Recipe for Relationships
Resource Book

by
Women’s Ministries International
(WMI)
Dear Ladies,

I hope and trust you will have some fun as you use these ideas to plan your meetings for this year. I have chosen a simple kitchen theme, since most of us will have some experience in the kitchen.

This will also make decorating easy, as we can use what we have, or purchase odds and ends at a local Good Will or used store, or ask for donations to be given away later as prizes. These will be used for our centerpieces each month. I suggest getting a tote to keep them in a central place where they can be accessed each month.

As the emphasis changes and the season changes, you can add simple decorations to the kitchen accessories to accent the theme or season. Our overall program themes are how to build and maintain relationships, and to ultimately influence our unsaved friends and loved ones to join us in our Christian journey. In past years, this was called relationship evangelism.

Since the theme is about baking and cooking, you can include or exclude food at your meetings. It is your choice. These are only suggestions. Pitch-ins are very popular at my church and we share the work and expense of having refreshments at our meetings.

Remember, it is your job to read the ideas and modify them to fit your church and your group of women. No one is expected to do exactly everything as it is written. This is a working tool. As you read it, you should have a pencil in your hand, making notes of ideas that pop into your mind.

I chose a relationship theme because it is the stepping stone to winning others to Jesus Christ. It is much easier to witness to someone you have befriended than a complete stranger. This book is meant to provide you some useful methods and ideas.

You have a program leader’s book for those of you who will be doing devotions and organizing the monthly meetings. You also have a participant’s workbook from which you can make copies of or use only the selected pages of your choice. I recommend printing the workbooks and keeping them at your meeting location. Printing each month is just more work for you.

Unfortunately, I had to divide two of the sessions in half, which makes eleven lessons this year. It is vital to use the one on witnessing and telling your own story. It would be ideal if you could meet twice during
January and February to keep the lesson in the forefront of your mind. I realize we don’t live in an ideal world, and just ask that you do your best.

On page 4, you will find a planning page. Each month and topic is listed. You can meet with your team and fill in the blanks so no one person is expected to do all the work.

Most of my information has been learned first from the Word of God and second from what mom and dad taught me, and finally from my experiences in the workplace as an advisor in leadership and organizational development. I read and practiced from the works of authors such as Steven Covey, Robert Greenleaf, Daniel Goldman, Ken Blanchard, John Maxwell, Tom Peters, and Jim Collins, just to mention a few.

Of those very well-known leadership gurus, the ones who are most successful find their roots in traditional values and upbringing. One of my favorite authors was Robert Greenleaf, who founded a philosophy around “servant leadership.”

He used the following KJV verses as his foundation: "But ye [shall] not [be] so: but he that is greatest among you let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."

As we establish new relationships, let’s remember to be the servant in the relationship, like Jesus who came to seek and save. God bless you as you continue to grow in your relations with Christ and influence others to join you in the journey.

Your sister in Christ,
Billie Goodner
The Rock, Columbus, IN
WMI PROGRAM PLANNING GUIDE

For your convenience, you may use the planning sheet below to decide dates, refreshments, and speakers for each month. Use your book for ideas and make this fit your group.

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INTRODUCTION

Basic Ingredient for Recipe

(Col 3:12-14) Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

PREPARATION

- Obtain a volunteer hostess to prepare appetizers or ask several to bring appetizers. The first five meetings are a progressive dinner type, if you so choose.
- To welcome the ladies to the new year, using recipes to share
- This year you may want to publish a church recipe book. It can be done through a company, or talented computer ladies can do it themselves.
- Bring a sack of flour for devotions table
- Optional: Purchase a recipe box for each lady. Use index cards or recipe cards for recipes each month to be added. Alternative: The ladies can take notes on the recipe cards and file them for future devotions. (Most Dollar General Stores have recipe cards.)
- Obtain a small gift for each newcomer to WMI; good idea to do this all year.
- Participant Workbooks or pages for this month
- Have chocolate chip cookies for closing if you use the demonstration in your talk

DECORATIONS (optional)

- Aprons, chef’s hats, dishtowels, pots, pans, mixing bowls, recipe books, utensils, etc. If there is room, meet in a kitchen.
- Options: Use things people donate or loan, or purchase items that will later be donated to a domestic shelter, mission field, or someone whose house is destroyed. Good Will may also have a great selection. Keep your décor in a tote to be used each month as a reminder of the theme – a recipe for great relationships.
REFRESHMENTS

- Appetizers (You will see this is progressive, salad will be the next suggestion.)

