Christ, the Great Communicator

(Improving Your Communication Skills by Imitating the Master)

Lesson 1: Communication Lessons from Matthew 13 ~ Part 1

The Big Idea:
Communication - Follow Jesus’ example.

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its first fruits.”
Proverbs 18:21

The success of your leadership, your marriage and your relationships with others depends a great deal on your ability to communicate. Many of the best thinkers are not leaders. Why? They cannot communicate. Your leadership rests on your ability to connect with people, share your ideas and vision, and motivate them to partner with you. One former world leader said, “If I could start all over again, I would go back to school and learn to communicate.”

Matthew 13

Jesus is the greatest communicator who ever walked the earth. In John 1, He is called “the Word.” In Matthew 13 we see an example of His effective style. Christ, the Great Communicator, teaches us how to relate truth to our people today.

Over this series of lessons, we will take a more in depth look at the communication principles Jesus’ demonstrates in this passage.

A Question to Consider:
How well do you communicate?
1. ________________________________ (Matthew 13:3, 10-13)

3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed.

10 The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

11 He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them.

12 Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance.

Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.

13 This is why I speak to them in parables:

‘Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

Jesus shared most of His message through stories. He shared seven of them in this chapter. He used the power of simple, familiar narratives. The educator takes something simple and makes it complicated. The communicator takes something complicated and makes it simple. He gave them a point for their head and a picture for their heart.

Our lesson: It's not just what you say, but how you say it.

Take a moment with your group to discuss each of Jesus' rules of communication:

a. ________________________________ beginning

b. ________________________________ theme

c. ________________________________ language

d. ________________________________ pictures

e. ________________________________ objective

f. ________________________________ response
2. ______________________________________________________________________ (Matthew 13:2, 14-17, 57-58)

2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore.

14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:
"You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.
15 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'
16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.
17 For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

57 And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home."
58 And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

At times, Jesus was conspicuously silent when it was tempting to speak out. At other times, He spoke when it was in His selfish interest to stay quiet. He understood timing. The Scripture says when the people came, Jesus spoke (v.2). The Scripture also says when the people rejected the message, He withdrew (v.57-58). Effective leaders know when to relay a message for best results. Early on, Jesus said: "The time has not yet come." Later, He said, "My time has come." God is a master at timing. Galatians 4:4 says, "When the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son."

Our lesson: It's not just what you say, but when you say it.

Take some time to discuss the following questions to ask about timing in regards to communication:

Who is my audience?

What are their questions and needs right now?

What needs to be accomplished most?

What's God's answer to their questions and needs?

Are they ready to receive it?

How can I build a bridge of relationship that will bear the weight of truth?
A Thought to Ponder:

“May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”

Psalm 19:14

Communication ~
Let me listen to the words of their spirits.
And let me speak words from Your Spirit.

~ Leadership Prayers

What Difference Would It Make:

What difference would it make if you followed Jesus’ example of giving people a point for their head to ponder and a picture for their heart to remember?
Lesson 2: Communication Lessons from Matthew 13 ~ Part 2

The Big Idea:
Communication - Follow Jesus’ example.


“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its first fruits.”
Proverbs 18:21

3. ____________________________ (Matthew 13:51)

51 “Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked.
“Yes,” they replied.”

After Jesus taught, He asked, “Have you understood these things?” He was probing to make sure they could apply the truth. Jesus always spoke with a goal in mind. There was something for the audience to know, something for them to feel, and something for them to do. A good message always includes all three of these ingredients. This will require us to research our audience, not just our message.

The fact is: 20% of most audiences will act on their own.
80% of most audiences will not act on their own.

Our lesson: It's not just what you say, but how they respond to it.

Take some time to discuss these tips on helping people to respond to truth:

- Have a clear objective for your listener to act on.
- Reduce it to a simple phrase and write it down.
- Use a “hook” the listener can grasp and remember.
- Give them a point for their head and a picture for their heart.
- Provide a vehicle for them to use to respond.
- Ask for what you want them to do.
A Question to Consider:

When you think about communicating (sharing) the Gospel, how important is it to communicate it in a way that is both Biblically based and relevant (understandable) to the people?

4. ____________________________ (Matthew 13:1-2, 9)

1 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake.
2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore.
9 Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

Jesus saw the people and perceived their needs. It is difficult to effectively communicate with an audience without knowing something about them. Most learning takes place in the arena of a person's familiarity or interest. Jesus identified with people. To become more like Him we'll have to become more “people-oriented” and less “lesson-oriented.” Public speakers teach lessons; communicators teach people.

Our lesson: It's not just what you say, but how they hear it.

Take some time to discuss the difference between being a Public Speaker and being a Communicator:

**Public Speaker**

A. Puts the message before the people

B. Asks: “What do I have?”

C. The key is techniques

D. Content-oriented

E. Goal is to complete the message

**Communicator**

A. Puts the people before the message

B. Asks: “What do they need?”

C. The key is atmosphere

D. Change-oriented

E. Goal is to complete the people
Jesus used what was cultural to say what is timeless. He connected with them where they were in order to lead them to where they needed to be. Paul did the same thing in Acts 17 when he spoke at Mars Hill (Areopagus). So did Peter when he spoke at Pentecost, Acts 2. These men all communicated truth, but did so from the perspective of their listeners.

