

The Dangers of Assumptive Communication

I. What is Assumptive Communication?

- “Assumptive Communication” refers to communication between two or more people where we are either A. Required to make assumptions about what is being said, or B. We make assumptions about what is being said even when we’re not required to.
 - According to Merriam-Webster, an assumption is “assuming that something is true.” And they define assume as “to take as granted or true,” to “suppose.”
- **Assumptive Communication happens because our communication is imprecise.**
 - Most of the words used in average conversations, require that the other person either ask for more clarity or simply fill in the missing information—whether they realized they were doing it or not.
 - But we don’t only do this when we’re required to because of a lack of specificity.
- **Assumptive Communication happens because its easier for us to take for granted that people think the way we do.**
 - Genesis 3
 - As sinful human beings, we are not only foolish, we’re wicked, lazy, and dead-set on our own destruction. We run headlong into folly and pain, and were it not for the Holy Spirit, we would all destroy ourselves.
 - It’s incredibly easy for us to enter most conversations assuming not only what the person is saying, but why they’re saying it. We just take for granted that we know what’s true about the person and the ideas they’re trying to give us . . . and we far too often assume *all the wrong things*, believing our assumptions to be true and responding accordingly.

II. How can we avoid Assumptive Communication?

- **Communicate for understanding.**
 - Proverbs 12:18 tells us that “*A fool does not delight in understanding, But only in revealing his own mind.*” The Legacy Standard Bible says, “*A fool does not delight in discernment.*”
 - This is the very crux of what we’re talking about today. When we fail to communicate for understanding, we’re failing to be discerning. We’re being fools. All we care about it whatever is in our own minds. And—of course—that attitude is easily going to assume that everyone is communicating from the same starting point we are.
- **Ask for clarification.**
 - Asking for clarification is helpful, but there’s another version of this that is more like saying back to the other person what we think we hear them saying. Either of those would have quickly clarified the misunderstanding on my part.
 - Later in Proverbs 18:13 we read, “*He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him.*” We so often do that when we form conclusions in our mind about what is true without really hearing (or asking) what’s being said.
- **Speak carefully.**
 - Proverbs 25:11 tells us that a word spoken in right circumstances is like apples of gold in settings of silver. The idea of speaking a word in right circumstances has to do with saying what needs to be said when it needs to be said.
 - This is very similar to the truth we learn in Proverbs 15:23, “*A man has joy in an apt answer, And how delightful is a timely word!*”

- We need to strive to communicate all the necessary information for peak understanding in the moment. That requirement will be different as we communicate with different people, but if it's the focus of our communication, then we will be quick to consider how best to communicate carefully.
- **Speak to glorify God.**
 - I Corinthians 2:14-16 reads, *“a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. 15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. 16 For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.”*
 - Christ-honoring, biblically accurate communication is beyond the grasp of those who are spiritually dead. Therefore, we need to strive to conform our minds to the mind of Christ, but we also need to teach our families to know and understand the things of God.
 - Our families will be set up for far more success when we root our communication in concepts and motivations that come from the Bible.