

# “Character: It’s Personal”

It’s Personal Sermon Series | Week Two | Newbreak Church

October 23rd, 2022

Newbreak’s Sermon Study Guide is an in-house resource that serves sermon-based Life Groups and/or individuals who want to reflect further on how the message contributes to our spiritual formation.

In this week’s study, we talk about how our communication is perceived in both what we say and how we say it. Here we aim to take responsibility for our personal part and seek to improve how we communicate with others.

## Icebreakers for Life Groups

- What is something encouraging someone has said to you this week?
- When was a time you read a text message and totally misunderstood the tone that was intended?

## Going Deeper Into the Message

*How do I communicate in a way that honors God and others?*

**Read James 1:19; Proverbs 12:15; Proverbs 18:13**

**Point 1 – Commit to listen with love.**

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be **quick to listen, slow to speak** and slow to become angry (James 1:19, NIV).

The order in this passage seems intentional. If you are quick to listen, you probably will be slower to speak and respond because you’ll actually be processing what is being said. Then, if you are probably going to be slower to become angry since anger in communication usually comes from miscommunication or misunderstanding that could often be avoided if more listening was taking place.

We sometimes think of responses to people before we even hear them! But are you really listening at that point? That's like trying to give an answer before you hear the full question. When we listen to someone, we are showing respect for them.

Active listening is key to good communication. It is the intentional effort to hear every word someone is saying without simultaneously thinking about how you will respond.



We can admit it; this is difficult! Yet, it's not impossible. Active listening allows us to know more about the person we are listening to. Sometimes we fall prey to either half-listening, multi-tasking, or listening so we know how to respond. But active listening gives us vital information and greater detail regarding what someone cares about or is going through.

### Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- What makes you feel heard when speaking with others? Do you do these things when listening to others?
- Which one of the 6 Active Listening Skills is hardest for you? Why? What can you do to become better at active listening? Which one is easiest?

- How are you going to challenge yourself to listen more intently moving forward? Perhaps this week try putting the phone down or turning off the computer or TV when someone wants to speak with you and give them your full attention. Watch how it becomes easier to understand them.

*How do I communicate in a way that honors God and others?*

**Read Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 15:23, 28; 16:24**

### **Point 2 – Commit to speaking with love and truth.**

Just as James 1:19 encouraged us to “**be quick to listen and slow to speak**” so we should put a lot more thought and craftsmanship in what we say when we speak. In essence, we should probably THINK before we speak. In fact, T.H.I.N.K. makes for a great acronym for us to work through.

**Here are 5 things you can ask yourself to improve your communication today!**  
(These will apply to any and all relationships you have, though in different ways.)

#### **1) Is this True?**

Truth should be the basis and first tier we think through before processing if something should be said. We need to be working with facts, not fiction.

*Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ. (Ephesians 4:15, NLT)*

If it's not true, then it does not need to be said, *full stop!* Yet, *truth is not the final stop* in discerning the best way to communicate with care.

#### **2) Is this Helpful?**

*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. (Ephesians 4:29, NIV)*

Did you catch that? The communication filter given to us in Ephesians 4:29 is asking the two-fold question: "Does this build others up?" And, similarly, "Is this beneficial?" If not, our talk might be labeled as "unwholesome."

The language of "building up" in the New Testament is a metaphor to see others as buildings under construction. We have the power to come into each other's construction

site and fortify and edify, or fracture and tear down. Words are that powerful! And that's why it's imperative that our communication should be marked with helpful words. That's why even constructive feedback is just that, constructive, it seeks to build upward, not tear down.

### 3) Is this Immediate?

In other words, is this a "now" or "not yet" conversation? Timing is key in a lot of things. For example, if you come home from a busy and/or stressful day of work and your spouse meets you at the door with a personal critique, well, it might not be received in the best manner. Why? Because our frame of mind affects how we receive communication. The same respect should go for how we communicate. When we want to address something, even if it is *true* and even if it is *helpful*, we ought to consider the immediacy and timing of it.

*Everyone enjoys a fitting reply; it is wonderful to say the right thing at the right time!* (Proverbs 15:23, NLT)

The best thing might be to create a literal or mental note of it and wait for a better-timed moment to talk about certain things. 3 follow-up questions to help you here: *Am I the right person to say this? Is this the right time to say it? Is this the right place to say it?* Walk through these and you'll be walking in far more wisdom than those who are too eager to say what they *want to say* when they *want to say it*.

### 4) Is this Necessary?

This one takes a lot of discernment. The question of necessity is a question of weightiness or importance. This is not to say that we disregard saying what we are feeling or even our personal preferences. Rather, this is about taking into account the relational capital we have with someone. Sharing a personal preference in how your wishes could be better respected or how the relationship could be improved will *likely* be well received if talking to a friend of 5+ years. However, there are times we might need to bite our tongue and even forfeit certain personal preferences in a new or fragile relationship, whether that be with a friend or even a colleague. When you consider the relational capital you have with the person, you'll better determine the necessity of what needs to be said.

*The heart of the godly thinks carefully before speaking; the mouth of the wicked overflows with evil words.* (Proverbs 15:28, NLT)

### 5) Is this Kind?

Having considered the truth, helpfulness, immediacy, and necessity of your message, if it is still worth sharing, then kindness is the manner that will package your message together. We can all think of the people in our lives who are not very kind with how they speak. Maybe their words are too brash, too abrasive, or too blunt. Whatever the case, I'm sure you have walked away wishing they were more kind. Granted, what they said may have been *true* (see point 1), it might have even been *helpful*, and so on, but if it was not *kind*, then the message gets lost. If the message is like a package, it is not received like a gift, but like a brick; it does not *benefit*, it *bruises*.

*Kind words are like honey— sweet to the soul and healthy for the body.*  
(Proverbs 16:24, NLT)

Honey for the soul? Yes, please! That's what our words can be. But this takes a willingness to improve how we communicate, from what we say, to when we say it, to how we say it.

Make no mistake about it, there are times when tough conversations need to be had. And no matter how much tact or even if you have a graduate degree in communications, it still is hard. Yet, in all this we can seek to reflect Jesus in our communication skills. After all, Jesus is "full of grace and truth" ([John 1:14](#)). Or to paraphrase the bookends of our 5 insights, Jesus speaks what is *true*, *kind*, and everything in between!

Here we invite you to T.H.I.N.K. before you speak!

### Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- Do you like to say things right away when you think of them? Why is this? What might happen if you sat with the idea until a more opportune time?
- Are you prone to giving more truth when you speak, or more kindness? Why do you think this is? How might you incorporate more balance of truth and love into your conversations?
- Which of the T.H.I.N.K. speaks to you the most? Why that one?
- How would your conversations look differently if Jesus were physically sitting next to you? Would you take more time with your words? Show more compassion? Have more patience?

**Memory Verse:** Ephesians 4:29 (NIV) Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

**—FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—**

How are you going to think or live differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?

How does this week's message shape or nurture your relationship with God?

**BONUS:** For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids in a way that they would relate to or understand?