

God's Blueprint For The Home

Lesson 9: God's Blueprint For Communication In The Home



Discovering God's Word
Bible Study Series

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Learn how God wants members of the home to communicate

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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Lesson 9: God's Blueprint For Communication In The Home

Building on godly character in the home, every member of the home must strive for the kind of communication that would glorify God. For, a failure to communicate properly is one of the quickest ways for homes to be torn down and walls to be built to isolate members of the family. So, we should thoroughly consider what God's word teaches us concerning our communication.

The power of communication in the home is great. It has the potential to lift up all the members of the home and help everyone become what God would have them to be. Or, it has the potential to crush the spirits of everyone and hinder them from serving God. And, so that you don't think that communication is an either-or kind of proposal, our communication can also accomplish both (at different times, to different people).

The breakdown of many homes is accomplished through a failure to communicate according to God's blueprint. There is a great majority of people in homes who do not communicate effectively because they do not apply

God's standard. Not only does this failure to communicate apply to the words that are said, but also to how words are received.

So, Satan tries to interfere anywhere he can in the process of communication. This can be accomplished by interfering with the messenger, the receiver, or the message. Sometimes he can negatively impact all three at the same time. Whenever we allow Satan anywhere near our communication, it is sure to result in trouble for the home! Fortunately, God has given us all the same blueprint to follow concerning the kind of communication that we should be involved with in the home.

Keys To Effective Communication

There are three basic parts to any kind of communication. In fact, these are necessary ingredients of communication. There can be no communication without all three. First, there must be a messenger (someone sending a message). Second, there must be a receiver (someone receiving a message). Third, there must be a message (something sent from the messenger to the receiver). But, *effective* communication also demands holiness in all parts of the communication. To be "holy" is to be separated from everything that is evil and totally committed to following God's righteous ways. Remember that God has commanded us, "but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:15-16). This certainly applies to every element of our communication.

A holy messenger

First, effective communication requires a holy messenger. This is someone who is committed to only sending messages that have God's approval. This individual must recognize that, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit" (Proverbs 18:21). There will be "fruit" of every message that you send in the home.

Either it will be the “fruit” of death (or, tearing down) in the family or it will be the “fruit” of life (or, building up) in the family. You must recognize that whenever you choose to send any message, you are working toward one of these two goals. So, effective communication requires that you *always* choose to send messages that provide life to the family!

Proverbs 13:3 says, “He who guards his mouth preserves life, But he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction.” Because of the serious nature of every message that you send in the home, you should set a guard at your mouth. Just speaking according to what is on your mind or what you are feeling at a given moment can result in destruction that cannot be easily undone. So, you should set a guard at your mouth that will only allow messages that are helpful and that build up the receiver(s) to exit! So, Proverbs 10:20-21 says, “The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little. The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of wisdom.”

Here is another benefit of the messenger guarding his/her mouth closely. Proverbs 21:23 says, “Whoever guards his mouth and tongue Keeps his soul from troubles.” Not only does your communication have an impact on others, but it also has an impact on yourself. You are going to have to eat the “fruit” of your own message (in one way or another). Maybe your message invites an argument. Maybe your message invites a “cold shoulder.” Maybe your message isolates you from others. So, carefully guarding your mouth and controlling the messages that you send will save you from a lot of trouble that you could otherwise bring on yourself.

Then, holy messengers are even careful in using their knowledge. Proverbs 15:2 says, “The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, But the mouth of fools pour forth foolishness.” Just because something is true doesn’t mean that you must say it. And, whenever it is time to speak something, you should still be careful how you say it. For, there are many people who injure and tear down others with the truth. So, the destruction is not caused by *what* is said, but *how* it is said! In all things, holy messengers need to consider the one who is receiving the message.

A holy receiver

Second, effective communication requires a holy receiver. This is someone who is committed to receiving the message in a way that has God’s approval. For instance, James 1:19-20 says, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” We’ll think about this passage from the perspective of the messenger a bit later. For now, let’s give it our consideration from the perspective of the receiver.

Here is a common problem in communication (especially in the home): Either all of the individuals involved in the communication are trying to talk at once (and over-talk each other) or the one who is supposed to be receiving the message is thinking about the next thing he/she wants to say rather than listening. In either case, the receiver has prevented the communication because he/she is not being “swift to hear.” Yes, those who are interested in following God’s pattern must be careful to hear what the messenger is actually saying. So, even though you may not agree with what is being said, you must try to understand the message in the way that the messenger is sending it!

