

# 21 Days to More Godly Communication

It takes 21 days to make a habit. Why not make it count for God?

**SAMPLE**

By JoJo Tabares

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# Introduction

Hello and welcome to “*21 Days to More Godly Communication!*” This is quite a unique communication study for several reasons. First, it's the only communication course I am aware of that teaches everyday communication using the Bible as a source. Secondly, it's the only communication study I know of that gives you a format where you can actually build your communication skills through habit during every day activities and experiences. Lastly, it is the only communication study I know of that allows you to continue building your everyday, godly communication skills long after the end of the book by offering a link to ongoing articles/activities!

This study is designed to help you learn the lessons of effective communication that the Lord presents in scripture, while giving you insights as to how to apply these time-honored, Biblical tips to today's modern world. Each lesson is designed to be easy to read and apply, and to give modern day communicators the most information and experience in short lessons that fit into busy modern day schedules! The lessons are perfect for adults, teens and some preteens. So grab your older children and make it a family activity!

Before I start right in with our daily lessons, I want to share a little bit of background so you will be able to have a complete understanding of the importance and value of what you are about to embark upon in the next 21 days and beyond. After this I will share some general tips for more effective, godly communication.

I often pose this question when I teach seminars and it usually receives a positive response from my listeners. “How many believe communication skills are important today?” Almost everyone's hands go up, but when I ask how many have actually studied them or are actively teaching them to their children, most hands fall. I believe my next question explains this, “*Why* are communication skills important today?”

Most people do not fully understand why communication skills are important or appreciate that they are even more important today than ever before. Many think communication skills are really only necessary for lawyers and politicians. Therefore, they give into fear or “busy-ness” and choose not to spend time in the pursuit of communication mastery. However, research shows that communication skills are increasingly important for every day life in areas of marriage, relationships, career, school and even personal happiness. Before we begin our study, I want to share a little about each of the major reasons why communication skills are so important today.

## **1. The way we communicate reveals who we are.**

How we speak to others communicates who we are to those around us. Not only do people judge each of us based on our behavior, but they judge who we represent. This is why even football teams have some rules of conduct! This is why there are consequences in the military for “Conduct unbecoming an officer.” This is why when a professing Christian isn't gracious, an Atheist says, “Well, if that's a Christian, I sure don't want to be one!” Some of us are the only Bible that person will ever read. Our example and the impression we leave others with is a reflection not only on us, personally, but on Christians and on Jesus.

## **2. It's a global world!**

Modern technology allows us to communicate with more people from all over the world via phone, internet, social media and texting. The world just got bigger and the world is filled with people of many different religious or cultural beliefs and worldviews which we can now talk to on a daily basis. This makes our communication more difficult as it bridges the gaps in word usage, ideas and values. The combination of our new found ability to communicate with the world and our lack of communication training has brought about many disagreements and created a world where people are much more likely to take offense. Godly communication is needed in order to help build those bridges, allowing us to come to an understanding in order to share our ideas in a way that is more effective.

## **3. Civility is becoming a lost art!**

Technology now allows people to communicate in relative anonymity. We no longer have to look our adversary in the eyes as we disagree with them. This has allowed us to have a disconnection that allows us to communicate in a way that was previously deemed rude if it were done face to face. Further, the idea that we all have free speech in America has blossomed into a new era of a lack of attention to civility we

now call honesty. What we don't always understand is that our honesty in our freedom of speech has consequences that take the form of offense and retaliation.

In our haste to post on Facebook or reply to a blog post before we cross off any more items on our To Do List, we don't always consider that the person on the receiving end of our scathing but honest remarks has real feelings and is as justified in them as we in ours. Hateful words give way to arguments which may have fallout far beyond just the two involved in the dispute.

#### **4. Separation of Church and State.**

Separation of Church and State has become a popular reason to avoid a discussion on religious issues and has actually fueled the fire leading to increased distaste for Jesus and Christianity. This makes discussing morals or certain political issues increasingly difficult. It also creates an atmosphere of fear in the eyes of the Christian such that they choose not to speak up or share their beliefs and the Gospel. These days Jesus is a rather taboo subject. Even some who profess to be Christian feel there should not be public displays and discussions of religion.

