

Skilled in Communication or Always Interrupting People■

by James Jennings

This sermon emphasizes the importance of skill in communication based on Proverbs 18. It highlights the need to be diligent listeners, seek knowledge, avoid rough and harsh speech, hear both sides of a story, and yield judicious and persuasive words. The message encourages humility, patience, and seeking the Spirit's help in communication.

Scripture: Proverbs 18:13, Proverbs 18:15, Proverbs 18:17, Proverbs 18:21, Proverbs 18:24, Exodus 4:11, Matthew 10:19, Ephesians 4:30

Topics: "Effective Communication", "Humility in Listening"

Description

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Transcript

You can open your Bible to Proverbs 18. Good to have those from Austin and Temple here. Let's see, we've got Kelvin.

We've got Eric over there. Well, I want to speak this morning on kind of a topical message. We're going to look at Proverbs 18.

And this is dealing with the importance of skill in communication. The importance of skill in communication. And as I was praying about this, I thought this is very applicable for all of us, obviously.

But even for those from Austin and Temple who are here, as a newer church in some way, these are things you really want to take to heart. And during the last months, I've just been reminded time and time again in my own life, seeing areas that I have failed, and in different situations I've been involved with, I've just been reminded of how important it is to become more and more an expert, a master in communication. In how do I convey certain things to people? How do I handle conversations? How do I go about exchanging information through words? So like David, we have a sign there that has words on it that communicates which door to use.

Little things like that. We have to be clear. It wasn't the right way.

Yeah, and that's what I mean. It wasn't the right way, so we are failing to adequately communicate which door to use. But let's go ahead and pray.

Father, we thank You for Lord bringing us here today. And we just ask, would You make our meeting sweet? This morning, Lord, give me grace that I wouldn't fail to communicate in dealing with communication. Lord, I could drop the ball right there and teach on this and fail to communicate adequately.

And Lord, would You just be in the next message, the scening, the fellowship, Lord, the time later with Lord, this Grace Church Austin and Tafik, this transition that's happening. Lord, we just thank You for Your goodness in bringing this day about. And we bless Your name.

We look to You for help. In Christ's name, Amen. Now this morning, I'm not talking about communication via body language.

That is one of the most misread things. And we have to use words. How many times have we wrongly assumed what someone is thinking based upon their body language? Based upon their facial expression? It might give some grain of truth to what they're thinking.

Or you could totally miss it. And if you don't use words, you don't really find out what's going on in their mind. Now, communication is difficult.

Even this morning, I faced one of the difficulties of it. I'm driving here and a kid sees a dog out the window. And Paul says, that's a big dog.

And Selah says, no, that's not a big dog. And I said, well, what Paul thinks is big to you might be small. And that's one of the difficulties of communication.

What I mean with one word, someone else might mean something entirely different. What was big to Paul is actually big to him. What was big to Selah, she's seen a bigger dog, and therefore, that one dog was small.

So that makes communication tricky. People use different words. We need people to define their words.

In order to have them define their words, we have to be patient to listen, to understand what they are saying. We are all in situations where communication is part of our daily life. Thinking about it, for us who are pastors, we are shepherding who? People.

We're tending to a flock of people. How are we going to know what's in everyone's minds without talking to them? Communication is always taking place. Thinking about you brethren, just as being a Christian, how many one another verses do you have throughout the New Testament? Tons.

How are most of those verses, in order to live them out, some sort of communication has to be taking place. Good communication goes hand-in-hand with having unity in the church. When communication fails between members or with leadership, all manner of false ideas and assumptions can crop up and then division can happen.

Just think of this. How many problems in your life as a Christian have existed that shouldn't have existed if communication would have taken place? Just talking to the other individual. The problem would have been non-existent.

Sometimes we let problems go on for weeks that we did not have to bear if we would have just opened our mouth, opened our email, and communicated with that other individual. Thinking about marriage. You want to talk about how important communication is? When people have asked me what's one of the most important things about marriage, I tell them it's open communication with my spouse.

Communicating. Getting her to talk to me and know what's going on in her mind, in my wife's mind. That's one of the most important things.

When communication disintegrates in a marriage, all sorts of problems crop up. So, communication, it's always happening. Today it's going to happen.

We're going to communicate ideas. There might be correction that takes place. There's going to be encouragement that takes place.

How are we doing when we communicate? And it's not just us. God is a God of communication. He communicates.

He's communicated through His God-breathed Scriptures and in Hebrews it says through His Son. Hebrews 1-2, it says, in these last days, God the Father has spoken to us by His Son, Whom He appointed heir of all things, through Whom also He created the world. So God is a God of communication.

