



COMMUNICATION: What Did I Just Say?

Author: Susan E. Hohman

Preview

“Speak clearly, if you speak at all; carve every word before you let it fall.” This quote by Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr., an American physician, poet, professor, lecturer, and author based in Boston, Massachusetts, in the 1800s, outlines the importance of thinking before we speak and making certain each word is worth speaking.

However, there is a great deal we say when we don't speak aloud. Or, as Peter Drucker (instrumental in the philosophical and practical foundations of the modern business corporation) said: “The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said.”

Praise

Have everyone in the group close their eyes and think of the first positive word that comes to mind. Write down that word. Is that word able to be used as a form of praise? *Example: “Joy.” The joy of the Lord is my strength. Thank You, Lord, for giving me joy.* Spend a moment, asking each student who is willing to share their word of praise.

Parable

Divide up into groups of two or three. One person should example a “body language” or a particular facial expression but speak no words. The other person(s) should try to guess what the demonstrator is “saying.” Trade places and give everyone a chance to be the demonstrator.

Point out: *This is how easy it might be to misinterpret what someone else is trying to say to you, if their words say one thing and their body language says another. This also clearly makes the point that what we say, BOTH verbally and with our actions, needs to correlate.*

Present

No one is ever understood by everyone at all times. That’s impossible, and you can rest assured that you’re not the only one who has ever had your words or actions misunderstood.



But it's also important to remember that we definitely have control over what we say and how we say it. Read ***Ephesians 4:29*** in your Bible. We are commanded in this Scripture verse to make sure that no junk (corrupt speech) exits our mouths. We are also admonished to “build up” or encourage others with our conversations and behaviors.

As we saw in the demonstrations of body language and facial expressions, we also have to be careful to send the right message to others in those ways, as well as through our words.

Jesus didn't pull any punches when he asked the Pharisees, “How can you speak good, when you are evil?” in ***Matthew 12:34***. He pointed out that their fruit (what they DID) clearly proclaimed exactly what was in their hearts – no matter what words they spoke.

Pactice

The song “Word of God, Speak” (Mercy Me) is a reflection of how poorly our human vocabulary can fully express to an infinite God just how big and important He is to us. Still, we only have human speech (conversation) and behaviors (non-verbal expressions) to share with others what God has done in our lives.

Do you ever dream of speaking to large groups about something you're passionate about? How about singing publicly about your favorite hobby or pastime? Do you like to act or perform skits that share a message? Did you realize that every day, in various ways, you are “speaking” to others about something – good or bad – in your life?

What message are you sending? Do you show God's love through words and actions, or would you have to admit you kind of fall short in that sometimes?

Pray

Dearest Lord, we ask as the psalmist David did, that You “set a guard over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!” (***Psalms 141:3***). Help us to consciously consider the words we speak on a daily basis. If they're not something that will lift others up, please put a guard — in fact a lock! — on our lips, so that we don't injure someone with hurtful words. Also, help us



remember that both our words and actions should join together to point people to You at all times.

Plus

Being all grown up sounds like something you might want to do soon, doesn't it? *Read and memorize **Ephesians 4:15*** to discover how we can "grow up in every way."



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STUDENT WORKSHEET

1. Oliver Wendell Holmes said to “carve every word before you let it fall.” Write what you think he meant by this phrase. (Hint: carving takes time)

2. Write the first positive word you thought of with your eyes closed. Use that word in a praise.

3. Besides speech, Body Language and Facial Expressions are two other ways of _____.

4. Ephesians 4:29 gives us a commandment: that no _____ (junk) exits our mouths, and an admonition: to _____ (encourage) others with words and actions.

5. Jesus spoke some very strong words to a religious group called the _____, letting them know that no matter what they said, their actions told another story. Matthew 12:34

6. Some hard questions to ask ourselves:

a. Did you realize that every day, in various ways, you are “speaking” to others about something – good or bad – in your life?

b. What message are you sending?

c. Do you show God’s love through words and actions, or would you have to admit you kind of fall short in that sometimes?

7. The psalmist David asked God in Psalm 141:3 to set a _____ over his mouth and to keep a _____ over the door of his lips.

8. How do we “grow up in every way,” according to Ephesians 4:15? _____
