Debate your case with your neighbor, And do not disclose the secret to another; Lest he who hears it expose your shame, And your reputation be ruined.** Proverbs 25:9,10 NKJV

These verses teach us to never spread conflict, but rather to resolve it privately, or with the help of an intermediary at most. Stop the self-propaganda!

Self-Propaganda

Self-propaganda is dangerous because it is never accurate. Our own estimation of ourselves is usually very one-sided and emotional.

- **Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?** Proverbs 20:9
- **There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.** Proverbs 14:12, 16:25

- **Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts.** Proverbs 21:2
- **All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits [*attitude*].** Proverbs 16:2
- **The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.** Proverbs 12:15

Other Verses

- **Devise not evil against thy neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.** Proverbs 3:29
- **An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered.** Proverbs 11:9
- **He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he.** Proverbs 14:21

Some Reality

If we can adjust our hearts, conflict can easily be resolved or avoided.

- **A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.** Proverbs 17:17
- **A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.** Proverbs 18:24

Christians are not speed bumps; therefore don't run them over to make yourself look good, nor throw them under the bus to escape fault. We must lay our own lives down.