Similarly, Proverbs 18:13 says, “He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him.” Sometimes we can be guilty of not really listening to what is being said because we have already made assumptions about the message. It may be that we have already decided there is nothing we have done wrong. It may be that we have already judged what is best. It may be that we have already determined that the messenger is only interested in attacking our character. It may be many things. Yet, if we already answer the message before we truly receive it, we will never receive it in the way God wants us to receive it.

Consider Proverbs 25:12. “Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold Is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear.” While messengers need to consider how they can be wise rebukers, I want to consider the “obedient ear.” Certainly, whenever both elements are combined, the result is always positive. But, regardless of the wisdom of the message that is being sent, we must do our part to

receive the message with an “obedient ear.” No, this does not imply that we must obey a message that is going to take us away from God. Instead, my point is simply that our intent in receiving the message should be honest and with the purpose of acting properly. We should not be guilty of shutting down communication before we have received the message in the appropriate way.

A holy message

Third, effective communication requires a holy message. This is a message that has God’s approval. Although we will be spending the remainder of this study giving greater consideration to what makes a message pleasing to God, I do want to consider some basic points now.

We should be aware that messages can take two forms. These are verbal and non-verbal (spoken and unspoken) messages. Although we will be focused on verbal (spoken) messages throughout this lesson, I believe that much (if not all) of what will be said also applies to the non-verbal (unspoken) messages we send. For, sometimes, there is as much or more communicated by our actions, posture, attitudes, and tone of voice than is communicated by our actual words. And, there are many times when the problems of communication are more about how something was said or received than the actual spoken message itself.

So, we need to apply God’s standards for communication to this as well. Not only does this apply whenever we are sending verbal messages (i.e. through our tone of voice, demeanor, etc.), but this also applies whenever we are supposed to be receiving verbal messages. For, rather than just listening carefully, those who are supposed to be receiving the message can actually be communicating (non-verbally) that they are not really listening, that they are not interested, that they have already judged about the matter, that they are angry, that they are irritated, etc. And, these non-verbal messages can prevent effective communication just as much as if there were two people screaming at each other!

Consider two verses. Proverbs 25:11 says, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold In settings of

silver.” Proverbs 15:23 says, “A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, And a word spoken in due season, how good it is!”

Whether verbal or non-verbal, we must be committed to sending the right message at the right time. For, there is no right time for a wrong message. And, even a right message at the wrong time can hurt people. So, not only must the messenger evaluate himself/herself carefully, but the message (and the timing of that message) must also be very carefully considered.

Effective Communication And The Power Of The Tongue

As we begin to appreciate these three essential components to effective communication, let’s focus on the power of messages. Although we will be talking specifically about verbal messages, remember that many of these same points are applicable to non-verbal messages.

The difficulty of controlling the tongue

James chapter 3:1-12 provides us some great insight into the power of the tongue. Verses 1 and 2 teach about the difficulty involved in controlling the tongue. “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.”

Effective communication requires that we all be dedicated to controlling the messages we send. We all struggle to fight between the fleshly and spiritual natures that we possess. But, James helps us to see that one of the greatest struggles that we all have is to control our messages (our words). If we are successful in controlling our words to only speak words that are completely right with God, then we will likely be successful in other areas of our lives as well. For, controlling our words is among the most difficult tasks that any of us have to accomplish.

Small but powerful

James continues in verses 3 through 5 to demonstrate that even though the tongue is a small member of the body, it is very powerful. “Indeed, we put bits in horses’ mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!”

Effective communication requires us to recognize that we must never underestimate the power of the tongue because of its physical size. So, James draws our attention to some other small things that have big impacts. Think about the small bit put into a horse’s mouth that is used to direct that large animal. Think about the small rudder that is used to direct large ships. And, think about how every large forest fire has begun with a small flame. The same is true about our words. We must recognize that there is a lot of potential that our messages have to destroy or to accomplish good!

