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Committed to Communicate

Do you ever have a hard time communicating? Do you ever have a hard time getting other people to understand you?

Once there was a heavy fog out on the ocean. On that ocean was a US Warship. Because the fog was so heavy, the ship was using its instrumentation to find its way along, when all of a sudden the radioman told the captain of the ship that something was up head.

The captain said, "Contact them and tell them to turn 15 degrees to the north."

The radioman did and the message came back, "You turn 15 degrees to the South."

The captain, became a bit miffed and ordered his radioman to contact them again and repeat the order, "turn 15 degrees to the North". The radioman did and again the message came back, "You turn 15 degrees to the south."

The captain now became mad and grabbed the controls and said, "Turn 15 degrees to the North." Again the message came back, "You turn 15 degrees to the South."

Now the captain was really upset. He simply wasn't used to people not listening to him. He said, "Look, this is a captain of a US Navy Warship. If you want to avoid a collision, you turn 15 degrees to the North."

This time the message came back, "Hello Captain. This is a lighthouse. If you want to avoid a collision, you will turn 15 degrees to the south."

(Pause)

Communication, it is a key to avoiding a collision in our lives. It is a key to avoiding a collision in our relationships. It is a key to helping us live better, healthier with the people who mean the most to us. Communication is critical. Do you ever have a hard time communicating?

Today we are going to talk about communicating as we continue our sermon series called *Getting a Family to Function*. Last week, we talked about the importance of seeing ourselves as connected to family.

Remember; as we go through this sermon series on family that I said, I believe there are many different ways to construct family. Single parents. Couples with children and without children. There are gay couples with and without children as well. There are grandparents raising children.

Each of us may define family a bit different and that is okay. I will most likely reference family as I have experienced it. Growing up in and being a part of a two parent family. I have also experienced divorce. I am remarried and Debbie and I are learning how to bring our children together. It is a great adventure.

It is an adventure in which I have learned a couple of things about communicating. That is why I find our scripture for today to be so instructive. It says many things about the importance of communication.

I want to focus on how honest, straightforward communication can make an incredible difference to help build up the relationships we care about most. This entire passage of advice points to that as a key. Being honest. Naming how you are feeling. Caring enough to listen to others feelings as well is critical.

I certainly didn't grow up in a perfect family. We had our share of problems. But one of the gifts my parents gave to us as children is learning how to communicate and talk. I never grew up wondering what my parents thought.

They were open and honest with us as children. If we did something wrong, they would let us know. They didn't go overboard and fly off the handle at every little thing. But they did communicate if we did something wrong, what was wrong and how to fix it.

Even in those times when I did something really bad and I knew I was in trouble. My parents always were committed to visiting. Only once did my dad get so mad at me did he say, "Scott, I am so mad. I can't talk to you now. I will talk to you later." And he did. But when he was more calm.

If we are going to get our families to function, we need to be committed to communicate with each other. There are several ways we can do that. Here are several principles that I find helpful in communicating.

1. **Understand Your Own Feelings.** If you are angry or frustrated or sad. Name that and know that. If you can pause long enough to ask, How do I feel? Why do I feel the way I do? Often that is enough time to begin to formulate thoughts and feelings so you can give voice to them.
2. **Name what is going on with you to the person you love.** If you are frustrated by the actions of another, it is most helpful to be able to say something like, "I am feeling frustrated when you do such and such. It makes me feel this way." If you can name what is happening within you and take responsibility for that, it actually helps to communicate, because it isn't blaming.
3. **Once you have named how you feel, take time to listen to the other person.** Communicating is listening as well as talking. If you are going to name your feelings, allow the people you love to name theirs as well.
4. **Find other ways to communicate.** Sometimes talking isn't always the best way. Doing little things for other members of your family helps. I find one of the best ways to communicate with my son is to get in the car and as we are driving

- somewhere, just visit about his day or about life in general. Sometimes, just playing catch or doing chores outside together are great ways for families to connect and be together.
5. **Take advantage of family time together.** When we eat dinner together as a family. It is often a time for us to touch base. We like to play a little game called "High/Low" in which each one goes around the table and tells their high and their low of the day.
 6. **Be honest, but don't be mean.**
 7. **Try to extend the same grace to others; I would hope to have extended to me.** We all screw up. But that doesn't mean we are bad people.

Communicating is all about caring. It is caring enough about the other members of the family to engage them and have conversation with them. It means taking time to decide who is going to do what around the house. It means taking time to figure out what is going on in each other's days when we are not together. It means caring enough about the people in your family to actually visit with them and talk with them.

How are you doing at communicating? What do you need to work on?

I want to close today by sharing with you one of the most touching comments on marriage I ever heard. It was from a man who had been married for 65 years. I asked him, "What is the secret of your successful marriage?"

He looked at me and said, "That's easy. There are just two things. First I forget whatever she does that bothers me. I can actually do this because I know she loves me very much. So I have developed the habit of forgetting. Second, I try to be the first one to do something special for her every day."

I was touched by the obvious love he had for his wife. I was touched by the obvious desire he had to please his wife. He understood that when he worked for his wife's best interest, when he worked for his wife's welfare, it ultimately had a positive impact upon him.

Being committed to communicating in an honest, caring, straight forward manner can help our relationships grow and deepen the way in which God wants them to. Are you willing to work at communicating with those you love?

May God help us live lives of faith.

Amen