One of the greatest challenges people face is developing the ability to communicate with God and with one another. We are communal beings with an innate desire to relate to other human beings and to God. Our happiness is directly linked with our ability to communicate. Failure to communicate creates problems in the family, problems with self-respect, and problems with our relationship with God. Failure to communicate results in a sense of isolation and a loss of hope.

In this talk, we want to help participants see that prayer is our communication with God and to understand the importance of prayer to our communication with others as well. Prayer is the beginning of renewed communication both with God and people. The speaker introduces the tripod (or milk stool) image as a way of illustrating that prayer is the first of three legs that support our growth in Christ. Other speakers will explain the other legs and complete the tripod image. Because the outline contains a large amount of content, the speaker may find it necessary to emphasize certain aspects of the outline over others. In doing so, however, the speaker must remember that the heart of this talk is not interpersonal communication alone but communication with God and its importance for communication with people as well.

The outline elaborates on the meaning of the points, not to provide a script but in order to stimulate the speaker in developing the talk in his or her own words. Personal examples are to be used as the speaker feels comfortable and as they fit the text. This talk should be no longer than 15–20 minutes. Visual aids help convey the main points of the talk. The reflection guide will pose the following questions:

1. When have I felt really misunderstood or experienced a breakdown in communication in my family or circle of friends? How did that make me feel? How did I work it out?
2. When have I experienced good communication? What made it good?
3. Thinking about my experience of prayer, what do I find most helpful in communicating with God? How has God communicated with me?

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LD—“With a clean sheet of paper, pen in hand...”; followed by the before-talk chorus, at which time the speaker will enter the conference room (participants should be standing for the chorus). The speaker will ask the participants to join in “The Prayer to the Holy Spirit” found on the last page of the Chrysalis Worshipbook. The speaker will then ask the participants to be seated.

Introduction

*Share a brief story, illustration, or experience that helps get people’s attention and leads into the theme of communication. For example,*

- Play a brief round of the “Whisper Game.”
- Play a brief excerpt of the old comedy routine “Who’s on First” by Abbot and Costello, or briefly act out such a scenario of total miscommunication with another team member.

“My name is ____________________________, and the title of this talk is "COMMUNICATION THROUGH PRAYER.""

I. One of the basic needs of all human beings is to communicate.

A. Communication is, on one level, how we exchange information. On another level, it is how we share life, how we connect with one another.

B. We have all experienced times when communication has broken down, or we have been misunderstood. As a result, we feel alienated from others.

C. We have also experienced times when we were understood. We felt a sense of worth and connection with others.

II. Lack of communication results in two common problems.

A. Families experience stress and misunderstanding.
   1. Miscommunication in the family results in confusion of expectations, hurt relationships, and injured people.
   2. Think for a moment about how communication or miscommunication has affected your family. Pause. Share a personal example of miscommunication in your family.

B. God begins to feel distant and unreal.
   1. Our relationship with God is a two-way street.
   2. When we don’t communicate, it diminishes our relationship with God; our faith goes flat.
   3. We begin to think God doesn’t exist or has left us, when in fact it is we who have left God by not communicating.
III. Prayer is the first step toward improved communication with God and people.

A. Prayer is the first of the three basic practices that support Christian growth. Present the three-legged image, using a stool, tripod, or a drawing. The other legs of the tripod are study and action, which we will discuss later.
1. Jesus’ relationship with God served as the hub of all his relationships with people.
2. Jesus’ communication with God shaped and guided all of his communications with people.
3. Through prayer we learn to share the heart of Christ—his relationship with God.

B. Jesus communicated regularly with God.
3. He had prayer for persons with special needs (John 11:41-44).
4. He had an attitude of constant openness to God’s presence in the midst of life (John 12:27-29).
5. He had prayer through weekly worship with others at the synagogue (Luke 4:16).

IV. Effective communication happens in three directions: God to human, human to God, and human to human. Show a chart or draw a diagram as you speak about the three directions.

A. God to human
1. God makes communication a priority.
   a. The whole Bible is the story of God’s trying to communicate with humanity, first through creation, laws, prophets. We call this form of communication “revelation,” God revealing God’s self to us.
   b. God comes in Jesus to communicate in person—to reveal truth, listen to people’s needs, heal broken relationships, and show the way to true life and peace among all peoples.
   c. The Holy Spirit continues to communicate to our hearts and to foster our openness to what is true, right, and called for at the time.
2. God regularly communicates to us in more ways than we consciously acknowledge. Prayer is paying attention to what God is saying to us:
   a. Through scripture and tradition.
   b. Through nature and life experiences.
   c. Through people—friends, parents, pastors, strangers.
   d. Through silence.
3. Prayer is loving God with our whole heart and mind, beginning with listening to God and then doing what God’s love prompts us to do.

B. Human to God: Communication with God can enhance our communication and relationships with others.
1. One of the first rules of prayer is this: Be honest.
   a. Simply share with God in your own words what is on your mind and in your heart.
   b. We can share everything with God, good and bad, joy and anger, our love and our selfishness.
   c. As we talk honestly with God, we learn to be honest with ourselves and with others.

2. As we share our desires with God, God sometimes answers our prayer by helping us see our real needs more clearly.
   a. Sometimes God says “yes,” sometimes “no,” sometimes “later” to our request.
   b. God gives us what we need to mature in Christ (John 15:7).

3. As we pray for other people, God often grants us an awareness of how we are called to serve them.
   a. When we have negative feelings toward persons, we can ask and God will give us the love we need to reach out and forgive.
   b. When we give God our negative feelings about someone, we make room to receive God’s love for that person in our hearts.
   c. Share some meaningful scripture that encourages prayer, such as Mark 1:35; 1 Thess. 5:17; 2 Chron. 7:14; Jer. 29:13.

4. Patterns of prayer can give form to our communication with God in helpful ways.
   a. ACTS reminds us of the pattern: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication.
   b. TALK to God can be explained by Thanks for all that God has provided, Ask for needs, Listen to God, Kneel before God.

5. The way we communicate with God—openly, honestly, regularly, desiring communion with God and people—becomes a model for our communication with people.

C. Human to human: We as humans can experiment at our small table group of friends with prayerful communication.

1. Actively listen to one another.
2. Open your communication with one another to God.
   a. Be aware of God’s presence among you as you share.
   b. Practice listening with the ears of Christ. Listen to the heart, not just the words.
   c. Practice speaking with the mouth of Christ, not to impress but to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15).
   d. Communicate in such a way that you foster communion with God and one another.
V. **In closing:** The marks of effective communication with God and people are
- Honesty
- Openness
- Truthfulness
- Sincerity
- Listening
- Prayerfulness

*At the close of the talk, the table groups may begin discussion using the two-page reflection guide that follows. Permission is granted to make one copy per participant.*
Prayer, giving our hearts to God, is the first step toward improved communication with God and people.

1. When have I felt really misunderstood or experienced a breakdown in communication in my family or circle of friends? How did that make me feel? How did I work it out?

2. When have I experienced good communication? What made it good?

3. Thinking about my experience of prayer, what do I find most helpful in communicating with God? How has God communicated with me?
TALK #6: COMMUNICATION THROUGH PRAYER

Scripture References

Luke 6:12
Luke 9:18
Luke 9:28
John 11:41-44
John 12:27-29
Luke 4:16
John 15:7
Mark 1:35
1 Thessalonians 5:17
2 Chronicles 7:14
Jeremiah 29:13
Ephesians 4:15

ACTS

Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication

TALK

Thanks for all that God has provided; Ask for needs;
Listen to God; Kneel before God

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