

ALI 340: Elements of Effective Communication

Session Seven

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ
أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفُرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ
تُؤْتِي أُكْلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا

Have you not seen how Allah has drawn a parable

A good word is like a good tree

Its roots are firm and its branches are in the sky

It gives its fruits every season, by the permission of its Lord

Sura Ibrahim, 14:24-25

Agenda

- The Holy Quran
- Refining the message
- Choosing Words
- The Best Words
- Types of Words - from the Holy Quran

The Holy Quran

O Allah, bless Muhammad and his Household
and appoint the Qur'an for us
a companion in the darkness of the night
and a guardian against the incitements of the Shaytan
and the dangers of the whisperings,
for our feet an obstruction from walking
to acts of disobedience,
for our tongues a silencer without blight
preventing an indulgence in talk of falsehood,
for our limbs a restrainer from committing sins,
. . . . Such that You attach to our hearts
the understanding of the Qur'an's wonders
and its restraining similitudes
which immovable mountains in all their solidity
were too weak to carry

Dua no.42, Sahifa Sajjadiyya

Refining the Message

For effective communication the speaker should help the listener by making the message more 'listenable'.

This includes:

- 1) Knowing the listener
- 2) Having a clear objective
- 3) Choosing words and tone accordingly
- 4) Making the message positive
- 5) Keeping it simple and focused

Choosing words

Words are very powerful and do more than just convey meaning. Using the right words is necessary for effective communication. It makes the message clear and prevents misunderstandings.

- Words stir emotions
- Words stimulate a particular type of thinking
- Words motivates actions
- Words carry different meaning to different people

The Best Words

According to Imam Ali (a) the best of speech is:

- 1) That which is not rejected by the ears
- 2) Its understanding is not tiring for people
- 3) It is adorned by a good structure
- 4) It is understood by both the elite and the layman
- 5) Does not bore the listener
- 6) Is not too brief

Scale of Wisdom, Hadith #s 5610, 5611, 5612.

Types of Words – From the Holy Quran

Respectful words

وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا

Speak to them respectful words

Sura al-Israa, 17:23

- Noble words showing honor and esteem
- Beautiful and gentle words
- Soft words
- Generous words
- Sweet and loving words

Guiding words

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ
وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَقَالَ إِنَّنِي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

Who is better in speech
than one who calls towards Allah
works righteousness
and says, 'I am of those who submit'
Sura Fussilat, 41:33

- Preaching the word of God
- Spreading the Truth
- Proving the righteousness of religion
- Removing doubt and skepticism

Peaceful words

وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا

And when the ignorant address them
they say: Peace

Sura Furqan, 25:63

- Not argumentative
- Words of endurance and tolerance
- Shows a large inner capacity
- Is a sign of strength rather than weakness
- Words of farewell, different from the salaam of greeting

Firm words

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا

O you who believe, be God conscious
and speak upright words

Sura al-Ahzab, 33:70

- From the word *sadd* – dam, barrier
- True and principled
- Firm against wrong and falsehood
- Not intimidated or moved by others

Soft words

فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَىٰ

Speak to him with soft words

Perhaps he will take heed or fear [God]

Sura Taha, 20:44

- Effective words
- Reasonable and rational words
- Clear message

Kind words

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا

And speak kindly to people

Sura al-Baqarah, 2:83

- Pleasant words
- words of compassion, comfort
- words that bring happiness