He's brought us His Son. And you think about Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was the perfect communicator.

Jesus Christ never misspoke. He never sinned in His speech. He never sinned, period.

In Matthew 12-34, Jesus is strong. He called the Pharisees a brood of vipers. With Peter, Jesus said get behind Me, Satan.

He was without sin in those statements. Jesus was also gracious. It says in Luke 4, people marveled at the gracious words that were coming from His mouth.

Have you ever had someone, and you wouldn't know they did this, but my hope would be we would have conversations where people leave that conversation marveling at our gracious speech. Where they get home from that meeting and they're just marveled. How? They were so gracious to Me.

That conversation, it did not blow up. We want that. Jesus is gracious with Peter.

He knew Peter was going to deny Him in Luke 22. He says, I've prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you've turned again, strengthen your brothers.

Christ is our perfect example. Every time He spoke strongly, it was justifiable. Every time He spoke with great gentleness, it was perfectly justifiable.

Jesus was never too strong. Jesus was never too soft. He had the perfect balance in His speech in every single phrase that ever came out of His mouth.

Jesus was silent when He needed to be silent. Even Isaiah 53, it says, there's a lamb before His shears is silent. So Christ, going to the cross, did not open His mouth to defend Himself.

He was perfect in that. I want to start by thinking about Christ here. And just think about the Gospel.

God is holy, right? Do you realize to go to heaven, you've got to have a perfect record. Not just of not sinning, but of perfectly living out obedience in every single area of your life. And one of those areas is in your speech.

You have to have spoken perfectly and never not said something you should have because you were afraid. Never said something too harshly. Never been too soft when you should have been harder.

You need to have a perfect record of righteously following this standard. Who here has that record on their account this morning? I do. You know who gave me that record? Jesus Christ the Righteous.

That's why I can go to heaven. Because Romans 5.19 says, by the one man's obedience, the many will be made righteous. Think about it.

The Lord Jesus lived a life never misspeaking, never being sinfully harsh, being perfectly gentle. And when every occasion demanded that. That is incredible what Christ has done.

And here we get His record. We get that one man's obedience to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who declares righteousness ungodly. His faith is counted for righteousness.

We get that perfect keeping of God's standard that Christ did. We get that accredited to our account. That is amazing.

Because we all have room to improve. We all have room to improve in our communication. How much have we said that did not fit the occasion? Craig's going to get to Colossians 4 eventually.

It says, "...let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you might know how you ought to answer each person." How many times I thought I knew how to answer that person, and I ended up being wrong. And you're thinking, ah, I thought that was the way to go. It wasn't.

You know, in some ways, we can feel like Isaiah. I'm a man of unclean lips. I missed it here.

I missed it there. We need God's help. So in Proverbs 18, we're going to see eight different types of what I'm going to call people.

Eight different types of people. And most of them point out failures that you don't want to have in order to be a good communicator. If you want to have skill in communication, you don't want to be falling into these things.

You want to be doing the opposite of them. And I'm going to take these principles and kind of give them names and portray them as types of people. And as we go through this, just ask yourself this, do I fail in this way? How much do I fail in this way? Or even better, if you're married, ask your spouse to grade you.

Your spouse is going to be the best one to give you a grade. Not yourself. Not yourself.

One of the greatest hindrances to growth in our ability to communicate is we're blind to see our faults. We just don't see it. We're oblivious to it.

And we need someone to point it out to us. So, Proverbs 18. The first person.

I believe there's an idea in v. 1. This first person is Mr. avoids communication after being corrected. That's what we're going to call him. Mr. or Mrs. avoids communication after being corrected.

Look at v. 1. Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire. Why is this person isolating himself? He breaks out against something. All sound judgment.

So in some form or another, this individual has heard sound judgment. They've heard wisdom from above that is truth. And their response to that is to seek their own desire by isolating themselves.

He hears sound judgment. Breaks out against it. He goes against the counsel.

This person is a person who after being confronted, they try to no longer communicate. If someone is avoiding you and isolating themselves, is that a good skill you want in communication where you're not accessible? That's bad. You can't communicate with a person if you can't get a hold of them.

This person, they often allow themselves to think that everyone is against them. Is that the case? It's not. They're kind of isolating themselves to protect themselves when the people trying to speak sound judgment in their life are actually seeking to help them.

So they're actually hurting themselves. In Proverbs 15, verse 31, it says, the ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise. Meaning, he's not isolating himself.

