

# Communication Guidelines

by Pastor Timothy Keller

Proverbs 18:21; 25:11; Job 19:2; James 3:8-10; I Peter 3:10; Ephesians 4:25-32

**Think about these guidelines and study the supporting Scripture verses:**

1. Be a ready listener and do not answer until the other person has finished talking (Prov. 18:13; James 1:19).
2. Be slow to speak. Think first. Don't be hasty in your words. Speak in such a way that the other person can understand and accept what you say (Prov. 15:23, 28; 29:20; James 1:19).
3. Don't go to bed angry! Each day clear the offenses of that day. Speak the truth but do it in love. Do not exaggerate. (Eph. 4:15, 25; Col. 3:8; Matt. 6:34).
4. Do not use silence to frustrate the other person. Explain why you are hesitant to talk at this time (Prov. 10:19; 15:28; 16:21, 23; 18:2; 20:15; Col. 4:6).
5. Do not become involved in quarrels. It is possible to disagree without quarreling (Prov. 17:14; 20:3; Rom. 13:13; Eph. 4:31).
6. Do not respond in uncontrolled anger. Use a soft and kind response and tone of voice (Prov. 14:29; 15:1; 25:15; 29:11; Eph. 4:26, 31).
7. When someone confesses to you, tell him you forgive him. Be sure it is forgiven and not brought up to the person, to others, or to yourself! (Prov. 17:9; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13; I Pet. 4:8).
8. When you are in the wrong, admit it and ask for forgiveness, and ask how you can change (Prov. 12:15; 16:2; 20:6; 21:2; Matt. 5:23-25; Luke 17:3; James 5:16).
9. Avoid nagging (Prov. 10:19; 16:21, 23; 17:9; 18:6, 7; 21:19; 27:15).

10. Do not blame or criticize the other person. Instead, restore, encourage, and edify (Rom. 14:13; Gal. 6:1; I Thess. 5:11).
11. If someone verbally attacks, criticizes, or blames you, do not respond in the same manner (Rom. 12:17, 21; I Pet. 2:23; 3:9).
12. Try to understand the other person's opinion. Make allowances for differences.
13. Be concerned about the other person's interests (Eph. 4:2; Phil. 2:4; 3:15, 16).

**Communication Guidelines**

- 1. Remember that actions speak louder than words; nonverbal communication usually is more powerful than verbal communication. Avoid double messages in which the verbal and nonverbal messages convey something contradictory.**
- 2. Define what is important and stress it; define what is unimportant and de-emphasize or ignore it. Avoid fault finding.**
- 3. Communicate in ways that show respect for the other person's worth as a human being. Avoid statements which begin with the words "You never . . ."**
- 4. Be clear and specific in your communication. Avoid vagueness.**
- 5. Be realistic and reasonable in your statements. Avoid exaggeration and sentences which begin with the words "You always . . ."**
- 6. Test all your assumptions verbally by asking if they are accurate. Avoid acting until this is done.**
- 7. Recognize that each event can be seen from different points of view. Avoid assuming that other people see things like you do.**
- 8. Recognize that your family members and close friends are experts on you and your behavior. Avoid the tendency to deny their observations about you--especially if you are not sure.**
- 9. Recognize that disagreement can be a meaningful form of communication. Avoid destructive arguments.**
- 10. Be honest and open about your feelings and viewpoints. Bring up all significant problems even if you are afraid that doing so will disturb another person. Speak the truth in love. Avoid sullen silence.**
- 11. Do not put down and/or manipulate the other person with tactics such as ridicule, interrupting, name-calling, changing the subject, blaming, bugging,**

**sarcasm, criticism, pouting, guilt-inducing, etc., Avoid the one-upmanship game.**

- 12. Be more concerned about how your communication affected others than about what you intended. Avoid getting bitter if you are misunderstood.**
- 13. Accept all feelings and try to understand why others feel and act as they do. Avoid the tendency to say "you shouldn't feel like that."**
- 14. Be tactful, considerate, and courteous. Avoid taking advantage of the other person's feelings.**
- 15. Ask questions and listen carefully. Avoid preaching or lecturing.**
- 16. Do not use excuses. Avoid falling for the excuses of others.**
- 17. Speak kindly, politely, and softly. Avoid nagging, yelling, or whining.**
- 18. Recognize the value of humor and seriousness. Avoid destructive teasing.**

## Conflict or “Hope Deferred”

### A. Introduction

Frustration is experienced by everyone and often leads to conflict. Frustration is the blocking of motive satisfaction by some kind of obstacle. We can become frustrated by a flat tire, the loss of a game, heavy traffic etc. Frustration is also the feeling we feel when something interferes with our wishes, hopes, plans or expectations.

### Proverbs 13:14

**Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.**

### Sources of Frustration

#### 1. Physical obstacles

##### a. Obstacles out of our control.

- drought for a farmer, causing the lack of a good crop
- A broken alarm clock
- A traffic jam, a flood, fire etc.