Cannot trust the tongue

James continues in verses 6 through 8, then, to help us appreciate that we cannot leave the tongue to its own devices. “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”

Effective communication requires that we carefully guard our tongues. Just like forest fires that start with a small spark, many problems in the home and broken relationships can be traced back to a failure to control the tongue. James causes us to think about how all kinds of animals have been tamed (think about how trainers are even able to work in close proximity to lions while they are in zoos). Yet, the tongue cannot be tamed to this same degree. Now, I do not believe James is teaching us that we are doomed to fail in our communication and

providing us with an excuse for our failures. Instead, I believe he is telling us that our tongues cannot be tamed to the point that we can stop exercising constant watchful care over them! We must always have a guard set at our mouths and be prepared for our tongues to try and revert back to their destructive ways.

Blessing and cursing

James concludes his discussion about the tongue by warning us not to engage in both blessing and cursing with our tongues, in verses 9 through 12. “With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.”

Effective communication requires that we commit our tongues to only speaking messages that would be a blessing to others, not a curse. Think about how we can be guilty of speaking words of praise to God and then turn around and speak messages that curse those who have been made in the image of God (our fellow man). James says that these things “ought not to be so.” Just as a spring does not produce fresh water and bitter water from the same opening, a fig tree does not produce olives, and a grapevine does not produce figs, our tongues must not be allowed to produce messages of both blessing and cursing.

Judged for every word

Before we move on, I want to consider some quick points about our words from Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 12:33-37. “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your

words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

First, appreciate how effective communication is connected with your character. So, you will not engage in effective communication if you do not have a heart that is focused on doing the will of God. Instead, all corrupt communication in the home comes from the heart that is not listening to God (at least not in all things). So, if you want to correct problems in your communication, you must begin with your heart and make sure that your heart is more focused on doing the will of God than it is focused on “winning” arguments, justifying yourself, etc.

Second, effective communication must recognize that you will give an account before God for every message (i.e. every word) that you send. And, notice carefully that this is even true for every “idle” word. So, even the messages that you send that are unemployed and useless will be judged. Therefore, whenever you are trying to send any kind of message, remember that God is also listening to the message and that message will be part of the judgment that announces whether you will spend eternity in Heaven or in Hell! Surely, this requires you to take a different perspective whenever you communicate.

Effective Communication Eliminates Destructive Messages

There are two things that are necessary regarding the messages that we send. The first is that we must eliminate all kinds of destructive messages from being sent. Now, we cannot control the messages other people in the home will send. But, we *can* control our own messages and determine that we will send no message to anyone that works to destroy in any capacity. Consider a sample of the kinds of destructive messages we must eliminate (though I am sure we could add to this list).

Corrupt words

A “corrupt” word is a word that is bad. It is not of a good quality. It does not accomplish good. It is rotten. So, God wants His people to eliminate such messages from being sent. Ephesians 4:29 says, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

Now, this verse forbids a lot of language that is commonly used today. In fact, it even forbids all of the other categories we are going to consider in this section. So, we will avoid making those applications here so that we can discuss them in greater detail a bit later. One specific application, though, involves eliminating profanity, euphemistic expressions, using God’s name in vain, etc. This would also apply to gossip, slander, and such things. None of these corrupt messages have any part in the way people should communicate in the home (or even outside of it).

Ephesians 4:31 goes on to say, “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.” Again, notice the specific application of “evil speaking.” Any kind of word that is evil must not be part of the message you send. Then, as you consider the other items on this forbidden list, we can also make applications to the messages we send. For instance, our messages must not have any trace of bitterness, unrighteous anger, fighting, and hatred!

Finally, Ephesians 5:3-4 adds to the list of what can fall under the heading of “corrupt words.” “But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.” So, there must be nothing filthy/obscene about the way that you talk. There must be no foolishness (that goes against God’s wisdom) involved in the messages you send. And, there must be no inappropriate (“off-color” or suggestive) jokes made (“coarse jesting”). All of this is not fitting for God’s holy people (saints)!

Angry words

There may be no place where more angry words are spoken than in the home. Yet, we must be very careful how we deal with our anger. For instance, Ephesians 4:26-27 says, “‘Be angry, and do not sin’: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.” So, even when a situation arises that causes you to experience the emotion of anger, you must respond to it correctly so that it does not result in sin. One way that you can respond properly is to make sure that you do not speak out of anger.