PROGRAM ORDER

- Opening prayer
- Refreshments (serve cookies at the end)
- Icebreaker
- Introduction to our theme, Recipe for Relationships: Building Trust
- Spiritual Challenge
- Prayer for new relationships
- Song (Choose one): Love Lifted Me, They Will Know we are Christians by our Love, Love Through Me, More Love, More Power, I Could Sing of Your Love Forever, I Love You Lord, Amazing Love, The Bond of Love, Love Divine, No Greater Love, The Power of Your Love, etc. Even the Barney song is good, I love you, you love me, we’re a great big family, with a great big hug and a kiss from me to you. Won’t you say you love me too? You may want to choose a theme song and sing it each month about relationships - Family of God, Plenty of Room in the Family, Bind us Together, Bless Be the Tie that Binds...
- Missions presentation
- Offering
- Prayer for missions
- Crafts and fellowship

ICEBREAKER

Get into groups of 4-5 and share a story about a cooking or baking disaster you have personally experienced, particularly when you were first married or learning to cook. (Allow 10 minutes for this activity. When done, ask each group to share ONE story with the entire group.)

SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE

Leader instructions: If you are comfortable, and this is optional, as you read the scripture put all the ingredients for cookies into a mixing bowl. You may want to ask another lady to put the ingredients together as you read. (Add all the ingredients except flour.) You should even label the ingredients with the name.

Compassion – eggs
Kindness – sugar
Humility – salt
Gentleness – baking powder
Patience – oil or butter
Bear with each other and forgive – chocolate chips
Love - flour
I want to start tonight’s program by reading our scripture. Our program book this year is designed to help us build and maintain relationships for the specific purpose of being able to witness to our new friends.

You probably won’t need to follow the reading in your Bible as it has been modified to illustrate the lesson.

*(Col 3:12-17)* Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with

- 2 whole parts of compassion, *(break and add the eggs)*
- 1 cup of kindness, *(add the sugar and stir)*
- A dash of humility, *(sprinkle in some salt)*
- 1 tsp. of gentleness, *(sprinkle in the baking powder and stir)*
- A generous amount of patience. *(pour in some oil or melted butter)*
- And for added taste, don’t forget to bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. *(add the chocolate chips and stir.)* *(show the audience your dough.)* Yum. Yum.

Something does not seem right about my cookie dough. It is so thin. *(look around for what you may have forgotten.)* Oh, I forgot the most important ingredient……..

- And over all these virtues put on love, a lot of love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. *(Pick up the cup labeled love and add the flour, gently stirring and blending together. Now show them the dough and set the bowl aside.)*

What a fun year is in store for us as we learn how to make and maintain relationships. Our goal is for these relationships to result in women accepting Christ and growing in His grace. So let’s get started putting together this recipe. Our theme this year is about cooking or baking, something almost everyone has tried.

Paul exhorts us to practice compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. He also emphasizes it is essential to bear with one another and forgive as the Lord forgave you. While those are important, he says most important is love. Our basic ingredient for relationships is love. It is the flour that will hold together the other ingredients as we build relationships.

*(Matthew 22:37-39)* Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"
Let’s see how flour (love) is the basic ingredient. We have to go to the great love chapter in Corinthians to review the principles of love.

