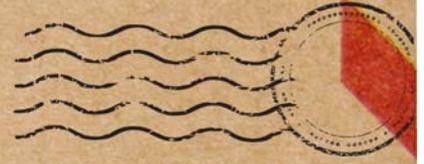


Wish you were
HERE

May 7 & 8

Communicating for Connection

Chip Uhrmacher, Family Ministry Pastor



Introduction

While you might not recognize his name, you will certainly recognize the commercial performances of Paul Marcarelli. From struggling actor to the famous "test guy" in Verizon phone commercials, Paul brought America the catchphrase, "Can you hear me now?" For the nine years he played this role, he was bound by contract to never speak of his on-air performances. Looking back on his career, he reveals how his ad celebrity robbed him of his own freedom of speech, such that few knew what he really wanted to say. In this week's message, we learn how communication is critical to our lives and how it can be framed in competition, criticism or connection. In John 4, Jesus demonstrates how we can connect with others as He encounters a Samaritan woman on His trip to the village well. Our attitude and care in connecting with others will assure them the answer to "Can you hear me now?" is "Yes!" When that happens, real communication begins.

Discussion

Read John 4:1-26 and discuss the following questions.

1. In verses 1-9, how does Jesus demonstrate humility in his initial encounter with the woman? Do you ever feel like someone is trying to dominate the conversation when the two of you are together? What is our natural response when this happens? How does humility help to foster better communication on spiritual and other issues?
2. From verses 10-15, how does Jesus show His listening skills when responding to the woman's question? Share one person whom you would consider a good listener in your life. What kind of impact has he/she had on you? How do we practice the art of effective listening while also looking for opportunities to speak the good news of Christ?
3. How does Jesus reveal the woman's spiritual issues in verses 16-19? When are some times when it's appropriate for us to be blunt when discussing spiritual matters with those we encounter? What is the fine line between criticism and speaking the truth with grace?

Think About It

Modern communication has morphed into an odd mix of electronic transmissions. Consider these words of professor and author, Sherry Turkle. "We are tempted to think that our little 'sips' of online connection add up to a big gulp of real conversation. But they don't. E-mail, Twitter, Facebook, all of these have their places But no matter how valuable, they do not substitute for conversation. Connecting in sips may work for gathering discrete bits of information or for saying, 'I am thinking about you'.... But connecting in sips doesn't work as well when it comes to understanding and knowing one another." Is it time to take stock and re-think how we are "communicating" with others? What would Jesus do?

Do Something

1. Let's face it... Most of us will be giving or receiving some "truth with grace" messages this week. Take time to prepare for how to give or receive the message. Pray about the people you need to approach and for the people who may need to approach you.
2. Practice listening in at least three conversations this week. Do this by resisting the temptation to talk more than you listen. Take note of how the other person reacts to your listening.
3. Make plans as a group to be intentional in communicating with each other over the summer. Plan some outings without distractions - afternoon at a park, evening around a campfire, before-work coffee meeting, etc.

