

# Art of Eloquence

Communication Studies For Homeschoolers



## Week 1: Introduction

***"A wise man's heart guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction."  
Pr. 16:23***

Everything you say, everything you do, everything you wear, the groups you belong to, even the food you choose to eat communicates something about you to others. You convey your strengths and weaknesses, your likes and dislikes. Some choices communicate important things about you: like how you treat others and some communicate insignificant things. Learning to communicate effectively is important.

Sometimes the most important subjects are simply not taught in school. Public schools are not allowed to teach about God or the Bible. Most schools, public or private, do not attempt to teach critical thinking skills. And precious few spend much time teaching students to express themselves well.

One of the most important skills anyone can learn to cultivate is communication. How well you express yourself will directly impact how well you do in life. Communication skills are not only essential for lawyers and politicians, but for everyone. A doctor with bad communication skills might worry his patient needlessly. An employee who has not learned how to communicate with his superiors may never be considered for a promotion despite her qualifications. A company may never hire a potential employee because he didn't make a good impression during the interview. A friend may hurt another's feelings because of the way that he made the comment.

Most often it is not as much what you say as it is a matter of how you say it. Have you ever complimented someone and had them walk away mad? "Wow! What happened to your hair? It looks so much better than it usually does!" You can see that the speaker's intention to compliment his friend would be overshadowed by his unfortunate choice of words.

Communication is a skill that can be cultivated. There is no absolute right or wrong way to communicate, but during the next 18 weeks you will learn how to increase your odds of saying what you mean.

# Course Outline

## I) What is communication?

A. Definitions of communication

B. Kinds of communication

1. Verbal communication
2. Non verbal communication

C. Forms of communication

1. Verbal forms
2. Written forms

## II) Why do we communicate?

A. To gather information

B. To give information

C. Persuasion/witness about God

## III) What makes a good communicator?

## IV) Who were good communicators?

## V) Persuasion

A. Know your audience

B. Be a good listener

C. Be articulate

D. Get the facts straight

E. Credibility

F. Confidence

G. Personality

## VI) Life Skills

A. Answering the phone

B. Answering the door

C. Giving directions

D. Describing a task/job

E. Relaying a message

F. Showing appreciation

G. Manners

H. Job interviews

## VII) Project due

## Week 10

***"A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." Pr. 25:11***

### **C) Develop your skills**

Great communicators have developed large vocabularies and continually strive for succinct and powerful ways to persuade their audiences

#### **1. Vocabulary**

The more words you know, the more you have to choose from. Some situations will require informal language-even slang in order to relate better to your audience. Some situations will require more formal or technical language.

The best way to increase your vocabulary is to adopt a policy of never letting an unknown word get by you. Whenever you encounter a word that you are unfamiliar with, look it up in the dictionary or ask your parents what it means and how to use it. It is not enough to just know what a word means. You should know how it is generally used. Some words you may encounter should not be used at all!

#### **2. Connotation**

Some words are offensive to certain people. They have a bad connotation or meaning attached to them. You will want to choose another word to use in its place for this audience. That same word may not have a bad connotation to another group of people. Some words have a negative meaning to most everyone. This is another reason why you need to be aware of how a word is used and not just what the word means. For example, the word feisty (full of spunk or spirit) has a more positive meaning than the word belligerent (hostile).

I hope I grow to be a "feisty elderly lady" and not a "belligerent old bat".

#### **3. Slang/technical jargon**

Since your goal in communication is to make yourself understood, you would not want to speak in a way that would make that goal more difficult. For example, most people would agree that it would be futile to speak German to a typical American or that it makes no sense to give directions to your home over the phone with sign language. But are you aware that using slang or technical jargon is akin to speaking a different language? Consider the following:

*Lawyer: "I hereby give and convey to you all and singular, my estate and interests, rights, claim, title, claim and advantages of and in, said orange, together with all its rind, juice, pulp and seeds, and all rights and advantages with full power to bite, cut, freeze and otherwise eat, the same, or give the same away with and without the pulp, juice, rind and seeds, anything herein before or hereinafter or in any deed, or deeds, instruments of whatever nature or kind whatsoever to the contrary in any ways notwithstanding."*

Translation: *"Here's an orange."*

If you were addressing a group of scientists, you would want to use technical jargon so that you would relate better to them. You would probably need to do some research in order to be able to use those terms correctly. The same would be true if you were addressing a group of doctors, lawyers, plumbers or electricians.

#### **4. Making your argument easy to follow.**

So now you know your audience, you are a better listener, you have developed your vocabulary and have learned to be careful to use words and their connotations to your advantage. You have learned when it is appropriate to use technical jargon or slang. Now you must learn how to make your argument easy to follow.

Sometimes you may find that what comes out of your mouth (or off your pen) doesn't make as much sense as it did when it was in your head. Since no one else is in your head, you must learn to say what you mean. Consider the following:

*"I am forwarding my marriage certificate and six children I have seven but one died which was baptized on a half sheet of paper."*

*"I am forwarding my marriage certificate and three children, one of which is a mistake as you can see."*

*"He spoke with the wisdom that can only come from experience, like a guy who went blind because he looked at a solar eclipse without one of those boxes with a pinhole in it and now goes around the country speaking at high schools about the dangers of looking at a solar eclipse without one of those boxes with a pinhole in it."*

*"John and Mary had never met. They were like two hummingbirds who also never met."*

Making things easy to follow means that you punctuate correctly so that the reader knows where to pause, what is the subject of the sentence etc. It also means that you need to lead the reader or listener in a straight line to your point and not in circles all around it.

The following are a few rules of writing that I found floating around the internet circuit. They illustrate how not to do things:

1. Verbs HAS to agree with their subjects.
2. It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
3. Be more or less specific.
4. Also too, never, ever use repetitive redundancies.
5. No sentence fragments.
6. Don't use no double negatives.
7. Use words correctly, irregardless of how others use them.
8. Use the apostrophe in it's proper place and omit it when its not needed.
9. Proofread carefully to see if you any words out.
10. Place pronouns as close as possible, especially in long sentences, as of 10 or more words, to their antecedents.

My family and I were going to the mall one Saturday when we spotted a man sitting at a corner holding a sign that said "Don't trust your loyalties to a bully." We had to stop at the light before turning and so had time to look around to see if we could get a clue about what he was talking about. He was at a four-way stoplight where there were mostly office buildings. He had apparently been out there all day long because he was sunburned and falling asleep. My thought was, if you are willing to sit on a street corner all day for a cause you believe in so strongly and hold a sign to inform others of your plight, it might be a good idea if they were able to understand what it was.

#### **5. Learn to use an outline.**

A tool that can help you make your persuasion easy to follow is an outline. It helps you organize your thoughts. I usually start my books with an outline. Then I fill in the outline with substance and back it up with facts. If you were telling a story, you would have an outline that went from the beginning, middle to the end. If you were talking about history, you might want the outline to be chronological. If you were persuading someone of something, you might want to start with the main points and fill in each point with the substance and facts that back them up. Look back at my course outline to get an idea of what I mean.

## **Week 10 Homework**

Do #1 and 2 of the following:

1. Make an outline of your topic's arguments.
2. Look up any words in this book that you are unfamiliar with.
3. List all the organizations or groups you belong to that use jargon. (Ex. Christians)
4. Rewrite the following so that they are easier to understand and follow:

"Please excuse Sarah for being absent. She was sick and I had her shot."