



RELATIONSHIP MATTERS

PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK

Five Pillars for Christians: Relationship Foundations for a Flourishing Life

Every relationship needs a solid foundation to flourish. When we live these 5 principals out, we build a healthy foundation that will easily carry the weight of our relationships.

- Trust
- **Communication**
- Authenticity
- Honesty
- Honour

Watch the video lesson on Communication in the online course and then complete the daily exercises. Plan to spend about 15 minutes each day. You may wish to print this workbook in order to easily refer to the key points and best practices and to complete the exercises.

The following exercises will give you what you need to break through your communication barriers and start building flourishing relationships!

LESSON 2: COMMUNICATION

Communication is more than talking and it is bi-directional!

Remember: Dialogue, not Monologue

- Verbal and non-verbal forms of communication
- Listen to understand the heart
- Speak from your heart
- Remember your body is speaking too

Styles of Communication

Passive Communication

- ❖ Maintains harmony at cost to self
- ❖ Needs, feelings, wants are ignored
- ❖ No eye contact, poor posture, indicates submission
- ❖ A reaction to helplessness
- ❖ Often carries resentments

Manipulative Communication

- ❖ Also known as passive/aggressive
- ❖ Needs, feelings and wants expressed but indirectly
- ❖ Being passive in a manner that hurts others
- ❖ Sarcasm, twisting words and secretive
- ❖ Can impact someone for life and gets passed down the generations

Aggressive Communication

- ❖ Needs, feeling and wants are expressed but at another's expense
- ❖ Loud, direct and insulting or name calling
- ❖ Often get their own way but others resent it
- ❖ Believe if they don't win, they lose
- ❖ Carry regrets

Assertive Communication (This is your goal)

- ❖ Maintain everyone's dignity, but clearly express's needs, feelings and wants.
- ❖ Thoughtful and honest
- ❖ Speak at the right time, in the right way, for the right reason
- ❖ See a way to have a win/win outcome

Active Listening

- ❖ Give your undivided attention
- ❖ Give them eye contact
- ❖ Find space to reflect what you are hearing them say
- ❖ Listen to understand – hear the heart not just the words
- ❖ Show Empathy

Empathetic Communication

- ❖ Look for opportunities to acknowledge & validate their feelings
- ❖ Helping them to identify their feelings helps them see cause & effect
- ❖ Separate their feelings from their behavior
- ❖ Affirm their personhood while contrasting their behavior
- ❖ Put yourself in their shoes, how would you be feeling if it were reversed

TIP: Remember using 'I' language deescalates tension: The three parts 'I feel' 'When I' and 'I want' gives you the tools to express your heart without accusation.

Asking questions de-escalates - making statements escalates

Six Steps to Conflict Resolution

This is a structured approach to help you work through a conflict that has affected your relationship. It assumes that you and the other person are both wanting to reconcile and resolve disagreement.

Ground rules:

- Only one person speaks at a time.
- Agree to listen to each other and understand the other's perspective before responding
- Agree to maintain confidentiality (unless there is a clear understanding of who else needs to know)
- Agree to communicate openly and respectfully and directly with one another
- Agree not to make it personal – do not personally attack each other's character
- Agree that its ok to pause if one or both need a break.
- Pick a time that works for both with no distractions. If one or the other comes to that date and is no longer in the right frame of mind to proceed, then pick a different date.

STEPS:

1. *State the Reasons for meeting and agree to ground rules*
2. *Each person states his/her side of the story – one speaks, one listens.*
3. *Both express needs, hopes and concerns (use "I" language)*
4. *Both generate ideas towards a possible solution*
5. *Both select a solution for implementation*
6. *Both decide and agree on next steps including an accountability plan*

An accountability plan typically allows you to talk about the most common/likely scenarios that could derail your agreement. It's ok to expect that there will be stumbles and missteps, so the accountability plan is your agreement of what to do when those stumbles occur.

Remember: You can be right & wrong at the same time. Compromise is your friend. The best result is a win/win.



RELATIONSHIP CHALLENGE: COMMUNICATE

For the next week, set aside 15-30 minutes each day to complete the daily activities. You may prefer to do this first thing in the morning to help you become more aware and intentional about your communication throughout the day. Or try it in the evening as a way to reflect upon your day and set your intentions for how you can make more trust deposits the following day.

Day 1 – Tone of Voice & Body Language

Practice using tone of voice and body language to say something without using words.

Pay attention to your tone of voice and body language as you communicate throughout the day. Body language and tone of voice are the FUEL for the words you speak, positive or negative! – Remember you speak with more than just words.

