



FAMILY

LESSON 3

HOW TO TALK SO PEOPLE LISTEN
AND LISTEN SO PEOPLE TALK
(Part 2)

HeartLine
CROSSLINE COMMUNITY CHURCH





Get Healthy: Family

Lesson Three: How to Talk so Your People Listen, and Listen so Your People Talk (Part 2)

Looking Back: 10 Minutes

1. Last week we explored the importance of listening. Share your answers to question six from lesson two, and discuss how you put listening into practice this week. How did it go?
2. Did you make a conscious effort to reign in your tongue, as James 1:26 instructs us to do? If so, what results did you see? Did you find it easier than you thought, or more difficult? Why?
3. Share one thing you learned about listening you will continue to put into practice.

Looking Forward: 50 Minutes

Two women, with two kids, sat next to me at my favorite local lunch spot; one sat about six feet to my right, the other, six feet to my left. The woman on my right happily chatted with her son, making it clear conversation was a habit they'd honed. The other woman stared at her cell phone, while her son stared at his.

In those 30 short minutes, one woman built a bridge of love and connection. One woman didn't.

Opportunities to make our family relationships loving and life-giving surround us. Every. Single. Day.

Nine times out of ten, these moments involve conversation. Whether your home is full of introverts or extraverts, healthy communication is critical to create healthy family relationships.

Proverbs 16:24 tells us, "Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones." And Proverbs 18:21 says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue."

Your family's emotional, spiritual and relational health is inseparably linked to the words spoken between its members. Our words are that important. This week we'll make sure our family communication is healthy, so our family connection is healthy, too.

1. All communication can be divided into *what* we say, and *how* we say it. Read the verses below and note what each teaches about what we should, or shouldn't, say.
 - a. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. (Ephesians 4:25)
 - b. The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. (Proverbs 12:18)
 - c. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)
 - d. Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. (Ephesians 4:29 NLT)
 - e. But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes, and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation. (James 5:12 ESV)
 - f. Everyone enjoys a fitting reply; it is wonderful to say the right thing at the right time! (Proverbs 15:23)

2. Which of the above scriptures is most difficult for you to apply? Why?

Most of us make common mistakes when it comes to healthy family communication. Usually, we aren't aware we're making these mistakes, because the way we communicate with our family stems from the way our family of origin communicated with us. What we say, and how we say it, seems normal to us.

Normal isn't always the same thing as healthy.

3. Below you'll find a list of the most common communication mistakes unhealthy families make. Check any communication mistakes that apply to you:

- Talks *at* each other, rather than *with* each other
- Talks only about surface issues
- Criticizes
- Lies, keeps secrets, tells half-truths
- Avoids difficult issues
- Fails to express feelings, wants, or desires
- Speaks disrespectfully
- Ignores another due to disinterest or distraction
- Corrects more than connects (Did you ____? Why didn't you ____? Don't ____.)
- Unspoken or unrealistic expectations
- Negative non-verbal communication (rolls eyes, shakes head, frowns)
- Barks orders, rather than gives instructions
- Dominates conversation, or over-shares
- Says too little, or under-shares
- Uses hurtful sarcasm
- Complains
- Negative tone of voice
- Wasted words rather than wise words (i.e. ungodly advice, wrong timing)
- Snide Remarks

a. Were any of the above mistakes surprising to you? If so, which one(s)?

b. Pick one of the communication mistakes you checked in question three, and commit to improve your communication in that area, this week. Write down what you will do in the space below:

Although communication mistakes are many, after two and half decades of ministry, I've observed these top three:

- 1) Failure to communicate expectations clearly, and realistically**
- 2) Inability to successfully navigate difficult conversations**
- 3) Tendency to be negative rather than positive, discouraging rather than encouraging, or critical rather than appreciative.**

4. Do you struggle with any of these issues? If so, which one(s)?

If you look again at the list of communication mistakes listed in question three, you'll notice all twenty can be summed up in these top three.

The failure to communicate expectations clearly, the inability to navigate difficult conversations successfully, and the tendency toward negativity, has messed up more families than we could count.

No one wants to mess up her kids. No one wants to mess up her marriage. No one wants to mess up any relationship, if she can help it.

So is there any hope? Any help?

There is! Here's the good news: *if we apply just two simple scriptures we can learn to be healthy communicators, and avoid messing up our family.*

Are you ready to learn these two transformational verses? Here you go:

- **Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. (Ephesians 4:15)**
- **She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. (Proverbs 31:26)**

5. According to Ephesians 4:15a, above, what are we to speak? How?

a. Fill in the blanks:

When we speak the _____ in _____ we will _____ to become in every respect the _____ body of Christ.

Let me paraphrase and personalize what you just wrote:

When I speak the truth in love, I (and my family members) will grow to become mature in Christ.

Truth. Love. Growth. Maturity.

Sounds like a recipe for a healthy family to me. Sounds like the recipe for a healthy woman, too.

**Words of Truth + Words of Love =
Relational Growth and Personal Maturity**

Speak the truth in love. This is how we avoid messing up our relationships. If we don't speak the truth in love, we set the stage for a disconnected relationship with our child, a detached marriage with our husband, and in-authentic relationships with everyone.