#### **5. A false sense of effectiveness.**

Technological advances in communications have created the false impression that we are actually communicating well, but we often mistake communication technology for communication effectiveness. Additionally, the shortcuts, which are often accepted and encouraged in texting and email, have caused a decline in our communication skill as a people. Grammar and spelling errors abound in the corporate world, including CEOs! Just look at some of the blog posts, Facebook and Twitter entries. Errors in word choice, grammar or even spelling are often the cause of miscommunication and/or hurt feelings.

#### **6. Too busy for our friends.**

The speed of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has affected our attention spans. Modern communicators seldom have time to pay attention to the details of an email, the thing left unsaid in a phone call and the body language of a friend in need. These oversights result in anemic relationships. We don't know our neighbors unless they give loud parties, we don't keep in touch with extended family who have moved away more and more due to technological advances in transportation. Working two jobs, or moms working part time from home, has caused a drop in free time, but also in our willingness to help a friend, listen to a neighbor or sometimes even our own children.

I have one last part I want to share with you before we dig into our scripture lessons and that is a short list of general communication tips for speaking in grace. I cover the following topics in much more depth in other communication studies and we will cover these as tips as they relate to each lesson as the study progresses. These few tips will point you in the right direction as we begin our study of godly communication.

#### **Godly Communication Tips to Keep in Mind:**

1. Know Your Audience. A term I use to denote gaining as much of an understanding of the person(s) you are communicating with in order to better understand how to do so. Paul wrote about how important it is to relate to those with whom we communicate: *"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."* -1 Corinthians 9:19-22
2. Speak out of love and keep an attitude of grace about you, especially in times of disagreement and misunderstanding.
3. Take time with people and don't rush an encounter, especially if it is on a topic of a sensitive nature like politics or religion.
4. Understand that there will be differences of opinion, even among those close to you, and apply, whenever possible, the idea that you can disagree without being disagreeable!

5. Choose your words carefully. *"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."* Proverbs 25:11
6. Listen carefully. *"He who answers before listening-that is his folly and his shame."* Proverbs 18:13
7. Answer prayerfully.

### **Godly Tips to Avoid/Resolve Conflicts.**

Almost all conflicts under heaven are caused or are exacerbated by communication problems. Studies show that misunderstandings cause not only hurt feelings and anger, but often violence as well. Conflicts can destroy a marriage or a friendship. Misunderstandings can cause a conflict and they can build a small disagreement into a wall that will not allow a relationship to continue. Mistrust, fear and pain often follow conflict and they can be formidable opponents, even in the face of conflict resolution. The best way to deal with conflict is to avoid it all together. Here are a few communication tips for avoiding conflicts.

1. Speakers should be clear to say what they mean and mean what they say. Don't get lazy in choosing your words or lax in working to speak directly to the unique individual God has put in front of you. God didn't make Cookie-Cutter People and one size does NOT fit all!
2. Use words such as "I feel" or "I believe" instead of "You should" when talking about topics with which you disagree.
3. Use words such as "I feel" instead of "You make me feel" when confronting a disagreement.
4. Use specific examples instead of "You always" or "You never" when discussing a conflict issue.
5. Be sure to get your facts straight and do not exaggerate. Exaggeration can not only cause misunderstandings, but also a distrust in the speaker for not being careful with facts.
6. Ask your listener if he/she understands what you are trying to say to make sure there are no misunderstandings. Perhaps ask your listener to summarize what you said or repeat it back to you to make sure you are on the same page.
7. Listeners should utilize active listening skills in order to notice things that add to the communication, such as body language, eye contact, gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice. In addition, it's helpful to notice things left unsaid or read between the lines.
8. Listeners should give the speaker their full attention and not try to listen while washing dishes or watching TV. First, this communicates a disregard for the speaker and, second, it allows for distractions that can cause misinterpretation and misunderstandings. Another form of this is what we call "Listening with your answer running" which is not paying full attention to the speaker because you are busy going over your speech in you head as you wait for a break in the speaker's voice for the opportunity to speak.
9. Listeners should ask questions for clarification to make sure that something was actually meant as an offense before he or she acts on it in retaliation.
10. Both speaker and listener should act as if the offense was not intended until proven otherwise. We often jump to conclusions based on a misunderstanding and involve ourselves in a full conflict before we realize that there was not conflict at all. By that time, however, irreversible damage may have already been done to the relationship.
11. Once conflicts arise, be open to discussion, remain in grace and look for opportunities to resolve them.