How did Paul demonstrate communicating truth to the people from their perspective, in a way they could understand, in Acts 17:16-34?

How did Peter demonstrate this same concept in Acts 2:14-41?
A Thought to Ponder:

As Sydney J. Harris said, information is “giving out” while communication is “getting through.” When there is interactive communication between the team leader and his people, it empowers them to succeed.

~ Developing the Leaders Around You

What Difference Would It Make:

What difference would it make if you were intentional about researching your audience, as well as your message?
Lesson 3: Communication Lessons from Matthew 13 ~ Part 3

The Big Idea:
Communication - Follow Jesus’ example.

5. __________________________ (Matthew 13:53-57)

Jesus spoke from His convictions. His convictions enabled Him to conclude that a prophet is not without honor except in his own country (v.57). His words were from His heart. He spoke with passion and demonstrated obedience to His heavenly Father. He had nothing to prove, nothing to lose and nothing to hide. He didn't speak out of routine or obligation. When He spoke, His words always had great meaning.

Our lesson: It's not just what you say, but why you say it.

There are no boring subjects-only boring speakers.
There are no small audiences-only small speakers.
If you are interested in your audience, they will be interested in you.

Take some time to discuss these tips on speaking with passion:

Speak on themes that you own for yourself.
Be impact-conscious rather than image-conscious.
Be authentic. Lock on to a pair of eyes with each point.
Paint pictures in their hearts.
Know what your goal is when you speak.
Prepare with prayer and let God build a fire inside you.
**Question to Consider:**

*Do you communicate from your convictions and with passion?*

6. _____________________________ (Matthew 13:54)

“And coming to His home town, He began teaching them in their synagogue,
so that they became astonished and said,
'Where did this man get His wisdom and these miraculous signs?'

Matthew 4:19

Jesus' credibility came not only from His words, but also from His life. He modeled His teaching. It was show and tell. He said “Follow Me,” not just “listen to Me”.

Author Charles Allen describes Jesus this way:

“He might have preached lengthy sermons on the dignity of labor, temptation, how to enjoy life, the immortality of the soul, the worth of children, and the fact that God answers prayer. Instead, He worked in a carpenter's shop, He met and conquered temptation in the wilderness, He went to parties and laughed with other happy people, He raised the dead, He stopped to love little children, and after He prayed, the power of the Lord was present.

“He might have talked long and loud about the need of man for human sympathy, the worth of womanhood, the blessing of humility, and the equal worth of all men. Instead, He wept at the grave of a friend, He treated all women with deep respect, He took a towel and washed His disciples' feet, He gave His time to the poor and outcasts.”

“Instead of talking about how He could transform lives, He took a harlot and made her the first herald of the resurrection. Instead of preaching that people need bread, He fed the multitude. Instead of arguing the spirit is stronger than matter, He walked on water. Instead of telling people how bad it is to be crippled, He said, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk.' Instead of merely telling people they should forgive, while He was dying and being spit on He prayed, 'Father, forgive them.' ”

**Our lesson: It's not just what you say, but how you show it.**

Every time you speak, your audience is quietly asking:

Why should I listen to you?

Can I trust you?

Do you care for me?

Do you know your subject?
As a good communicator you must:

A. Believe in your ________________.

B. Believe in your ________________.

C. Believe in your ________________.

D. Believe in your ________________.

Steps to Reduce Your Anxiety as a Communicator

1. Prepare extensively. (The more ready you are, the more relaxed you'll be.)

2. Memorize your first burst. (Know your first three sentences or opening story.)

3. Speak to friendly eyes. (To get comfortable, focus on faces that are interested.)

4. Dress comfortably for the audience. (If you don't, you may get preoccupied.)

5. Take deep breaths before you begin. (This keeps you from nervously rushing.)

6. Visualize yourself being effective. (See God using you to impact your audience.)

7. State your goal to yourself before you begin. (Be clear on what your target is.)

8. Use visual aids. (This can make the message memorable & keep the attention off of you.)

9. Come to the meeting room early. (Arrive fifteen minutes early to remove surprises.)

10. Pray, pray, pray! (Lean on God to communicate His vision through you.)

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, through prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6-7
A Thought to Ponder:

“Then Elijah said to all the people, ‘Come near to me.’
So all the people came near to him.
And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken.”
1 Kings 18:30

When Elijah spoke, people jumped.
But most amazing of all, by the end of the day after all the theatrics,
Elijah turned his face toward heaven and cried,
“Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God,
and that You have turned their hearts back to You again” (1 Kings 18:37) ~ and God did.

How did the prophet gain the ear of everyone who heard his voice?

We can discern a number of reasons:

His courage: He was willing to stand alone for God.
His conviction: He has a passion for what he believed.
His character: He was honest and forthright with everyone.
His connection: He magnetically drew the people to himself and to God.
His credibility: He eventually gained the people’s ear because he got the results he wanted.

~ The Maxwell Leadership Bible

What Difference Would It Make:

Jesus demonstrated six principles of communication.
Which of these six do you already effectively practice?

What difference would it make
if you intentionally worked to improve on the others?