The ability to speak truth is the foundation of a healthy family. This is not an overstatement. If family members won't speak the truth, or don't feel like they can speak the truth, family function becomes severely impaired. If truth is spoken in the absence of love, the family will be equally broken. The truth must be spoken *in love*.

Speaking truthfully goes beyond simply not lying. Not speaking truthfully shows up in ways you might never have considered.

6. The list below includes ways women commonly fail to speak the truth. On a scale of 1-10 (never to often), how often do you struggle with speaking the truth in the following ways?

- _____ I withhold parts of a story, or pieces of information
- _____ I have difficulty sharing my opinions with confidence
- _____ I can be sarcastic, critical, or snarky
- _____ When I finally speak the truth, I usually explode, and it's not with love
- _____ I find it hard to correct my child, because I don't like conflict
- _____ I get my feelings hurt easily, but don't say anything
- _____ I don't talk about the elephant in the room
- _____ I embellish the truth, or exaggerate the truth
- _____ I find it hard to discuss my feelings without getting overly emotional
- _____ I don't want to express my needs; my family should just know
- _____ I keep parts of my life hidden from my family members
- _____ I have difficulty saying "no"
- _____ I allow my family members to speak disrespectfully to me
- _____ I speak disrespectfully to my family

Every one of the issues listed above can be traced directly to the failure to speak the truth. Can you see why it's impossible to have a healthy family if you don't speak the truth in love?

Starting today you can make the move to get healthy family communication, no matter how you've communicated in the past. Right here, right now, commit to speak the truth in love.

7. So let's get practical, and tackle the three biggest communication mistakes. How can speaking the truth in love help you clearly, and realistically, communicate your expectations with a family member? Be specific, if you can.

a. How would speaking the truth in love help you successfully navigate a difficult conversation? Again, try to be specific.

b. How would speaking the truth in love help you avoid being negative, critical, or discouraging?

Oh, how I hope you are starting to get the hang of this! Speaking the truth in love is the key to healthy relational communication.

8. Let's stay practical, shall we? Proverbs 31:26 says an emotionally, spiritually, and relationally healthy woman, "opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue."

Wisdom is knowledge *put into practice*. A wise woman knows *what* to say, *how* to say it, and *when* to say it.

On a scale of 1 - 10 (low to high), how wisely do you communicate:

- a. With your husband?**
- b. With your children?**
- c. With your family members?**
- d. Why did you give yourself these numbers?**
- e. Do you think your family would agree?**

9. On a scale of 1 - 10, how kind are your words:

- a. To your husband?**
- b. To your children?**
- c. To your family members?**
- d. Why did you give yourself these numbers?**

10. If you peek inside the home of a healthy family, you will see kindness in the way they communicate with one another. Kindness will be their norm. Is kindness your norm?

a. How can you affirm, encourage, or express appreciation to your family members this week—especially the one you are least likely to encourage?

I realize some of you might be thinking, “But you don’t understand! My husband (child, parent, sibling, etc.) is *impossible!* I can’t even imagine speaking with kindness to him/her/them!” Let me ask you a simple question. And I need you to be honest, ok?

Do you want to be healthy?

Then you must choose to speak words of kindness. Even if they do not.

You cannot teach kindness, if you do not speak kindness.

My heart goes out to you if your family is steeped in unhealthy habits. Some of you deal with verbal abuse. Even more have dealt with criticism, outbursts of anger, and all kinds of unhealthy ways of relating.

May I leave you with just a few words of hope?

Take a peek at the verse that precedes Proverbs 31:26. This is Proverbs 31:25-26:

*Strength and dignity are her clothing,
And she smiles at the future.
²⁵She opens her mouth in wisdom,
And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.*

The wise woman who speaks with kindness is not weak! She’s not a doormat. She’s not cowardly, or impotent. Oh no, girlfriend! This woman is strong. Confident. Optimistic. She speaks truth in love. She respects herself, and those around her. Her future is bright.

Why? Because the woman who learns to communicate with truth and love, with wisdom and kindness, is a woman headed for emotional, relational, and spiritual health, wholeness, and healing.

For herself.

For her family.

For real.

Life Application:

1. Ephesians 5:33 says, “*However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, **and the wife must respect her husband.***” Decide right now how your words will show respect to your husband this week. Will you tell him you are proud of him? Notice something positive about him, and say so? Thank him? Share with your group next week.
2. Be proactive about building up all your family members this week. Choose words of encouragement. Speak with kindness. Make a note of how this changed your family dynamic.
3. Review your answers to question three. Choose one area you will seek to improve.
4. This week, speak the truth in love. Be ready to share how you applied this principle.

Optional: Further Reading, Reflection and Bible Study

1. Read 1 Corinthians 13. Jot down how this type of love could impact your family toward real emotional, relational and spiritual health.
2. Ephesians 5 addresses how a healthy family functions. Read Ephesians 5. Write down anything the Lord speaks to your heart.
3. Memorize Ephesians 4:15a “Speaking the truth in love...”
4. Memorize Proverbs 31:26 “She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.”