Listen carefully to the following proverbs. Proverbs 15:18 says, “A wrathful man stirs up strife, But he who is slow to anger allays [calms] contention.” Proverbs 21:19 says, “Better to dwell in the wilderness, Than with a contentious and angry woman.” Proverbs 29:22 says, “An angry man stirs up strife, And a furious man abounds in transgression.” And, Proverbs 30:33 says, “For as the churning of milk produces butter, And wringing the nose produces blood, So the forcing of wrath produces strife.”

While none of these passages specifically address angry *words*, they all apply to the messages we send. We must be very careful not to allow our messages to communicate any kind of anger in ways that God does not approve. For, all that our angry words accomplish is to cause more trouble. Instead, when we are slow to anger in our messages, we work to calm contentions. So, even though we may be tempted to respond in angry ways, we need to choose to send messages of calmness. For, James said, “the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (James 1:20).

Fighting words

Again, there may be no place where people are more prone to get into fights than with those in the home (i.e. between husbands and wives). However, we must recognize that one of the most harmful ways we can fight with anyone is by using our words as weapons. Yet, this is the case far too often toward those we love most on this earth.

Listen to some proverbs about contention (quarrelling, strife). First, consider a contentious woman. Proverbs 21:9 says, “Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, Than in a house shared with a contentious woman.” Proverbs 27:15-16 says, “A continual dripping on a very rainy day And a contentious woman are alike; Whoever restrains her restrains the wind, And grasps oil with his right hand.” So, wives and daughters need to listen up. If they choose to act and speak in ways that promote strife and arguments, they will work to make their homes miserable. The other members of the home would be happier to live in a corner on the housetop than under the same roof with them! But, contentious men are no better! Proverbs 26:21 says, “As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, So is a contentious man to kindle strife.”

So, being contentious is condemned any way you look at it. God does not want people producing contention. Instead, God has said, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18). Rather than speaking or acting in a way that stirs up fights and escalates them, you should be working to bring about peace. You see, the interesting thing about fights is that they take at least two people! Therefore, if you choose not to fight, then people in your home can’t fight with you. Instead, you will be contributing to peace.

Then, listen to a couple more proverbs on this point. Proverbs 18:6 says, “A fool’s lips enter into contention, And his mouth calls for blows.” Proverbs 17:14 says, “The beginning of strife is like releasing of water; Therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts.” Don’t be foolish and speak (or act) in ways that fight with others. Instead, recognize that starting (or contributing to) fights is like holes in a bucket to carry water. You can never get all the water back in and it is very difficult to accomplish your task. So, just as you should use a bucket with no holes, you should do everything you can to stop a fight before it begins!

Crushing words

One of the things I think people do not always do well is to put themselves in the place of the one who is receiving their communication. So, you need to try and listen to the message you send in the way

that the other person will receive it. This principle applies Jesus' "Golden Rule." He said, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12). Yet, sometimes we crush people with our words because we do not apply this rule.

You need to recognize that your words have the ability to crush the people in your home. For instance, after Job had been hearing his friends falsely accuse him of doing wrong and bringing his suffering on himself, Job replied, "How long will you torment my soul, And break me in pieces with words?" (Job 19:2). So, rather than providing the comfort and encouragement that Job needed during this very difficult time in his life, his friends were adding to his suffering by breaking and crushing him with their accusative and judgmental words.

There are many ways that this same thing can manifest itself in the home. Yet, regardless of the specific applications, the words are used to break the spirits of others and tear them down rather than help and encourage them. Psalm 140:3 says, "They sharpen their tongues like a serpent; The poison of asps is under their lips." Surely, this must never be said about the way you communicate with others – especially those in the home! Your words must never be like poison or a weapon to harm others.

Effective Communication Harnesses Righteous Messages

The second thing necessary for an effective message is that we must harness the power of righteous messages. Again, we cannot control the messages other people will send in the home. But, we can choose to only send messages that will accomplish good. Consider a sample of the kinds of righteous messages we must be committed to sending (though I am sure we could add to this list).

Edifying words

Rather than allowing the messages you send to others to destroy and tear people down, you must commit yourself to *only* speaking words that build people up and help them be who God wants them to be (edify them). Look at Ephesians 4:29 again. "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers."