Whoever ignores instruction despises himself. But he who listens to reproof gains intelligence. You hear that? The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise.

As you hear truth, you're going to dwell among those who are wise. You're going to be around those who are speaking truth. You listen to reproof.

You gain intelligence. When we get corrected and we isolate, we make ourselves inaccessible, we see the person trying to call us and we just keep ignoring that call, that's a bad skill in communication that you don't want to have. You don't want to be someone who responds in that way.

It's difficult when you're being corrected to really seek to have humility and listen and say what is true about what they're saying. I want to hear what they're saying. So ask yourself, do you listen to reproof and gain intelligence? Or do you quiet down and isolate yourself after having a disagreement? Do you quiet down and isolate yourself after having a disagreement? I understand needing to get alone for a little while and ask the Lord to search your heart.

But you're eventually going to have to go talk to that person. You can't play the game of avoidance. You need to be accessible.

Conrad Murrell, he said, some people, they have this sullen silence when they've been offended. They get angry. And then they engage in a childish pout and give everyone the silent treatment, hoping thereby to get revenge by causing anxiety in others.

Such silence, so far from being virtuous, is the worst kind of selfish flesh crying out to be noticed and pampered. I was thinking we had an elders' meeting and one of the brothers there mentioned when he was a teacher, there was a student who at home, he would speak and talk. He could talk.

But at school, he was kind of offended at a younger grade, so at school for all these next years, he never spoke. And all the teachers had to deal with the kid is if he had a disability and could not speak. And he'd go home and he would speak.

Just like Conrad says, you're just pampering the person there. We might not do that, but we can do it in a lot more subtle ways. Isolation.

Not being accessible. Think of this. This happened in the beginning.

When Adam and Eve sinned, what did they do? Genesis 3. They heard the sound of the Lord. You saw that person trying to call you on your phone. You heard that ringtone.

And what did they do? And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. We're going to hide. We're going to hide.

We're going to be inaccessible. We don't want to face this correction that someone is bringing towards us. Some people, they blame it on shyness.

They blame it on I'm just a poor communicator. Look, communication takes work. And if as a child, our parents just pampered us to be shy and they allowed that, we've got to realize in Christ, we're supposed to imitate the Lord Jesus Christ.

We're supposed to be growing in our ability to communicate and not selfishly isolate. We've been adopted into His family. We need to start bearing His characteristics.

So, that was the first person. The second person we see in verse 2. And this person is Mr. Already-Has-His-Mind-Made-Up. Mr. Already-Has-His-Mind-Made-Up.

Verse 2, a fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion. So here this person is. You're trying to communicate to him.

You're trying to talk. You're trying to reason. And it's like he doesn't care.

He has no pleasure trying to understand you. All he wants to do is express his own opinion. And you get to the end of the conversation, he gained no knowledge from what you were saying.

He just had this one idea and he's just ramming it through the entire time. This person, it says, is a fool. He's foolish.

If you don't take pleasure in understanding the other person and what they're trying to convey, it's foolish because they're doing that for your benefit. For your help. Some people, they have their opinion.

That's all they're going to talk about. Their thoughts on the matter are all that matter to them. They do not want to hear.

They have no room for listening in their pride. They're completely convinced they're right. Everyone else is wrong.

And it's so easy for us to deceive ourselves when we take that position. Should our mind be made up on the Scripture? Can we be dogmatic? Absolutely. What an important thing it is to be a good listener.

To take pleasure in understanding. Proverbs 12, verse 15 says, the way of a fool is bright in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice. He's listening.

What are they saying? He's listening to advice. So you don't want to be, verse 2, and I've heard this verse quoted many times. A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.

Because sometimes we've talked to people like that. And sometimes if we're honest, we've been that individual just expressing our own opinion, and in the end, we find out we were wrong. The third person we see here, verse 6 and 7. And I'm going to call this person, come up with many different names, I'm going to call him Mr. Can't-Keep-His-Mouth-Shut.

Verse 6, a fool's lips walk into a fight and his mouth invites a beating. Verse 7, a fool's mouth is his room, and his lips are a snare to his soul. So this person, what's coming out of his mouth, it's not just he can't keep his mouth shut, but what's coming out of his mouth, he's a fool.

His understanding, he's already not taking pleasure in understanding, so what's being communicated is just wrong. You know what? It says here, he mells out an invite, doesn't it? A fool's lips walk into a fight and his mouth invites. So with his mouth, he's melling out an invite.

Is it a wedding invite? Nope. He's melling out an invite saying, come and punch me. Come and beat me.