The truth is that you may live your entire life without making a speech, but you won't get through one day without communicating something to someone. The most important communication isn't the speech you'll give to a crowd. It's the conversations you'll share with friends and family. The Bible is filled with thousands of scriptures about

communication with our tongues, our mouths, and our lips. They are all about how we treat one another and how we should talk to one another in grace. These scriptures are about listening, discernment, when to keep silent, when to speak up, why and how.

It is evident from His Word that God thinks communication with each other is vitally important. Secular research and surveys agree! Studies show that effective communicators do better in school, are more successful in their careers, have deeper relationships, longer lasting marriages and are generally happier than their less articulate counterparts.

How we communicate with each other determines the strength of our relationships and the power of our influence. The Lord shares with us scriptures which tell us that nothing is as powerful as the way in which we communicate to someone...not our good intentions nor our reputation. We cannot accurately say what we mean without first learning how to approach the subject. They say nobody cares about what we know until they know how much we care. However, there is no way to convey our sincerity unless it is with good, effective and articulate communication. One cannot share a truth effectively unless it is in love and one cannot convey that love without grace.

So how can God's Word help us in today's society? How these scriptures apply to us in the modern world can be a bit complicated, but they are just as true today (and sometimes even more valuable) as they were when they were first written down!

They say it takes 21 days to make a habit. In the next 21 days, this series of lessons will help you make a habit of communicating with the grace and wisdom God talks about in the scriptures. In addition to these 21 lessons, I have a special bonus for you. Each month or two, I will continue to help you learn to speak in grace, by posting another communication article on a secret page of the Art of Eloquence website. You will be able to see all of the articles I have so far on godly communication by clicking here:

### **Link Unavailable in Sample**

**Note:** This is a sampling of excerpts from some of the lessons found in *21 Days to More Godly Communication*. To order the full version which includes the link to all the bonus article/lessons, click here:

<http://artofeloquence.com/store/adults/21Days>

May this study bring blessings to your relationships so they honor and communicate the love of God.

*JoJo Tabares*

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# Day 1: A Word Fitly Spoken

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." -Proverbs 25:11



This is my signature verse so I thought I'd start with it. I love this verse. It reminds me that our words are precious. We shouldn't just throw them out there and hope they stick. We should take care to choose our words wisely and craft our conversation with wisdom, tailoring it to the unique individual and particular situation at hand.

**Being an effective communicator is more important today than it ever was before. WHY?**

## **1. We are now communicating with the world.**

Technology has given us the ability to communicate with people around the world. With one click of a mouse we can send our words anywhere. We need to remember that these unseen people are human beings from different cultures, backgrounds and experiences who see the world in a unique way.

God doesn't make Cookie-Cutter People and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to communicating effectively. It is critical that our words are a good "fit".

## **2. Misinformation abounds.**

Precisely *because* it is so easy for someone to express their opinions to the world, it is equally as simple to express *misinformation*. We have come to understand that just because it is written in the paper or reported by a newscaster, it is not necessarily true or accurate. The media is famous for twisting the truth and reporting whatever serves its agenda. We need, also, to understand that whatever is typed into a blog or an article on the internet may not be "the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

In today's society, it is often necessary to explain or clear up misunderstandings people have. This isn't as easy to do these days because there are more "hot topics" than there used to be. Politics and religion are no longer the only topics to "stay away from in polite company". Today's society has an emotional reaction to many topics, including homeschooling, evolution, gun control, global warming, vaccinations, etc.

Today's discussions require much more communication skill to overcome the knee-jerk emotional reactions that inevitably follow any mention of many of these topics.

## **3. People are busy.**

Today's woman is busy! Aside from the housework and children, she is usually working, as well (outside or inside the home). Today's husband may have to work more than one job to make ends meet. People no longer have the time to investigate issues thoroughly. They rely more and more on the media and, as I said, the media has their own agenda to promote. They no longer give you, as Sgt Friday used to say, "Just the facts, Ma'am." The media infuses their "truth" with opinion, sound bites and misinformation.