#### 2. Social circumstances

##### a. Obstacles we cannot control

- Refusal of a spouse to return affection

- Social barriers against minorities
- Threat of economic collapse
- Unable to get along with a brother in Christ

### 3. Personal short comings

- Not tall enough to play basketball
- Too tall to be a submariner
- Not equipped to be a leader even though you aspire to be one
- Not capable of handling the problems of the world even though you want to (Moses and Jethro)

### 4. Conflicts between motives

- You want to move but you can not sell the house or get a job etc.

The common form of frustration is CONFLICT.

**Conflict - the simultaneous arousal of two or more incompatible motives, resulting in unpleasant emotions. It is also the struggle between two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals.**

**Conflict is natural in life. Conflict can be beneficial because it can strengthen relationships if handled properly. People who use constructive skills in conflict are more satisfied with their relationships and with the outcome of conflicts.**

**Unhappy Couples Argue in Destructive Ways.**

- They are more concerned with defending themselves than being problem oriented.
- They failed to listen carefully to one another
- They had little or no empathy for their partners
- They used “you” language and ignored one another’s non-relational messages.

### **Happy Couples Communicate More Effectively**

- When arguing partners used perception checking skills to find out what their partner was thinking.
- They let the other partner know that they understood the other side of the dispute.
- They were willing to admit their defensiveness when it occurred.
- They could get back to solving the problem at hand.

#### **1. Hope is deferred because it is God’s will**

- It was God’s will for Paul to have a thorn in the flesh. In three seasons of prayer Paul sought the Lord and three times God refused to take the thorn away.

#### **2. Hope is deferred because of our carelessness**

- Sometimes we are careless about what we do in life and we reap consequences that we did not expect nor that we can erase but non the less our hope is deferred because of our own careless actions.

### **3. Hope is deferred because we have wrong or unrealistic faith (misguided hope).**

- **Solomon** depended on success, scholarship, and wives to provide happiness but they could not. He explains how he conducted experiments to seek true happiness. The conclusion of his experiments was that life was full of vanity.

**So what do we do when our life expectations are not met. It is at this time in life where we need to be the most careful. Because unfulfilled expectations are dangerous.**

## **I. God delays because of His plan.**

### **A. God allows a physical obstacle to happen to prove His greatness.**

#### **Genesis 16:1-3 The Life of Abraham**

1. God promised him twice that He was going to have a seed of a great nation.

- He is told he was going to be a Great Father of a Great nation. But how could this be when he couldn't be the father of one son.

- Abraham was counting on it and couldn't wait for it to happen. The child bearing years come and go and God has not fulfilled His promise. What do you do?

### **B. There is a great danger with a deferred expectation when there are physical obstacles beyond our control.**

- We can become **impatient** and try to **force things to happen** before it is time. **We can take things into our own hands and go directly against the will of God.**

- When Abraham did what he did, he brought tremendous turmoil into his own life through the birth of Ishmael. Of which the consequences are still being felt among his people even still today.
- His decision to do something outside of God's will to meet a need brought unnecessary hardship and pain.
- The way of the transgressor is Hard!

### **Illustration:**

Strawberry Season - Spiritual gift to down three quarts in one sitting.

Ball Park Franks - you know where they were and where they come from and what they are made of. But when you are hungry they taste real good.

- When you are hungry even the very bitter things in life taste good.
- God will forgive the sin but the scars, memories and damage may never go away.

## **II. We Become Careless because of Social Circumstances.**

### **A. When things do not go the way we think they should.**

#### **Genesis 4:1-8**

1. Cain becomes careless about meeting the expectation of God.
  - He chooses to do things his way instead of the way that God told him.
  - God tells him, your offering is not acceptable
  - God gives him a second chance, just in case he didn't understand, or made a mistake. If you bring the right offering will you not be accepted.
  - God implies if this is not an oversight, sin lies at the door.

## **B. The great danger of being careless is Bitterness.**

1. We become bitter towards God. But since we know that is not acceptable we act it out in different ways.
2. We become angry at God's children. Parents who feel they have done right by their kids and they do not turn out the way they think they should have can become bitter at God. So rather than admit their anger, they become angry at someone else.

These people did it God's way and it didn't work. So they become bitter at others. Your bitterness may hurt others but it is killing you.

3. Cain became bitter, empty, and depressed instead of doing things God's way and for all we know he died and went to Hell. Bitterness is a terrible thing and it destroys the one who is bitter. This is why God exhorts us to put off all bitterness, wrath and malice because it eats away the one who holds it and destroys them from the inside out.

## **III. Expectations can be unrealistic or misplaced because of personal shortcomings.**

### **A. Elijah had unrealistic expectations**

#### **I Kings 19:1-10**

- Elijah enjoyed the contest and even taunted the prophets of Baal.
- He won a great victory for God that day
- But he ran the next day not because a woman threatened him but because of his own shortcomings. He did not get the ultimate victory and success he thought was going to come because of what he did.

### **B. The Great danger of unfulfilled unrealistic expectations is Despair!**

- Solomon in Ecclesiasties 2.