That's what his words are doing. I remember growing up as a kid, I probably said this before, but my dad, he said, James, if you don't keep your mouth shut, someone's going to punch you in the face and you're finally going to learn your lesson. Now thankfully, the Lord punched me in my soul and converted me before I got punched in the face in a broken nose.

But my lips walked into a fight. I couldn't keep my mouth shut. Now God changes the heart.

Changes someone. He contained the tongue. I was thinking about the Internet.

The Internet and Twitter and Facebook. How many people, this is true, a fool's lips walk into a fight. They post one thing in the morning and by the end of the day, a whole fight has erupted on the Internet.

They've had thousands of responses. Because what they said is just foolish. They can't keep their mouth shut.

They have no understanding of truth. Proverbs 17. If you look right above chapter 18, verse 27, whoever restrains his words has knowledge.

And he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. And then it says this, even a fool, so verse 6 talks about a fool. Well, even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise.

When he closes his lips, he's deemed intelligent. So they're both fools. Just one keeps expressing that on his Twitter feed and everyone knows he's a fool.

The other guy, he doesn't post anything. You go there and it says no post in two years. He looks pretty wise compared to the other person.

Whoever restrains his lips, his words, his knowledge, boy, self-control with the lips. What a virtue we need. Verse 7, again, a fool's mouth is his room.

And his lips are a snare to his soul. It makes it sound like what comes out of my mouth gives evidence of where I will spend in eternity. And you know what? There's a lot of verses that are a lot more clear than this verse.

Think about Matthew 12. I tell you, the day of judgment, people will give an account for every careless word they speak because by your words you will be justified. And by your words, you will be condemned.

That doesn't mean we're declared righteous by our speech, but our speech will either vindicate or condemn what's true of our lives. James 1.26, I love this verse. If anyone thinks he's religious, so this person thinks he's a Christian, he thinks he's religious, he does not bridle his tongue, but he deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.

When someone says they're a Christian and they have no self-control over the tongue, the proverb is absolutely right. His lips are a snare to his soul. He's condemning himself by his speech.

His religion is worthless if he cannot bridle his tongue. Bad speech is rooted in a heart problem. Jesus said, how can you speak good when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart, what we say reveals what's going on in here.

You want to deal with your speech? You've got to have your heart dealt with first. And thank God, He gives us a new heart for Christians. Conrad Murrell, in regards to this fool whose lips walk into a fight, he says we are most likely to speak unwisely when we are exercised in our emotions.

It is a rare person if he indeed exists at all, who can hold his tongue and contain behind a closed mouth the hot, seething emotions of the heart. Especially is this true when we feel we've been mistreated, neglected, hurt, outraged, left out, misunderstood, or misinterpreted. How loudly our wounded ego cries to be heard, justified, pampered, and restored.

But you know what the Proverbs say? A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back. Wisdom says I don't need to defend myself. Are there times where we need to clarify and we could get charged with being defensive when it's totally correct what we're doing? Yeah, that will happen all the time.

Rather than quench the fire, we feed it with more words. So, think about it. How many times have you created a fight based on something you said? That message comes in on your phone, and it's just not a good time for you to even be thinking about it.

You've already had all these things going on. And you read that message, and it's like, what are they saying? And you quickly respond. And now you've just created a quarrel, a fight.

You just walked into a fight. You sent a message and it invited a beating. The fourth person I'm going to say that we find here in v. 8 says the words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels.

They go down into the inner parts of the body. So this is Mrs. Slandering gossip. And you know what? To have skill in communication, you know what needs to be said to who, and what's not appropriate to say to this person, and if I share this, is this actually going to be slander? If I share this with them, do they actually need to hear it? Or is this going to be gossip? We need to have skill in communication to not be those who offer delicious morsels for others to eat.

You don't want that to be you. There is information you know about people and situations that's like a delicious morsel. And to have skill in communication, you don't put that before someone who it does not belong to be before.

We don't want to be those who are gossiping, slandering. And when you feel you've been wronged by someone, it makes it all that much easier to speak evil of them to another person. But when we do that, when we slander, Proverbs 16, 28 says, a dishonest man spreads strife.

And a whisperer... that's what we have right here, the words of a whisperer. These delicious morsels, when they're inappropriately shared, what do they do? It says the whisperer separates close friends. My words can separate close friends.

As someone said, the tail of an unguarded moment may be a tremendous, irreparable injury. Just one unguarded statement could cause damage that is not easily repaired. We need to be guarded in what we say and to whom we say it.

And you say, is gossip really that big of a deal? How does it affect someone? Look at v. 8 again. The words of a whisperer like delicious morsels, they go down into the inner parts of the body. And I would take that to mean they affect that other person's mind.