It takes much more communication skill to respectfully break through some of these deeply-held, accepted beliefs. It also takes more time, time people generally don't have to wade through all the information out there and discover the truth. They're busy keeping their family together and making ends meet.

## **4. Respectful discourse is no longer in fashion.**

If you read the words of our forefathers you will notice that, although they may have disagreed vehemently with someone, they usually did so with respect and in grace. Not so these days.

Because there is so much information (and misinformation) thrown at us while we are busier than ever, there is more of a frustration with life today. Because much of the information we get is from faceless sources (TV, internet, email, billboards) we are no longer coming face-to-face with a human being. There is a justification, or even almost an entitlement, to respond to someone out of frustration and disrespect. You will not persuade another by cutting off his argument. You will only stifle your understanding of how to answer him.

I remember waiting in line behind a red light in the left turn lane a few years ago. The woman behind me got out of her car, walked around to my driver's side window and began screaming her head off at me! I remember her being behind me for several blocks prior to that. She came into view when the car in front of her changed lanes. I had no idea what she was so upset about and I dared not open my window to find out! When the light changed to green, she got back in her car and went on her way.

Road rage is only one of the many ways in which society has come to express their anger and frustration. It is much less common for someone to do something so violent in person, but over the internet where you don't need to look into the eyes of your victim, people are much more likely to "fly off the handle".

It takes much more communication skill to handle the typical "Nasty Grams" we get today.

#### **5. Anti-Christian bias is in fashion.**

More and more each day, Christians are told to sit down and be quiet about Jesus. Just the mere mention of the name of our Lord and Savior brings anger to some. More and more college professors and even high school teachers feel justified in spouting hatred of Christians, our beliefs and our Lord. More and more, God is being taken out of our society in the name of "separation of church and state." Even young Christian children may have to handle a question or negative comment (in school or even on the playground) about their faith. It is no longer a matter of *if* a Christian will be asked to defend his faith, but *when*.

God tells us to share the Good News. We can't do that without communicating. When we communicate, whether it be to share or defend our faith, express our political ideas or even just to have a conversation with someone in line at the grocery store, we cannot just throw our words out there and hope for the best.

The Lord tells us how we are to use the power of the tongue. Throughout the Bible, He shares how we are to speak with one another. Each of us is a unique creation of God who sees the world from a different perspective. It takes much more skill to communicate than it used to. We need to learn to share our thoughts and ideas in today's world. Later on in the study, we will discuss specific words or phrases that will help us speak in grace but, for now, the first step is to understand that our words are precious.

A word fitly spoken can be a gift we give to others as we share our lives and experiences with them.

#### **Today's Godly Habit-Forming Assignment:**

There is nothing in the Bible that the Lord didn't mean to be there. There is nothing in His Word that was not spoken on purpose. His words are perfect and God always says what He means. Our attempts to say what we mean take a bit more practice, especially if we are to aspire to godly communication.

This week, I challenge you to be purposeful in all you say and do. From now forward, take a bit of time before you speak or write to make sure, as best you can, that your words are fitly spoken.

Before you hit that send button on your computer, before you get back to your boss, before you discipline your children, before you confront a friend, before you share something with your neighbor, stop and think if what you are about to communicate is fitly spoken. Would it serve your purpose to use gentler words? Would it be more clear to use precise language rather than vague generalizations? What words could you replace that would make your message better understood? You don't need to spend a great deal of time pouring over dictionaries, but do pause and ask yourself how you can best present your message, taking into account your audience for just a minute before you send your communication out to touch another.



# Day 20: Be Ready to Give an Answer

*"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:" 1Peter 3:15*



We communicate for various reasons: to share information, to gain information, to fellowship and to entertain, although the most important reason for us to communicate is to share the Gospel. We can become as eloquent as a politician and as successful as a millionaire, but if we haven't shared God's love with those who don't know Him, we don't understand this verse. Let's look at this verse a little closer.

