

Mother Teresa



"Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless."

Where are we going?

1. Character and Christianity
2. Character and the image of God
3. Character and the Body of Christ
4. **Challenges that shape and show character.**
 1. Vision - direction & expectations
 2. Fear - faith
 3. **Relationships - community**
 4. Conflict - differences
 5. Change - growth
 6. Success & Failure - stress
 7. Private life - the heart

challenge #3

Managing Relationships

Godly character builds community through grace and truth.



Character is revealed in relationships with respect to:

how we see others.

how we talk to others.

how we care for others.



Godly character views people with:

Reverence

as it sees the image of God in others.

Tolerance

as it welcomes God given differences with humility and grace.

Three kinds of tolerance

Ideological

All values are matters of personal preference & equal merit.

Social

Who I welcome in my social interactions in the world

Legal

What I sense should be lawful in an open secular society

1. Many wrongly believe that the three cannot and should not be separated.
2. Christians are called to resist ideological pluralism but support social & legal pluralism.

How do we talk to others?

A Godly character follows spiritual rules of grammar.

1. Edifying speech starts with the ears.
2. Edifying speech is a spiritual body function.
3. Edifying speech comes from the heart.



How do we talk to others?

1. **Effective speaking starts with the ears.**



Bryant H. McGill
(American author)



“One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say.”

James 1:19

“Be quick to hear,
slow to speak,
and slow to wrath.”

**Slow down
and listen!**

**Everyone
deserves and longs
to be loved.**

**Love involves a
sincere desire to know.**

**Active listening leads
to sincere questions.**

**It's hard to listen when
you are talking.**

**It's impossible to hear
when you rush to
judgment.**



**People with Godly character
are slow to speak for a reason.**

James 3

“² For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. . . . ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.”

The tongue is a constant reminder of human depravity.

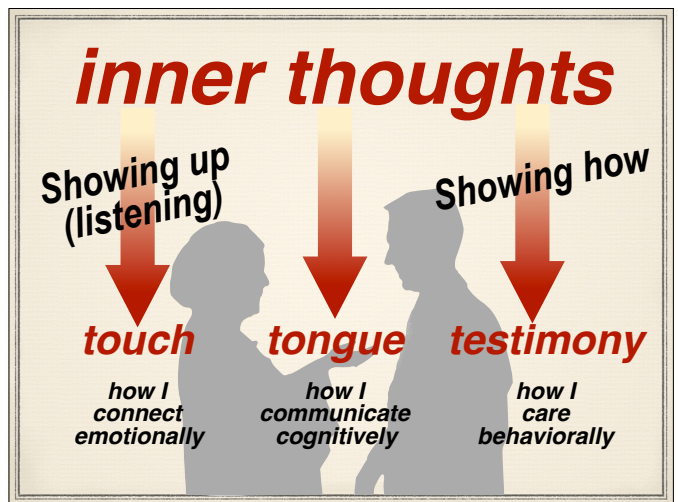
Buddha

"The tongue like a sharp knife kills without drawing blood."

Both the **eye (what comes in)** and the **tongue (what goes out)** shape our lives.

"¹³ Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. ¹⁵ This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. ¹⁶ For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. ¹⁸ And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

When people with Godly character use the tongue it is with a testimony that is -
- gentle, gracious, humble, and peacemaking.



Colossians 4:6

"Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person."

- ✓ Note that speech is often a response - suggesting that we first "**listen.**"
- ✓ Note that speech is to reflect knowledge - suggesting that we first "**think.**"
- ✓ Note that speech is gracious - suggesting that we first "**understand.**"

How do we talk to others?

2. Effective speaking is a spiritual body function.



John 1:14

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of **grace and truth.**”

1 Peter 4:11

“**Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God;** whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies;”

**As the Body of Christ
our tongues are to speak
his words of grace & truth.**

Ephesians 4

“²⁵ Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. ²⁶ Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and do not give the devil an opportunity. . . . ²⁹ Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear. . . . ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

Ephesians 4:15

“but **speaking the truth in love**, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ,”

L istening to concerns
O verlooking weaknesses
V aluing strengths
E mpathizing with pains

**How do we
talk to
others?**



**3.
Effective
speaking
comes from
the heart.**

Ephesians 4

“²⁵ Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.”

- ✓ Speak the truth about the **facts of life.**
- ✓ Speak the truth about the **kingdom of God.**

✓ **Speak the truth about
yourself.**

Telling the Truth

- ✓ **The worst lies we tell are those we tell to ourselves about ourselves.**
- ✓ **Telling the truth is most simply sharing God’s heart and ours.**

Levels of spoken communication

"Shooting the breeze"

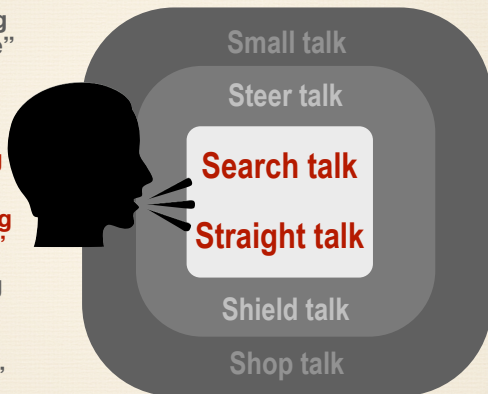
"Giving advice"

"Drawing out"

"Revealing the heart"

"Keeping at bay"

"Sharing interests"



Levels of spoken communication

"I want to listen to you and make it safe for you to be honest with me."

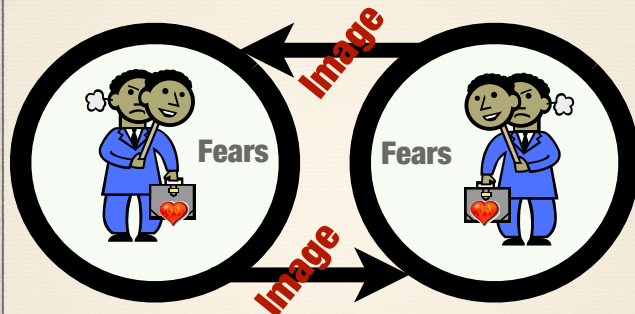
"Drawing out"

"Revealing the heart"



"I want you to know how I feel, what I want, what I fear, & how I understand."

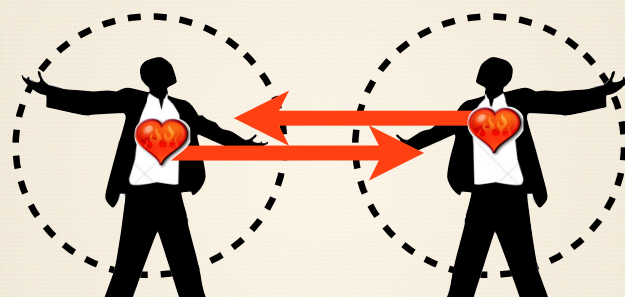
Two levels of communication



#1 Defensive shield to defensive shield

When my image and fears relate to your image and fears we may feel safe but **we are not connecting.**

Two levels of communication



#2 Heart to Heart

Don't just communicate with your heart but from your heart.

A person with Godly character is not afraid to relate from the heart.

How do I know if I am communicating from the heart?

1. I am **vulnerable** - resisting my self protective fears.
2. I am **empathetically drawn to others** - eager to listen to others with love.
3. I leave the interaction **feeling connected** - wanting to protect and continue the relationship.

Take home

- ✓ Treat the tongue with great respect.
- ✓ Use the truth as a healing medication.
- ✓ Recognize that grace opens the heart and mind to truth.