

7 Communication Landmines to Sidestep

The first time I watched a video of myself “preaching” a Sunday morning message, I went into shock. I thought: “That is *not* what I look like, that is *not* what I sound like, and asked myself, ‘What was I trying to say?’”

I considered becoming a monk. I could still serve God, but no one would have to listen to me speak.

My communication coach was tough on me, and that was good. Thankfully, I’ve improved. But I learned an important lesson. If I don’t face reality, I can’t get better.

Three things are needed to improve your skill as a communicator:

1) A Communication Coach

Your coach can be anyone who is a better communicator than you are. But they must be honest with you and have the ability to show you how to improve.

2) Watch Your Game Film

It might be uncomfortable, but it’s necessary. You don’t have to get sophisticated. An iPhone will work just fine.

3) A Willingness To Practice

You will never get better if you just do the same thing over and over again.

It doesn’t matter if you speak to a room of fifty people or three thousand people, the foundational elements of good communication are the same.

I don’t preach much, but I teach a ton. That doesn’t let me off the hook. There are boring teachers just like there are boring preachers.

Here are 7 of the most common mistakes, avoid them, and you’ll get better!

1) Speaking too long.

A great rule of thumb is to keep your talk shorter if it’s not your primary gift. Even if you are good, set a time limit and stick to it. People respond better when they know what they can count on. Simply stated, when you get to the end of your notes, stop.

I’m not a TED talk kind of presenter, but I’ve learned a lot from the book [Talk Like TED](#), by Carmine Gallo. If you “need” to communicate longer in a teaching environment, there are several things you can do to break it up and help keep it more interactive.

2) Not knowing how to close.

How many times have you listened to a speaker who circled the runway seemingly forever? You wanted to call out, "Land the plane!" Patti, my wife, used to have a hand signal that instructed me to land the plane!

When you write your talk, know where you are going. Have a singular purpose in mind and answer these two questions. What do you want them to know? What do you want them to do? End with precision and clarity in your spiritual encouragement or challenge.

3) Seeking approval, rather than change.

Like good leadership, good communication begins with self-awareness. People pleasing and insecurity are big stumbling blocks to good communication. You become too worried about what people think of you to focus on them.

Communicators that are secure in themselves stay away from things like exaggeration, forcing humor just to get a laugh, and softening the truth.

The ultimate goal of any communicator in the local church is to move people toward change for their good, according to Biblical values and Christ-like living.

4) Too much content, too little application.

We all like to let our secret Bible geek out from time to time, and it's obviously good to be passionate about scripture. But the point of our communication isn't information; it's transformation. That makes application incredibly important.

I remind myself that the epistles are basically half content, half application. Less is more. Candidly, it's more work to net down the content. **As the communicator, we should do the work, not make the listeners work to understand what we are saying.**

Remember, what do you want them to know, and what do you want them to do?

5) Intellectual integrity over spiritual intensity.

Your preparation in study is a required discipline; you can't communicate a sermon or leadership talk without it. The truth is that we can communicate a message without prayer. That is scary, and makes the talk nearly worthless in terms of eternity.

One of the attributes I most respect, and have learned from our senior pastor Kevin Myers, is deep commitment and passion for prayer. Prayer is a profoundly integral part of his preparation to communicate anything. The results are obvious.

6) Failing to connect.

Your ability to be real and connect at a heart level creates the most noticeable improvement in

your communication.

Stories are one of the best ways to connect, and you can increase your connection by improving your ability to tell a story. Authenticity gains you great trust in the room.

Reading the room is also key to you understanding how well you connect. A “public speaker” talks at the people, a communicator has a conversation with the people. He or she sees and senses the emotional temperature of the room and adjusts the tone of the talk as they go.

7) Underestimating the significance of encouragement.

When change, true transformation is the goal ([Romans 12:2](#); [Ephesians 4:11-16](#)), you simply can't over encourage those you speak to.

A good communicator always gives hope. Help the people believe they *can* do it, and God will help them with the part they *can't* do on their own.

It's not about fluff, Christianity light, or cheap grace. Encouragement is needed to inspire people to first, want to change, and second, elevate self-confidence enough to try.

> [Read more from Dan.](#)

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