They affect that other person's heart. It goes deep into them. It's not easily gotten out of them or forgotten.

Kind of like we looked at months ago in Acts 14. It says they were poisoning the minds against the Gentiles. You can get your mind poisoned where your perspective on someone is changed.

Their character has been assassinated. So we need self-control to not say and offer delicious morsels to people. I've done this and I've had people do this to me.

Call and apologize. And say, brother, I shouldn't have said that in that conversation. I'm sorry.

That shouldn't have come out of my mouth. You have people over to fellowship and ten minutes after they've left, they're calling you on the phone or you're calling them. Clear your conscience.

The conversation, it went too far. Some things were mentioned that weren't to be mentioned here. I missed it.

So, fifth person that we see here. Verse 13. We see here, Mr. Cut you off mid-sentence and Mrs., I already know what you're going to say anyways.

Mr. Cut you off mid-sentence and Mrs., I already know what you're going to say anyways. Verse 13, if one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.

And this is a big one. Even thinking of my own life, this is one of the biggest ones in my own life that I want to grow in. To be more like the Lord.

You know how it is. You start explaining something or someone starts explaining something to you, and you're already thinking, I know what they're saying. And so you hop right in.

You cut them off. You don't let them finish. And then, eventually, they get back in and offer their thoughts and you find out you were totally wrong in what you thought they were going to say anyways.

If you would have just listened, it would have saved you trouble. Or you start giving counsel. I've done this with emails.

I put the email in my Word doc and I read the first half and start already typing all sorts of thoughts on how to counsel the first half. And then I get to the end and it's like, well, delete the first half. It didn't even apply.

Or even worse, I think what I've written is so great, I don't even get to the bottom to really hear everything they're saying, or I quickly read it and don't really understand it, and I send the first half and it totally does damage or is misapplied. Or, you know what, you're in that conversation, they're trying to talk, you cut them off, and they never actually get a chance to talk. You leave the conversation thinking you were spot on in what you shared.

And the other person leaves frustrated that they were not even given a chance to fully explain themselves. It's our pride when we do this. It says right here in verse 13, if one gives an answer before he hears, it's to his folly and shame.

It's shameful to do it. And you feel it. The times I've done it, I feel ashamed.

Like, why didn't I have the self-control to keep my mouth shut and listen and hear? I feel ashamed. We should. Do we have the patience to wait and listen? I was thinking about where this happens all of the time.

The Internet, again. You post a sermon that's 60 minutes long. Okay, 60 minutes.

And in five minutes, you've got 10 comments disagreeing with it. Even if you played the sermon in two times speed, you need 30 minutes to hear the entire message. And what's the Proverbs say? If one gives an answer before he hears the full sermon, it's his folly and shame.

But you see, that person, their mind's already made up. They don't really take pleasure in understanding. They already assume they know what is going to be shared based on the title or based on who the person is.

They already assume, oh, I know, that's the guy's a Calvinist. He's going to say such and such. So forget about what he says.

I'm not going to listen to it. I'm just going to comment here and put him down. Hearing is vitally important to skilled communication.

We know James 1.19. Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. Obviously, not all cutting off of people in conversations is wrong. Because if you're talking to someone who won't stop talking, do you just sit there for two hours? You've got to cut in.

Or if there's something they say that is incredibly wrong, and it does seem right to halt the conversation and deal with that, you need to do that. So you don't just sit there and take this verse to mean I just sit and hear everything they have to say for the next five hours, so I'm not put to shame. Then I'll finally share something after five hours.

Well, that would be wrong. So what you don't want to do is wrongly charge someone and think, well, man, they didn't really hear me when they actually did hear you and they were saying something you needed to hear. But you are the one who is so consumed with expressing your own opinion that you didn't have the understanding to listen.

So we need balance here. Charles Bridges and his commentator, he says this in his commentary, too often is this proverb verified in common life. Men will scarcely hear out what is unacceptable to them.

They will break in upon a speaker before they have fully heard him and therefore answer a matter which they have little weighed but imperfectly understood. The eager disputant prides himself on his acute judgment. You hear that? He prides himself on his acute judgment.

He interrupts his opponent and confutes arguments or contradicts statements before he has fairly heard them. John Piper says something similar in an article on this. He says this.

This is spot on. He says it is arrogant to answer before you hear. Humility does not presume that it knows precisely what a person is asking until the questionnaire has finished asking the question.

