1 Peter 3:8-12: Being Wise in Our Communications
September 25, 2019

Christianity is a relationship where we are expected to communicate with one another. Many of the letters of the New Testament speak to this important action. We are to teach one another and edify others with our words (Colossians 3:16, 4:16 et al). James 5 says we are to confess our sins to one another. 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says we are to encourage one another. Romans 15:14 says we are to admonish one another. Matthew 18 says that if our brother sins against us, we need to go to him with the intention of helping him to overcome his sin. Matthew 5 says that if our brother has something against us, we are to go to them. Open, honest and direct conversation are necessary.

But how many times do you feel like you said the wrong thing? Or maybe you were not even aware until later that your words caused great damage. We are told that Christianity is a Way of Life; that word "way" could describe a road or path. Have you even been on the road and someone dropped something in your path? That danger was probably not intended, but it could cause great damage (or even loss of life). Careless words are like obstacles on the road. They hurt those closest too us, and often are unintended in their destruction.

We MUST speak, but we MUST speak WISELY. God does not leave us without a teaching on this. One example of God's direction in the manner of communication is the list of the qualification of a preacher, the one who speaks to the congregation. These are found in 2 Timothy 2:22-25:

> *Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,*

Many of these qualification revolved around effective communication. Pursuing love and peace, for example. Refusing foolish and ignorant speculation (as in 2 Tim. 2:16, avoiding worldly and empty chatter). Rejecting being quarrelsome, instead being kind, patient, and gentle. While these are the requirements of an evangelist, all Christians need to put on these qualities.

Rules for Christian communication:

1. PURPOSE: All things for edification
   Ephesians 4:29 *Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear*.
2. GENTLENESS: Speak the truth with love
   Ephesians 4:15 *but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ*,
3. HUMILITY: Put others ahead of yourself
   Philippians 2:3-4 *Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others*.
4. EMPATHY: Speak to others in the way you would want to be addressed
   Matthew 7:12 "*In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets*"
5. DISCERNMENT: Avoid contentious conversations
   2 Timothy 2:16 *But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness*,
6. FORGIVENESS: Don't take anything personal
   Colossians 3:13 *bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you*.
7. PATIENCE: Think about what you want to say
   James 1:19 *So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath*;

Rules that we need to avoid breaking:

1. SELF-RIGHTEOUS: Having a purpose of just proving ourselves right
   Luke 10:29 *But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*
2. DEMEANING: Speaking harshly to keep people from disagreeing
   John 9:34 *They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?" So they put him out*.
3. MEAN SPIRITED: Putting others down (intentionally or unintentionally)
   1 Peter 2:1 *Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander*
4. INSENSTIVE: Not having consideration for the feelings of others
   James 3:15-16 *This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing*.
5. CONTENTIOUS: Loving debate
   Titus 3:9-10 *But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. Reject a factious man after a first and second warning*
6. CRITICAL: Coming across (intentionally or otherwise) as judgmental
   James 4:11 *Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it.*
7. BOASTFUL: Coming across (intentionally or otherwise) as arrogant

Jude 1:16 *These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage*.