

Hanging out w/ God.... *Communicating*

Have you ever been in a conversation where you said one thing, but the person who was listening actually heard something different? Maybe your parents asked you to clean your room and when you said "in a minute" they actually heard "nope, not right now". Or maybe it was the opposite. Someone said something and you heard something different. Maybe you've been dating someone for a while and they say something to the extent of "well, I think we're better off as friends" or some variation of it. And you hear, "it's over, and I'm actually already more than friends with that person who lives closer". Other times we think we hear something that we didn't. You're on the team and the coach benches you; he says something to the extent of "you're doing too much and need the rest". What you think you hear is that "you're sorry and you need to sit your butt on that bench and let someone else take a shot. When really the coach might actually mean, "you *are* doing too much and you do need to take a day so that you're for the next game which could be more difficult".

What we say and what we hear can really have a huge impact and affect on our lives and relationships. So we are going to play a quick game tonight to help us see how what we mean and what we say can really be two different things.

Power Point Game...

I know that some of these phrases are out there, but when we are communicating whether it's with people or God, it's really important for us to understand three major things. The first thing is listening. That's where we were last week. The only way you can really connect with someone is to listen, shut up and listen to what they have to say. God really wants to connect with us; he likes us and wants to hang out with us. But most of the time we think we are too busy. Although God understands our business, it's hard for us to justify spending time doing all sorts of other things when we say God is the most important. I challenged you to take five minutes last week and just listen. Did anyone try it?

The second thing that is important to understand is the person you are talking to. In most cases it would not be appropriate to talk to your principle the same way you would talk to your friends. There are words you use with your friends that you wouldn't use with your principle. There are topics you talk about with your friends that you wouldn't talk about with your principle. In most cases you don't talk with your mom the same way you talk with your coach. That would just be creepy. There are different people in our lives who hold different places. Some of those people God's given authority to, over you. People like your parents have God given authority over you. You don't have to like it or believe it. But it's true. Scripture tells us that...

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Eph. 6:1-4)

You don't have to obey and honor your friends the same way God calls you to obey and honor your parents. Why? Two reasons, the first is because God set it up that way. The second is because you have a different relationship with your friends than you do your parents. It's not that one is bad and the other is good, although it could be. It's just that they are different. That's the way it's supposed to be. When relationships aren't like that, when your mom is more of a friend than a mom. Or your brother is more like a dad than a brother. Things usually get messed up in some sense or another. It's not that God hates that or anything; it's not like its sin. But everyone misses out on what God has for them in some sense when the roles are mixed up in the family. One of the ways you can tell that is by how you talk to people, do you talk to

your folks like God has put them in charge over you or do you blow them off like that boy or girl that you are "just friends" with now. Do you give your friends more say in your life than a trusted adult? Maybe a parent, a youth worker, pastor or just an adult that's somewhere in between. Most of our friends are not equipped to speak into our lives. So when we give them that opportunity chances are, at least in some sense they don't know what they are talking about. It's not always like that, but many times it is. They just haven't been around long enough.

The third thing that is important to remember when you are talking with someone is what you say. The average person speaks about 5-8 thousand words a day. That really isn't that much when you add in other forms of communication, texting, email, IM, etc. But the words we use to communicate are powerful and have the ability to impact our relationship with God and others.

I just want to point out a few verses to you that kind of give you some insight into how important our words are.

Ecc 5:2 Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few

Ecc 6:11 The more the words, the less the meaning, and how does that profit anyone?

Pr 16:28 A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.

1Th 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

Jas 3:4 ...take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. ^{Jas 3:5} Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts...

Jas 3:9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. ^{Jas 3:10} Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.

You see the words we use can build or tear down, the words we use can chart our course, and the words we use can have lasting effects on our relationships. That's why it's so important for each of us to...

Jas 1:19 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,

You see God's words gives some really important insights in the way we communicate with others and especially as we communicate with God. How do we communicate with God? Well the biblical term for it is prayer, but for some reason some of us get all weirded out when we start talking about prayer. We are ok to a certain extent it's a good thing, because to some extent it shows that we understand who we are talking to. After all He is God. He is the creator of the entire universe, powerful, Holy, righteous. Yea, it's definitely enough to weird us out. It gets weirder though, because of this. As different as we are from God, as much as we mess up, He still likes us and wants to connect with us. Pretty often we miss the second part. He likes us and wants to connect with us. He wants to hear from us, but we must, WE MUST, remember who we're talking to.

Think about it this way, sometimes you have a real casual conversation with your parents, teacher, coach. Phrases like, "Hey, how are you, what have you been up to, is there anything I can do?" Other times you know the tone changes, maybe you messed up, maybe they are trying to communicate something important, and maybe you are trying to get across something important. The tone changes, the conversation changes, the topic changes. This stuff happens

when you talk to people and it happens when you talk with God. We don't usually think like that though, I want to challenge you to think like that. Get away for a few minutes, get quiet and listen. As you listen, think about what you're hearing and talk about it *with* God. Too often I hear "I was talking to God" and I know what they mean, I even do it a lot. But we lose some of that understanding about who we are talking to. Do I really have any right to approach God? Not without Christ and the cross. When was the last time I thought about what Christ did? Does it affect me, do I really understand what a big deal it was? You see a pattern develops, and that pattern will lead you through the power of the Holy Spirit to talk with God instead of at him. Depending on what it is that you and God talk about, you'll know the best way to talk with him and the best way to respond.

As we close out tonight I want to show you a clip that will sort of give you a picture of some of the different ways people communicate with God.

<http://skitguys.com/videos/item/the-way-we-pray/>

The last part there, I think that really give us a good picture of what it looks like to listen to God, understand who we are talking to and talking with God like He is a real person. I want to read you this verse out of The Message that summarizes this concept well and then we'll close in prayer...

⁵"And when you come before God, don't turn that into a theatrical production either. All these people making a regular show out of their prayers, hoping for stardom! Do you think God sits in a box seat?"

⁶"Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace. ⁷⁻⁸"The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They're full of formulas and programs and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don't fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need. With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply (Mt. 6:5-8).

Suggested Discussion Concepts:

Talk about the craziest time you said something and somebody else heard something entirely different (or vice versa). It might spark their memories and encourage them to share.

Talk about your own prayer journey. How did you used to talk to God, did you at all? How do you talk to God now, the difference? How did you get there? It might spark their memory and encourage them to share.

Which character in the clip do you most identify with and why? Ask the students which one they most identify with and why? How hard is it to be yourself when you talk with God vs. talk with others is it harder, easier, the same? Why?

- If it's easier, should it be, why or why not?

After all you are talking to God you are not talking to an ordinary person?

- If it's harder, why?

After all he wants to connect with us.

- If it's the same, why?

What are some of the similarities and differences between talking with God and talking with people?

Please remember that there may not be a right answer for these questions, the purpose is discussion so that we all work through our salvation with fear and trembling... (Phil. 2:12-13)