**The Telephone Game with Kris Swiatocho**

The number one reason why relationships struggle or fail is poor communication. Whether it’s not returning phone calls and emails timely, avoiding complex discussions, to simply losing interest in wanting to communicate, it all affects our relationships. Often our struggle starts with our communication with God. If our relationship with God isn’t going well, it trickles down into our family relationships, friendships, work, romance, and those we lead.

Who remembers playing the telephone game when you were a kid? You would whisper something in someone’s ear, a phrase, and then they would whisper it to the next person, and so forth. Then the last person would say the phrase out loud. Often it would change dramatically to show proof of how our communication, what we say (truth or a lie), can quickly get distorted and altered as it goes from person to person. It also shows how easily gossip spreads.

When it comes to leadership, clear communication is critical if you want your team to:

1. Understand, value, appreciate, and accept the direction God has given you as the pastor or main leader that is passed down to your team.
2. Grow individually and together.
3. Get along with each other, even if they don’t always agree with each other.

Remember, the goal of the enemy is to tear down communication continually. He does everything from deleting emails and text messages (and other tech attacks), creating confusion in what people hear or think they heard, drawing you into conflicts that are not the actual battle, and separating leaders from the team. So, if we know this is what he is doing, what must we do to combat it?

**The enemy's goal is to destroy; what must we do to combat it?**

1. **Know that God called you the pastor or leader of this ministry**. But it is up to you to be an example of being a great communicator. If your time with the Lord isn’t going well, your prayer life is inconsistent, and if you aren’t hearing what God is telling you to do in leading your ministry, how can they follow? One of the greatest leaders of all time was Nehemiah. Whenever the enemy started to cause issues, Nehemiah would remind them of what God was doing. That God was the one that called Nehemiah and ultimately called them. This was God’s project in rebuilding the wall to bring folks back.

*Nehemiah 2: 17-20 Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace.”****18I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me.***

***They replied, “Let us start rebuilding****.” So they began this good work.*

***19****But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. “What is this you are doing?” they asked. “Are you rebelling against the king?”*

***20****I answered them by saying, “****The God of heaven will give us success****. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it.”*

1. **Return phone calls and emails in a timely fashion**. How can you expect communication to work well within your team if you are not calling folks back or returning messages? When leaders seem too busy to lead us, folks get discouraged. Why should they communicate with the team (or teams under them) if you aren’t? If this is an area of struggle, maybe some things need to be taken off your list. Seeking the advice of wise friends is essential in becoming better at communication. The enemy wants you to be an island, but God tells us the value of community—encouraging and supporting each other.

*Proverbs 11: 14 For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers*.

 *1 Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as, in fact you are doing.*

Note: There are times when we are over-communicating. We email, post, and text too much, and you can overwhelm your team. Depending on your ministry, you might use an app like WhatsApp to text short messages, prayer needs, and reminders but use email for longer communications. Then, use Zoom or Skype for monthly leadership meetings where you can see each other's faces (or in-person meetings). While you can still text leaders individually, be mindful to keep your communication consistent. Talking with your team to discuss the right balance is beneficial.

1. **Talk in person whenever possible and follow up with an email.** While conversations in writing are good, giving us a paper trail, often, they do not communicate how we feel, the emotion behind our writing, or opportunities to hear from the other person. Like in ALL relationships, talking in person, over the phone, or on video is much better. It allows you to view someone’s body language, hear their heart and respond with any clarification.

In today’s world, we prefer to text entire conversations. And while I do think texting is much easier and quicker, it should only be used here and there. We must return to looking into someone’s eyes and being in their presence. Also, if you aren’t sure if what you said was understood, have the other person(s) tell you what you just said or follow up with an email about our meeting. Remember, the enemy is the author of confusion.

*1 Corinthians 14:33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people.

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary, the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

1. **What we communicate is essential, too; passion is contagious.** As we stay on fire for God, as we stay excited for the work God has called us to do, and as you communicate this by your voice, actions, and interest, it will spread to others. The opposite is true too. It can destroy the ministry when we seem to lose interest, stop communicating well, or only talk about the problems in the ministry or our personal lives.

Have you noticed you have lost some interest? What is causing this? The enemy would love for you to get burned out and quit. If you lose your passion for the team you lead or the ministry, pray and talk to God about it. Ask yourself, is it time to make a change? Is it time to take a break and get some rest so you can recast the vision? Do you need more help in leading the ministry? Or is it time to step down? If so, don’t forget to train others to take your place. The enemy would love for you to quit and the ministry to fall apart.
 *Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

 *Proverbs 17:22 A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.*

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• [www.TheSinglesNetwork.org](http://www.TheSinglesNetwork.org)

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• www.IntentionalRelationshipSolutions.org