

ALI 340: Elements of Effective Communication

Session Nine

O Ahmad, when a servant keeps his stomach empty and protects his tongue, I teach him wisdom . . . and it becomes for him a light and a proof and a cure and a mercy.

Then he realizes things he did not know and he sees things he did not see before.

The first thing I will show him is his own faults so that he is occupied with them rather than the faults of others.

And I will show him the intricacies of knowledge such that Shaytan will not be able to sway him.

Mizanul Hikmah, H#4244

Agenda

- The Holy Quran
- Barriers to effective communication
- Signs of the existence of barriers
- Examples of Barriers
- Examples from the Quran

The Holy Quran

Imam Ali (a) describes the *Muttaqin*:

During the night they are up standing on their feet reading portions of the Qur'an and reciting it in a well-measured way, creating through it grief for themselves and seeking by it the cure for their ailments.

If they come across a verse creating eagerness (for Paradise) they pursue it avidly, and their spirits turn towards it eagerly, and they feel as if it is in front of them.

And when they come across a verse which contains fear (of Hell) they bend the ears of their hearts towards it, and feel as though the sound of Hell and its cries are reaching their ears.

Nahjul Balagha, Khutba no.193

Barriers to Effective Communication

When two people attempt to communicate it is possible that there may be road blocks that prevent the flow of communication. Each individual is different and communication means to meet the other on common grounds.

A barrier is something that blocks the speaker from conveying the message he wants to convey. It may then be conveyed wrongly or it may not be conveyed at all. Barriers distort the message and frustrate the speaker as well as the listener.

Effective communicators are aware of barriers and try to work on removing the barriers or at least minimizing their impact.

Signs of the existence of barriers

- A mismatch of verbal and non verbal cues
- Awkward conversations
- Resistance to talking more
- Misunderstandings
- Lack of interest or engagement on the part of speaker or listener

Examples of Barriers

1) Doubt

When the speaker or listener doubt themselves, doubt the other, or doubt that the outcome of the communication will be positive.

Self doubt often stems from low self esteem and can obstruct a strong relaying of the message.

Doubting the other creates skepticism and prevents acceptance of the message.

Doubts about the outcome of the communication affects the eventual results. Positive expectations lead to positive results.

The worst of mankind is one
who does not trust anyone
because of his negative assumptions
and is not trusted by anyone
because of his negative assumptions.

Imam Ali (a)

Mizanul Hikmah, H#11254

A negative person
will not think good of anyone
because he does not see him
except in light of himself

Imam Ali (a)

Mizanul Hikmah, H#11257

2) The Past

Inability to overcome the past is a huge barrier for effective communication.

Living in the past means constantly replaying past events in the mind. This replaces the potential of the present.

Living in the past while attempting communication creates negative emotions that obstruct communication. It sabotages the relationship through the emotions of anger, sadness, distrust . . .

وَإِنْ تَعْفُوا وَتَصْفَحُوا وَتَغْفِرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

and if you pardon and forbear and forgive
then surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

Sura Taghabun, 64:14

3 Stages of Overcoming the Past

1) **Afw, or Pardon.** This is described as overlooking the wrong done. Pardoning could include making excuses for the person, giving them a chance, understanding their weaknesses, not taking it too seriously, and not focusing on it continuously.

2) **Safh, or Forbearance:** It means to refrain from reproaching, through words and actions. Sometimes we forgive, but cannot resist the temptation to speak about it, and remind the other person of the hurt they inflicted. Words, gestures, even feelings, are a constant reminder of the hurt that we have 'forgiven' but cannot get over. True forgiveness entails complete forbearance. If we went through the first stage conscientiously, the second would be easy. Imam Ali ar-Rida (a) in explaining the word 'safh' in this verse, says it means; *to pardon [and forgive] someone without punishment, harshness, or reproach.*

3) **Ghufran, or Forgiveness:** Forgiveness means erasing the deed that is done and removing the negative consequences that the deed warrants. When Allah forgives a deed, He will not punish the doer for it. It is removed from the book of deeds. Forgiving someone means there is no thought of retaliation, or revenge.

Examples from the Quran

Nabi Yusuf meets his brothers (Sura Yusuf, 12:89-92)

He said: Do you know how you treated Yusuf and his brother when you were ignorant?

They said: Are you indeed Yusuf? He said: I am Yusuf and this is my brother; Allah has indeed been gracious to us; surely he who guards against evil and is patient is rewarded for surely Allah does not waste the reward of those who do good.

They said: By Allah! now has Allah certainly chosen you over us, and we were certainly sinners.

He said: There shall be no reproof against you this day; Allah may forgive you, and He is the most Merciful of the merciful.

The family reunites (Sura Yusuf, 12:100-101)

O my father! this is the significance of my vision of old, my Lord has indeed made it to be true. And He was indeed kind to me when He brought me forth from the prison and brought you from the desert after the Shaytan had sown dissensions between me and my brothers, surely my Lord is kind to whom He pleases; surely He is the Knowing, the Wise.

My Lord! You have given me of the kingdom and taught me of the interpretation of sayings: Originator of the heavens and the earth! You are my guardian in this world and the hereafter; make me die a Muslim and join me with the good.



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