How many times have I jumped to a wrong conclusion by starting to formulate my answer before I heard the whole question? Often, it is the last word in the question that turns the whole thing around and makes you realize that they're not asking what you thought they were. Piper goes on. Not answering a question before you hear it all honors and respects the person asking the question.

Just out of love for the brethren, we should be doing the showing honor to them. It treats the person as though their words really matter. It is belittling to another to presume to be able to finish their question before they do.

I've done that. And if I've done that to you, I'm sorry. We're in that conversation and I think I know where you're going, and I just, in a proud way, hop in and finish that thought.

Piper says about this verse, it's to their folly to answer before we hear. That is, it will make us a fool. One reason for this is that almost all premature answers are based on thinking we know all we need to know.

But that's foolish. Our attitude should be, what can I learn from this question? The fool thinks he knows all he needs to know. And I was thinking, and someone mentioned this, practical help is when you're talking to someone, it helps to pause before you speak.

Because sometimes, like right there, I just paused for a second. If you're just waiting for the person to pause to hop in, that might not be the best. You might not be really listening.

Let them pause. Then they mention their thought. They finish it.

And then you get to talk. That can be very helpful. Just not to be quick to hop in when there's a gap.

Again, there's some conversations where the other person is so slamming you that you've got to hop in whenever you can or cut them off. So don't wrongly charge someone with doing this if it actually is justifiable based on the person they're talking to is horrible at communication and full of pride. So, when communicating, we need humility to realize we probably don't know everything they already are going to say and the patience to listen and hear before answering.

Or else we waste time by not listening or reading the whole email first before we start jotting all our thoughts down. So the sixth person. Look at v. 15.

An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge. The intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise... So these ears, not lips, these ears of the wise seek knowledge. Your ear is your ear running around seeking knowledge.

Meaning not seeking what I can say, but what can I hear? What can I hear from someone else? So this person is Mr. Diligent Listener. And he does this, it says, an intelligent heart. So see, his heart is right.

Acquires knowledge. And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge. This person, they are seeking to be patient, to hear, to understand.

Dave Mathis in an article, he mentioned something about Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer wrote a book on communication or an article on it. And he says this, Bonhoeffer gives us something to avoid.

A kind of listening with a half an ear. And this is kind of repetitive, I guess, of what Piper said. That presumes to already know what the other person has to say.

This, he says, is an impatient and attentive listening that is only waiting for a chance to speak. Perhaps we think we know where the speaker is going. And so already begin formulating our response.

I was trying to think of a way I could illustrate that and trick you all this morning, but I didn't come up with any idea. I'm not clever enough. But I thought, what could I say to get you guys thinking and then prove the point by taking another direction? And you realize my assumptions were completely wrong.

I needed to listen to everything that was shared. Perhaps we know where the speaker is going. We already begin formulating our response.

Or we're in the middle of something when someone started talking to us, or we have another commitment approaching and we just sit there wishing they were already done. This person, it says, the ear of the wise seeks knowledge. How often in listening... It happened last night.

My wife started sharing something with me. And I was already thinking I knew where she was going. And I was just studying this.

And then because that happened, I didn't fully hear the second part of what she said. I listened to everything she said, but I really wasn't diligently listening to what she was saying. I didn't catch all the nuances in what she was trying to communicate to me.

Because in my mind, and I thought, wow, I've actually to some degree have trained myself to right when they start talking, I start throwing all sorts of assumptions in my mind to try to figure out where they're going. You need to be discerning though. So you can't just sit there with a blank mind.

You're trying to process what they're saying. But it's like there's some balance between you're processing what they're saying, but you're doing it where you're still fully hearing them to where you don't miss what they're saying. You're being a diligent listener.

Writer Dunn, he says this, unfortunately, many of us are too preoccupied with ourselves when we listen. Instead of concentrating on what is being said, we are busy either deciding what to say in response or

mentally rejecting the other person's point of view. You're sitting there mentally rejecting it.

Again, discernment, yes. But I'm just convicted in my own life, I don't think I'm actually as good of a listener as I think I am. And if I went back and listened to certain conversations I had, I probably totally missed something they said.

And my response was off because I wasn't being a diligent listener. My ear was not seeking knowledge as it should have been and understanding in that situation. So a seventh person, verse 17, we have, "...Mr. slants the story in his favor." That's one way you could call him.

Or you could say, in a good way, we have Mr. hears both sides of the story. "...The one who states his case first seems right until the other comes and examines him." So one vitally important thing in this verse, I think it's been quoted more than I've ever heard in the last year of my Christian life, hearing people quote it wrongly and hearing people quote it correctly, the one who states his case first. So there's a situation going on.