(1 Corinthians 13:1-11) If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

In these first three sentences, Paul is talking about those who say they love but don’t demonstrate love in their actions. You can probably picture someone in your mind right now, who reminds you of this verse. They talk pretty, they know the scriptures, and they appear to be so generous and giving, but love is missing. They seem to do the things they do either out of obligation or for personal glory.

What does Paul say about this person? Look at verse 8:

But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.

The ‘so-called love’ of those who pretend will pass away. It will be revealed. So what is authentic love? Christian love?

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Think about someone you deeply love. With that person in mind, close your eyes and ask yourself these questions: (read each one and pause)

Am I patient with him or her?
Am I kind?
Am I humble?
Do I seek his or her interest more than my own?
Am I slow to anger?
Do I forgive or keep a record of wrongs?
Do I rejoice in truths and what is right?
Do I protect, trust, hope, and persevere in this relationship?

Okay, open your eyes. The measuring stick for love is pretty specific, isn’t it? The real ‘proof of the pudding’ may be that word ‘always.’ It is hard to ‘always be demonstrating love. After all, if someone has not shown love to me today, it is hard for me to show love to them. Am I right?

Most of us tend toward having conditional love – by that I mean, “I love you when you love me.” I thought I would go to Mr. Webster and see what he had to say about love. I found that love is a noun that means deep and tender feeling of fondness or devotion.
Love is also a verb, an action. When I say, “I love you” or “I love to eat,” love is an action. Think about this………love the noun, without love the verb, is the love Paul described as a clanging cymbal. It is hollow and meaningless. Meaningful love is felt, spoken, and demonstrated.

**What is unconditional love?**

God demonstrated *unconditional* love for us when He sent His only Son to die for our sins on the cross of Calvary. Unconditional love means you don’t have to meet any criteria to be loved. It is just love for love’s sake. He was showing us He was seeking our interest more than His own. God demonstrated unconditional love by forgiving any grievances He has against us.

To demonstrate real love to others, we must also forgive and bear with one another through all our faults and failures. Jesus said:

*(Matthew 6:14)* *For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*

*(Matthew 6:15)* *But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

Paul reminded us of what Jesus had said when he wrote: *(Colossians 3:13)* *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

I recently read a book by Rebecca Alonzo called The Devil in Pew Number Seven. I won’t ruin it for you by telling all the details, but Rebecca was the daughter of a pastor and his wife, in the U.S. They were sent to a small church in the south where they encountered this devil. He was in fact one of the board members. Over the next few years of the pastorate, this man did his “worst” to drive the pastor out of town. In fact, there were bombings, shootings, and personal injuries, all without prosecution. In this book, you will read the unconditional “bearing” and forgiveness given to this man.

Rebecca was a young, elementary age school child when this occurred. She tells the amazing story of what her family endured and how they persevered in love. She has recently appeared on TV with her adversary and publicly proclaimed her forgiveness to him.

When I read that book, I thought, “I don’t know if I could be that forgiving.” Then I remember, “… with God all things are possible.” On my own, I cannot be loving and forgiving, but with the Holy Spirit to guide me, I can.

**How can we demonstrate unconditional love?**

1. Bear with each other through our faults and failures
2. Forgive
As we set out on our task to build relationships this year, we must begin with love, the ingredient that holds relationships together. Once we have and practice the love of God, we can share that love with others.

**SONGS: (Pass around the cookies as you sing)**

(Jot down the songs you have chosen and have handouts or slides for the ladies to sing along.)

**MISSIONS and OFFERING**

**CRAFTS, FELLOWSHIP, GAMES**

Keep in mind that not every lady enjoys crafting, can you just imagine? It would be good to have an area set up at each meeting for games or puzzles. Generally speaking, save crafts for the end of the meeting and those who don’t want to participate will go home. However, if you can keep them involved in games, etc. the fellowship goes on and lives are enhanced.

Games our ladies love are UNO, Dominoes, especially Chicken Feet, Scrabble, and other family board games.

Since this year is about “recipes” you may want to have someone teach you how to bake or make something special at this meeting. If you know someone who makes taffy, have them come and have all the ladies get their hands in and pull the taffy. It is a lot of fun.