Right up front He tells us to "sanctify the Lord" in our hearts. Sanctify means to consecrate, to set aside for a sacred purpose. We are to hold a sacred place in our hearts for the Lord for He is Holy and His words are precious. Anything precious should be treasured and something treasured should be given proper attention.

Next He tells us to "be ready". When we get ready to go out, we need to prepare. We get dressed, gather our things we are to take, etc. Being ready to share our faith with someone also means being prepared. It takes educating ourselves about the Lord, His Word and how to share it. This takes practice. We cannot just throw any old words at the unsaved and hope they stick.

The very next word the Lord uses here is "always". How often are we to be ready? Not just one time, but always! Every time. Preparing for a test takes some effort. Preparing to enter that field takes much MORE preparation! The Lord isn't asking us to be prepared to share our faith with one man or one person a month. He is asking us always to be prepared to share our faith. *That* requires much more communication skill because each situation is different.

Next this verse tells us that we are to be prepared to share our faith with "every man". God doesn't make Cookie-Cutter-People. Each person sees the world differently. Each of us comes from a particular culture with different experiences and beliefs. No two people see things in quite the same way so we cannot approach each person the same way-especially about something as precious as the Lord. Advertising agencies understand this concept. They often create different ads for the same product to appeal to different customers. One segment of their customers may place value on the brand name and the sleek look of the car, while another segment may value its gas mileage. It takes much more time and money to prepare two ad campaigns, but the results are worth it. One size does NOT fit all.

I find it interesting that He says "to anyone who asketh you". I've read the Bible through several times and nowhere in God's Word have I found where God forced Himself on anyone. Jesus met with great resistance. He had great power here on earth to heal. Surely Jesus could have made people believe! He asked the rich man to follow him, but he wasn't willing to give up what he had. Jesus never even argued with him. He just let him walk away. If Jesus didn't force anyone to become a Christian, who are we to do so?

Furthermore, the Lord tells us to do so with meekness and fear. Contrary to what many believe, meekness does not mean being weak or wimpy. Meekness is gentleness. This is an emphasis, I believe, on the fact that we are not to push people or argue with them about the Lord. We are to be gentle as we share and respectful of the choices others may make, even if we don't agree with them. How we share our faith is a reflection not only of us, but of our Lord. There is a danger in sharing our faith the "wrong way," understanding that the wrong way for one may be the perfect way for another. Sharing our faith in a way that angers or frustrates or confuses someone may close the door on any other opportunity you have to share with that person again. But even more damaging, sharing your faith the wrong way may close the door on EVERYONE who shares in ANY way about Jesus.

Lastly, you will notice that this is not a suggestion; it's a command. God's choice of words is purposeful. It's not an option. It's not easy, but then the Lord never said life as a Christian would be easy. In fact, He tells us that we will be persecuted for His namesake. Sharing the faith was never easy and it's more difficult today than it has been in the past. However, there are things we can do to become proficient at it. There are things we can learn that make it easier. The more you learn about something and the more you practice, the easier it becomes. How long did it take you to learn to speak, walk, play football, crochet, or do your job? Wasn't it worth it in the end?

Sharing our faith is a command from the Lord so that all have a chance to come to the saving knowledge of Christ Jesus. Today's world is more complicated and, therefore, so is our job. The good news is that we can prepare. We can learn God's Word so that we can be ready always to give an answer. The trick is that knowledge of God's Word is not enough. We need to understand how to approach each person as an individual. I think that is where many of these programs fall short. It isn't enough to know God's Word, we must be able to articulate it to "every man who asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

**Today's Godly Habit-Forming Assignment:**

Along with all the other godly communication habits you are forming, this one is of utmost importance. Take the time to educate yourself on how to share the Gospel and defend the faith in grace. Take the opportunities God presents you with to speak out in love and in a way that meets the needs of the individual. Think about what this person needs and pray that God will give you the tools you need to convey His love that will speak directly to the person. There are several articles on my blog and on my website that talk about this. The Lord inspired me to write a study on just this topic. I encourage you today to check it out and see how you and your family might benefit from my experience. You'll find the tools you need on our Defending the Faith page here:

<http://artofeloquence.com/store/DefendingtheFaith> including an article that gives you an overview of the book.

## Helpful Resources

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