Some person says something. They seem right. But if you're skilled in communication, you know, I don't just need to hear that.

There's more people involved in this situation. I need to examine the other person. What have they to say? You don't want to be a listener who you hear one person, you leave the conversation entirely taking sides with them thinking the other is wrong.

And I think in some way we see this in the life of David. You don't need to turn there, but in 2 Samuel 16, King David, he saw Ziba and he said, well, where is my master's son Meshubbeth at? And Ziba gives a response. He says, well, he remained.

He thought today, the Lord's going to give me back the kingdom of my father. Well, Ziba's saying that. Is that true? Seems right.

David thinks. So David makes a decision based on that. But you fast forward to 2 Samuel 19.

Meshubbeth finally came to Jerusalem to meet the king. And the king said to him, why did you not go with me? He answered, my lord, O king, my servant deceived me. For your servant said to him, I will saddle a donkey for myself that I may ride on it and go with the king.

For your servant is lame. He has slandered your servant to my lord the king. But my lord the king is like an angel of God.

Do therefore what seems good to you. That's Meshubbeth speaking. For all my father's house were but men doomed to death before my lord and king.

What's my point? My point is, David heard Ziba, and he came away thinking Meshubbeth had abandoned him. When Meshubbeth comes and presents his side of the case, David starts to recognize Meshubbeth as saying Ziba actually slandered him. But David makes a decision based on what Ziba says.

So in some ways, I think that's kind of an example of this. One states his case. Think about a court of law.

A person gets up and they mention it and then you get another witness. They come up and it crystallizes what actually happened. Because we can often slant the story to benefit us.

To hide our own sin. So we need in communication, if we're dealing with a conflict, we need to hear both sides of the story. We need to hear both people.

We need to examine it thoroughly. And you know what? Does it take work to examine? Yep. It's very easy to have someone come to you and they vent and they mention a situation, and now you've got that in your head.

Well, now you've got to go to the work to get a correct perspective, and you've got to call that other person, and then you try calling, and they don't pick up, and then you forget about it, and a week goes by, and then you're trying to meet with them. It takes work. It's not easy.

Good communication, having skill. You recognize I need to get every angle. I need to understand this.

I need to acquire knowledge. I need to have intimate details of this situation if I'm going to adequately deal with it and respond to it. You can't just meet with one person.

You need both to be there to hear both perspectives. And how often does that allow stuff to be diffused quickly? So you don't just need skill in communication, you need skill in being an organizer and organizing that meeting to happen. And then you get that meeting to happen, and then you can flesh it out.

And it's like, wow, that wasn't that complicated. Or it could blow up and become something more complicated. An A idea, or as I'm calling it, a person, verse 23, the poor use as entreaties, but the rich answer roughly, harshly.

The who? The rich. The people who think they've got a high position, therefore, they can treat others like dirt. And what we need as Christians, it's not a matter of rich and money, but where we can fall is we become rich in knowledge, and that could in some way puff us up.

We think we're right, and it could lead us to be rough in our communication. So this is something that does not help in communication if we're rough. Did Paul tell Titus to rebuke sharply? Yes.

Is there a time to rebuke sharply? You better believe it. But how often we are rough, sharp, harsh in a way that does not help. Proverbs 16.21, it says, the wise of heart is called discerning, and sweetness, not roughness, sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.

So being sweet in your speech all the more persuades someone. Verse 23, the heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips. Gracious words are like a honeycomb.

Sweetness to the soul and health to the body. They're judicious. They're well advised.

They're discerning. And when he has discerning words, it adds persuasiveness. You get resolved in what is going on.

And we see this in Judges 8 with Gideon. These men were upset that Gideon was going out there without them and taking the fight against Midian. And it says they accused Gideon fiercely.

And in v. 2, watch how he diffuses this. He said to them, what have I done now in comparison with you? As in, he's praising their victories. Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the grape harvest of Abizar? God has given into your hands the princes of Midian.

So he's kind of saying, look, look at all that you guys have done. You took out them. So don't be so mad accusing me that I didn't invite you as we went against Midian.

And then he says this, what have I been able to do in comparison with you? So those who were accusing him fiercely, his sweetness of speech, it says this, it says, then their anger against him subsided when he said this. Now, he could have responded in a proud way. Who are you to accuse me of that? I didn't need to invite you.

I didn't do anything. Whatever. He could have done something like that.

But the anger against him subsided based on his sweetness of speech, not roughness. When we answer roughly, we often are yielding to our irritation. We're irritated.

