

CROSSING ATTITUDES

Study Guide

Lesson Seven – Godly Social Skills

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People say that communication is one of the biggest problems in relationships. It is one of the top complaints in marriages, between parents and children, in the work place, and between friends. There are multitudes of misunderstandings, hurt feelings, and frustrations that stem from the way we relate to each other. No matter how hard we try, we will never be totally free of miscommunications. However, as with every other important aspect of life, the Bible teaches principles that will help our social skills.

Psalms 33:6 says, *“By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host.”* God spoke all of creation into existence. Since we are made in His image, God designed humans to communicate with Him and each other. “Word(s)” is used over 1200 times in the Bible. If you add all the different verses that talk about the “tongue,” the “mouth,” or what we should “speak” the number of references becomes overwhelming. The spoken word is obviously important to God.

Since God created us to talk, most of us do that fairly well. Even people with a speech impediment learn how to express themselves. The problem isn’t that we don’t know how to communicate; the problem is the motives behind our communication. For example, most people would say that a successful salesman has great social skills. He may be very personable, has good eye contact, and a great sense of humor, and yet he may be extremely manipulating. Whatever we do, in word or deed, we should do all in the name of the Lord Jesus (Colossians 3:17).

- 1) Read Romans 16:17-18. What is Paul’s warning to the Romans? Have you ever been deceived by this kind of person?

- 2) Read 2 Corinthians 11:6. In what way is Paul unskilled? Yet, what does he have? Why is it important for you to have this?

- 3) Read Psalms 37:30 and Proverbs 10:11-14, 20-21. Contrast the descriptions of the words of the righteous and the foolish. Think about times when you have spoken wisely or foolishly.

Righteous	Foolish

- 4) Read Hebrews 10:23-25. From verses 24 and 25, name the things that we should do. What shouldn't we do?
- 5) Think about your own attitude in social settings, including church. Do you generally go with a desire to be an encouragement to others? Do you look for ways to show genuine love and concern? Are you more concerned with what people think of you (e.g. the way you're dressed, what you say, how your kids behave, how your husband presents himself, how important you are, etc.) or with being a blessing to others?

Note: Think about it. Most of the conversations you had today were mundane and rather self-protective. We spend most of our time talking about things that are of little personal consequence – the weather, politics, sports, and entertainment. There is nothing wrong with this except it allows us to hide who we really are. A person may be terribly distraught about her marriage, yet when people ask how she is, she will quickly answer, “Fine, how are you.” The person asking doesn't really want to know and the person answering doesn't really want to tell. They are co-conspirators in a casual relationship. Whether it is over the back of a pew, in passing at a school function, or over the phone, we are all skilled at newsy but personally protective conversations.¹

- 6) Casual social situations can be awkward, frustrating, and can make us feel alone in a crowd. All of us struggle with “fitting in” at times. The answer is not to feel better about myself but to get my eyes off myself. Look up the following verses and restate each one in your own words. Think about times when you did this and saw the blessing it brought to the hearer. Also, think about times when you felt awkward because you were too focused on yourself. Ask God to help you choose to set self aside so you will be available to minister to others.

Proverbs 12:25

Proverbs 15:23

Proverbs 15:28

Proverbs 16:24

Proverbs 20:15

¹ Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemers Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change*, (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2002), 163-164.

Note: Godly social etiquette is to esteem others as more important than yourself (Philippians 2:3-4). Good communication is like bouncing a ball back and forth. If someone asks you how you are and you answer “fine, thanks” with no other response, then you have caught the ball and kept it. Game over. Instead, you would normally ask them how they are and “toss the ball” back to them. They usually answer “fine.” At this point, it can get awkward. Be ready to ask questions that show genuine concern for them such as, “How was your week?” or “How is your job going?” As time allows, the ball should go back and forth every minute or so. Of course, if something serious is going on in your life, it’s okay to keep the ball longer. However, be careful not to monopolize every conversation with your situations. If a person continuously takes the ball and talks for 10 to 20 minutes, they are playing ball by themselves and not sharing. Game over.

If you are going through something serious and need to talk, it’s still good to show concern for other people. If you are the one who is listening to someone who is going through a tough situation, ask if you can pray with him or her on the spot rather than just promising to pray later. Nothing binds two hearts together more than seeking the Lord as one.

- 7) We are usually polite in social situations but once we get home, being “harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit” can be forgotten (1 Peter 3:8). Look up the following verses. What ungodly social skill is being addressed? Write how others are hurt by these actions. Check the ones that God is convicting you on. Allow Him to remind you of His love and forgiveness.

	Verse	Ungodly social skill	How is this hurtful to the other person?
	Proverbs 29:11		
	Proverbs 16:28 Proverbs 20:19		
	Ephesians 5:4		
	Ephesians 4:25		
	Proverbs 29:5		
	Proverbs 10:19		
	Proverbs 18:13		
	James 1:26		

- 8) Read Luke 6:45. Where do our words come from? (*Remember that our heart is our attitude.*)

- 9) Read Colossians 4:6. What should our speech be seasoned with? Why is this attitude so important?

Psychology Myth: “Communication is the key to healthy relationships.” How does what we’ve learned in this lesson (including the teaching) refute this myth?