It's ok to make it fun, maybe at the dinner table tell everyone to use positive communication without using words.

Examples:

- ✓ High-Five to communicate "Way to go!"
- ✓ Praying hands to communicate gratitude
- ✓ Use direct eye contact to show interest and express connection.

Notice how people respond without telling them what you are doing. It might be giving your kids a hug for no reason or waving hello to a neighbor.

Reflection:

- What did you do?
- What did you notice? How did using tone and body language enhance your communication?
- How did you feel afterward?

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*And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but **encourage one another**, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. Hebrews 10:25*

Add to your Declarations these I AM Statements:

I AM a Good Communicator – I Am Encouraged - I AM an Encourager

Day 2 – Assertive Communication

Our goal is to learn how to be more assertive in our communication. This may be uncomfortable at first, however with practice it is very effective. To begin, let's look at what communication style you use most (refer to "Styles of Communication")

Based on the styles shared sit down and self-reflect on which style you tend to use the most. You may need to ask the people closest to you what style they see you use the most.

- a) What are your most common styles of communication?
- b) When are you most comfortable already using assertive communication?

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Identify a specific situation where you would like to improve using assertive communication. Visualize how the situation would unfold and what you would say using assertive communication.

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Make a commitment to move towards assertive communication. Invite others to hold you accountable.

I speak with all sincerity; I speak the truth. Job 33:3

The lips of the godly speak helpful words, but the mouth of the wicked speaks perverse words. Prov 10:32

Add to your Declarations any word that comes to mind, as well as these I AM Statements:

I AM Assertive – I Am Capable - I AM Using My Voice to Bless

Day 3 – Practice Active Listening

Today’s activity is to ask someone an open-ended question (that’s a question that requires more than a yes or no answer!). Your goal is to be curious and learn as much as possible about their perspective. Listen to understand: use active listens skills taught this week to listen, reflect back to them what you are hearing and affirm them for being transparent in their communication.

Reflection: What question did you ask? How was this experience for you? For the other person?

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Understand this, my dear brothers, and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. James 1:19

Add to your Declarations any word that comes to mind, as well as these I AM Statements:

I AM a Good Listener – I Am a Person Who Desires Understanding - I AM Kind

Day 4 – Empathy

Today, look for opportunities to exercise empathy. Use the skills taught in this pillar to practice and express empathy to someone who perhaps is not behaving well.

Think of a person that has done something that has hurt your feelings or communicated poorly. Maybe it is one of your children or a friend or colleague. There is an adage that “Hurt people hurt people”. Often if someone is behaving poorly, it is coming from pain that they are experiencing that may have little or nothing to do with you. Instead of reacting to their words, are you able to ask them what is going on in their life?

Sit down with them (or imagine doing so) and ask questions to understand their feelings (use active listening!), then take a moment to put yourself in their shoes by asking yourself how you would feel in the same situation. Then help them to be aware of how their feelings are impacting them and others (use “I” statements and de-escalate by using questions, not statements). Affirm them. Asking questions allows you to show empathy and use active listening to become curious about their perspective.

Reflection:

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Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Add to your Declarations any word that comes to mind, as well as these I AM Statements:

I AM Empathetic – I AM Affirming - I AM an Empowered –I AM LOVED

Day 5 – Conflict Resolution

For today's activity, take an unresolved issue that is not a major one but is irritating you. Take the 6 steps shared in this lesson and invite the person to sit down with you and resolve the conflict, ask for, and give forgiveness to one another.

Reflection: How was this experience for you? For the other person?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. Philippians 2:2

Add to your Declarations any word that comes to mind, as well as these I AM Statements:

I AM Forgiving – I Am Open - I AM a Minister of Reconciliation

Day 6 – Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Review the image of the four horsemen of the apocalypse in relationships. Which ones have you fallen into? You may want to invite your partner or someone close to you to sit down with you and ask them which ones you have used. Don't try to defend why, it is enough to acknowledge that it is not how you want to communicate going forward. Confess, ask for forgiveness and repent for each one you have operated in. Then declare that from this day forward you are choosing, gentleness, gratitude, responsibility, and healing!

Reflection: How was this experience for you? For the other person?

Click or tap here to enter text.

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. 1 John 1:9

Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. James 5:16

Add to your Declarations any word that comes to mind, as well as these I AM Statements:

I AM Gentle – I Am Grateful - I AM Healed

Day 7 – Day of Rest and reflection on the Goodness of God

Take time to acknowledge the work you have done this week to improve your communication. You have done important work this week and regardless of any specific outcomes, feel proud of the effort and progress you are making.

So, the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

Genesis 2:1-3