

Classroom Guidance Newsletter

Lesson Seven: Communication/Language

Dear Parents,

In Lesson Seven, the students learned the importance of good communication/language skills (particularly as they relate to conflict resolution). The art of listening is demonstrated in the Bible in different ways. Not only does humankind attempt to listen to God, but God also listens to humankind. Plus, people are advised to listen to one another. "We should be quick to listen and slow to speak." (James 1:19) Just because a person is speaking does not mean he is being listened to. More than anyone else, God is aware of this fact.

Repeatedly, prophets acting as God's representatives urge people to listen. Jesus, for example, said: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 11:15) The art of listening is fundamental to your growth, according to the Bible. It states: "He who answers before listening--that is his folly and his shame." (Proverbs 18:13) The Bible notes the pitfall of turning a deaf ear to the Word of God: "Stop listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge." (Proverbs 19:27)

Closely tied in with the skill of listening is the ability to express oneself in a nonabrasive and affirming manner. After all, "Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." (Proverbs 12:18) Wise people think before they speak; in so doing they select words that nurture rather than destroy. When faced with hostility they speak gently, so as to subdue anger rather than stoke it (Proverbs 15:1). Proverbs 18:2 demonstrates that the one-sided communicator comes off looking foolish: "A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions." Because we have been created in the likeness of God, we are personal, relational, communicating beings. Our speech can be a source of blessing or injury to others.

Communication/language skills were reinforced with activities that focused on active listening, verbal communication ("I" messages, tone of voice), nonverbal communication (body language, facial expressions), communication "potholes", the differences between arguments and discussions, fact versus opinion, and point of view.

Why Teaching Communication/Language Skills is Important During the Elementary School Years

Communication training is vitally important for elementary school students. Communication skills help children develop healthy interpersonal relationships, evaluate mediated messages, and learn to present themselves in effective and competent ways to others. Elementary school is an important time for developing effective communication skills. During this time, children are exploring language and message choices, learning about emotions, trying to navigate peer pressure, and building a sense of self. It is often assumed that children will learn communication skills on their own without any formal training. Yet, we know that more formalized instruction about communication is beneficial for children and their futures.

The importance of providing early training in communication skills grows increasingly evident. Our society has rapidly evolved from a culture which was production- or manufacturing-focused into one in which workers interact with each other, and with information. In this shift toward knowledge-focused work, life and career success will depend more heavily on the development of solid communication competencies. A variety of communication skills consistently top lists of what employers consider the most desirable personal traits. These skills needed to succeed in the world of work can be cultivated in early education. For the elementary student, communication training can help with a variety of problems. These problems can range from bullying to negative peer pressure, and communication training at an early age can help smaller problems from becoming larger problems in later years.

Ways Parents Can Help Their Children Develop Communication/Language Skills

Good communication skills build confidence. Encourage your child to talk about experiences, feelings, and ideas. Develop good listening skills by having them repeat stories, songs, and directions. Take time to listen without interruption or criticism. Your patience will build trust. Practice caring language with your child. Sensitivity to needs (theirs and others) will grow. Most importantly, they will gain the courage to speak up clearly and non-violently for what is fair. Congratulate your child when you hear them using caring language. Children get angry easily because they lack the communication skills they need to deal with frustrating situations. Discuss your child's feelings, especially when they seem distressed and angry. Encourage your child to talk, write, and draw about feelings. Help your child develop sensitivity towards the feelings of others.

Communication/Language Resources

- <http://www.thechristianwoman.com/articles/christian-family/child-communication.html>
- <http://www.focusas.com/ListeningSkills.html>
- http://parentingmethods.suite101.com/article.cfm/parenting_listening_skills
- http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:JFX8-ezOMgYJ:www.love2live.com.au/articles/TalkSoyourChildrenListenPPP2.pdf+children,+i+messages&hl=en&q=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESi_-EbZ-zATwEsdsAOqf1zuCsQpTPcGHfvX7yHuELHMCUUKKabo7bpUxxhAwHDMaSsrq3GhUNEoMHpehHAq5KDwHKXLvalU6Kv2n1SPRj0mZBwyJitj0g3_RFGO5dp3qZsBKBaC&sig=AHIEtbTHXBf4CQr5CNaBGHuFggO29J2Xwg

Sincerely,
Heidi Jolliffe
Classroom Guidance Coordinator