We're frustrated. And when we give in to irritation, we're slowly not exercising self-control in the heart. And if out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks, go figure.

If you're letting your heart off right there and getting irritated at that person in an unrighteous way, of course, that's going to lead to something coming out of that heart that could be wrong. We should be sensitive. Again, damage done is not easily repairable.

Proverbs 18, 19, that's the wrong reference. It's not 18, but a brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city. A brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city.

And quarreling is like the bars of a castle. Notice, it's easier to take over a strong city than to get back an offended brother. You hear that? Listen to it again.

Sorry, I missed the first half of the reference. Proverbs 19, a brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city. Rough, harsh, unjustifiable responses can damage someone where it's easier to actually take that strong city than that brother who you've offended to get that relationship back to where it was.

And honestly, anyone who's married should take that to heart. There have been situations where the husband said something so rough and harsh to his wife, his wife did not forget that the next week. She's doing all she can.

Next year even, it might still be in the mind. It might be something that Satan brings to her mind. So we have all the more reason to not be rough, to not be harsh.

It's not easy to just take that scar away. Proverbs 12, verse 18, there's one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the ton of the wise brings healing. So he compares rash words as equivalent to stabbing someone multiple times.

Sword thrusts. It's plural. But the ton of the wise, that's how we want to communicate, brings healing.

And this goes with Proverbs 18. It says right there, verse 19, oh, I see, 18 and 19 is where brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city. Verse 20, from the fruit of a man's mouth, his stomach is satisfied.

He is satisfied by the yield of his lips. There's a yield of my lips? Death and life are in the power of the ton. And those who love it will eat its fruits.

So you're saying what I speak is like sowing seed and eventually there's going to be a crop that's going to be yielded? Yeah. So we should be pretty careful what type of things we are sowing, right? Because we're going to have to reap that. Just like Jesus said, by your words you will be condemned.

Am I using my ton to bring life through preaching the Gospel to people who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ? Am I using my ton to bring healing? Or am I using it to bring death? We're out of time, but the Bible speaks of many more people. Mr. and Mrs. talks too much. When words are many, transgression is not lacking.

Whoever restrains his lips is prudent. The Bible speaks of a person, they don't keep their word. That's not good skill in communication.

We need to keep our word. So what fruit are your lips yielding? Will you be satisfied by that yield? Do you have a hunger? Lord, I want to have this ton tamed more. I want to grow in this area and become more of an expert and not have the things that are negative evident in my life.

Lord, I want to have the perfect balance and grace and truth of Jesus Christ. And we need to go to Him and ask for His help. In Exodus 4, Moses says to the Lord, my Lord, I'm not eloquent, either in the past or since You've spoken to Your servant, but I am slow of speech and ton.

And you know what the Lord's response to him is? Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, deaf, seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? So who's made your mouth? The Lord has. And just as it says in the New Testament in Matthew 10, there's this reality that when they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

Texts like that, you shouldn't take that and say I never prepare anything. You should take that and say, the Spirit of God will help me to say what needs to be said to perfectly fit that occasion. Lord, I want You to help me.

You made my mouth. Give me the words. Give me more of Your Spirit.

If you want to have skill in communication with people, you better have a life of communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. Because as you abide in Christ, as you walk with Him, as you don't grieve the Holy Spirit by whom you've been sealed, as Tim's going to get to in Ephesians, you're going to find your speech will fit the occasion. Your speech will be wholesome in honoring to God.

So that's all the time I have. But I wanted to share on these things, again, my own life. I just felt like there's so much room for growth.

But just different situations in the church where I've been reminded of these different thoughts and there are so many more Proverbs. There's so many more thoughts that could be offered. And we need God's help, so let's pray for His help.

Father, would You do as You have promised to cleanse us of all of our idols and allow us to be better listeners and give us greater skill in communication that we would not be a person who isolates themselves, a person who assumes they know where someone's going and does not listen, a person who cuts people off, a person who doesn't hear both sides of a situation and is too lazy to get adequate information, a person who is rough, a person who is harsh. Oh God, give us help. Lord, I pray You'd help

me.

I pray You'd help all of us in this area that You would be merciful to us. Lord, we want to continue striving side by side together for the faith of the Gospel. Lord, we want that for those in Austin and Temple.

For those in Grace Church Austin, Lord, we want that for us here. And Lord, we all have room to grow. We are all not like the Lord Jesus.

And we just pray that You would do what only You can do and all the more tame our tongues and allow our hearts to be pure that our speech would fit the occasion and always be gracious. God help us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/96aye9LVJUY.mp4>

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