Now, understand that speaking words of edification does *not* mean that the people who receive the message will always feel good about what you have said. But, every word that you say must be for the purpose of building people up spiritually and helping them get closer to God. Sometimes, this requires telling people truths that they will not like to hear. Still, it must be done with love and in a way that shows the grace of God to others. For instance, Ephesians 4:15 references the need to speak the truth "in love."

Furthermore, Colossians 4:6 (in the context of dealing with those who are not Christians) says, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one." So, in speaking words that build people up (even when they may not be what others would like to hear), you must always speak in a way that is palatable to others. Remember, Proverbs 25:12 spoke of a "wise rebuker to an obedient ear." So, you must use wisdom, grace, and love in your speech and make sure that every word you say accomplishes spiritual good rather than harm!

True words

There must be no place in your communication for words that are not 100% true or that mislead people in any way. This includes lying, which involves saying things that are false. This includes deceit, which involves misleading people (even though what you say might be true, you apply it in a way that misleads; compare with Satan's temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4:5-7). This includes flattery, which involves not speaking the truth in order to keep from hurting the feelings of others. And, this involves not keeping the promises that you make.

For instance, Ephesians 4:25 says, “Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another.” Lying is part of the old man of sin that must be put to death. In its place must be a new man who is committed to speaking truth. You see, homes must be built with trust. And, the only way you can have complete trust in the home is for there to be complete honesty and transparency.

Then, listen to what Jesus said about what the nature of our words ought to be in Matthew 5:37. “But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.” So, your words should not need any greater degree of emphasis added to them (i.e. swearing by something greater). Instead, you should allow your words to mean exactly what they say.

Calm words

We have already discussed how we must not be contentious in our communication. Now, we need to focus on the side of calmness. Recall that Proverbs 15:18 says, “A wrathful man stirs up strife, But he who is slow to anger allays contention.” So, you should be interested in calming any contention that exists and preventing future points of contention.

Listen to Proverbs 15:1. “A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.” Think about the “communication” that often happens in marriage. One person speaks something the other does not respond appropriately to. So, he/she speaks with frustration and irritation. Then, the other responds back in a slightly more irritated and angry tone. Then, the other responds a little louder and more contentious yet. From there, it just continues in a downward spiral that does not result in anything that is good.

Instead of falling into this trap by speaking harsh words, you must work hard to answer softly. Use calmness and sincerity in your speech (even when it is difficult to do so). And, as we have already discussed, determine that every word you say will accomplish spiritual good.

Carefully chosen words

Remember the principles about the power of our words that we saw in James 3:1-12. Our tongues cannot be left unguarded and be trusted on their own. Every word that we say must be carefully considered and evaluated.

Now, all of this should help us to consider the number of words we speak. For, if it is difficult to control a single word and make sure it only accomplishes good, then, certainly, the more words we say, the more difficult it is to make sure our words do no harm and only accomplish good. For instance, Proverbs 10:19 says, “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.”

So, like James wrote, you must be “slow to speak” (James 1:19) – even in the home. Being slow to speak will give you plenty of opportunity to think *before* you talk! In doing so, you can have no regrets about what you have said and how you have said it. Proverbs 15:23 says, “A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, And a word spoken in due season, how good it is!”

Conclusion

There are many additional things we could discuss relative to how we should communicate. So, I encourage you to search the Scriptures even more thoroughly to discover all that is in God’s blueprint for your communication. I believe that by applying the things we have discussed in this lesson to your communication, you will be able to be effective and holy in your communication with everyone in the home!

Study Questions

How does Satan destroy homes through the way people communicate?

1. Keys To Effective Communication

What is the need for a holy messenger to effective communication?

What is the need for a holy receiver to effective communication?

What is the need for a holy message to effective communication?

2. Effective Communication And The Power Of The Tongue

What is the difficulty involved in controlling the tongue?

What is the powerful nature of the tongue relative to its size?

Why can you not trust the tongue?

Why do you need to prevent your tongue from engaging in blessing and cursing?

Where do your words come from and why are your words so important?

3. Effective Communication Eliminates Destructive Messages

What are corrupt words and why should they be eliminated?

What are angry words and why should they be eliminated?

What are fighting words and why should they be eliminated?

What are crushing words and why should they be eliminated?

4. Effective Communication Harnesses Righteous Messages

What are edifying words and why should they be used?

What are true words and why should they be used?

What are calm words and why should they be used?

What are carefully chosen words and why should they be used?