We had a lady teach us how to make egg rolls one year, and several of us brought electric skillets and we fried and tasted.

Perhaps you have someone who decorates cakes. Ask her to show and share some tips about simple decorating for family cakes.

**PRAYER**

Pray for newcomers in your church and for relationships to develop and grow. Pray for the ladies to have an unlimited capacity to love, as Christ loved us. Pray women will have a desire to bring newcomers into the church and to love them without reserve or judgment and to befriend them immediately. Pray most of all that the Holy Spirit will draw women to Christ using us a tools and instruments of His grace.
ANNOUNCEMENTS: about next month’s meeting: (Salad pitch-in?? or .............)

If you will be decorating aprons, will you purchase them or do they provide their own? If you purchase, what will be the charge? What do they need to bring to complete this project? Paints? Stencils? Etc.?

When

Where

What to bring

Bring a favorite apron to share a story about it. If you don’t have one, ask a mother or grandmother to show you one and share her story.

Who is responsible
Other Ingredients for Recipe, Cont.

(Eph 4:22-29) You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

OCTOBER

FOCUS

- Love is the starter for creating all delicious relationships. After love, comes a lot of ingredients. We will learn, doing acts of kindness demonstrate our love, build trust and cement the relationship.

PREPARATION

- Obtain a volunteer hostess to prepare the site, decorate, and provide drinks, etc.
- Announce or send cards requesting the ladies to bring salads for a pitch-in, if desired
- Ask each lady to bring an apron that has significant meaning to them to the meeting. (Women of today’s culture seldom use aprons as in the past. The apron can be one she has inherited or one from a relative, or simply a cute one she found at an auction or other. Above all, don’t pressure anyone to go out and buy an apron.)
- Place a salad bowl with tongs on the devotion table. Decorate. For your devotions, you may choose to use the green leaves for elements of relationships – time, attention, honesty, and commitment. Be prepared.
- This year you may want to publish a church recipe book. It can be done through a company, or talented computer ladies can do it themselves.
- Optional: Purchase a recipe box for each lady. Use index cards or recipe cards for recipes each month to be added. Alternative: The ladies can take notes on the cards and file them for future devotions.
- Obtain a small gift for each newcomer (apron? or cookie cutters, etc.) to WMI; good idea to do this all year.
- Materials for decorating or making aprons
- Participant Workbooks or pages for this month
DECORATIONS (optional)
- Aprons, chef’s hats, dishtowels, pots, pans, mixing bowls, recipe books, utensils, etc.
- Options: Use things people donate or loan, or purchase items that will later be donated to a domestic shelter, mission field, or someone whose house burns.

REFRESHMENTS
- Salad (You will see this is progressive dinner type, soup will be next month.)

PROGRAM ORDER
- Opening prayer
- Refreshments (Can be anywhere in the program) 20 minutes
- Spiritual Challenge
- Prayer for relationships
- Song (Choose one): Family of God, Plenty of Room in the Family, Bind us Together, Bless Be the Tie that Binds, Make Me a Servant, Let it be Said of Us, He Who Began a Good Work in You, People of God, Make Us One
- Missions presentation
- Offering
- Prayer for missions
- Crafts and fellowship

ICEBREAKER ACTIVITY:
Say: At your tables, or get into groups of 4-6, share the stories about your aprons. Take 10 minutes to share, and then decide who should share their story with the entire group.

Take another 5 minutes to share some stories in the large group. This will take another 10 but valuable minutes. Display the aprons in a central location for everyone to see.

Leader instructions: Conclude the activity with a remark about how relationships played a role in the stories about the aprons. Draw attention to any that were significantly good examples.

SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE
Last month we heard briefly about how love is the basic ingredient as we build relationships with each other. In order to build new relationships, we need to do random acts of kindness and build trust with this new person. When we build up other people, we add the flour that holds together our relationships. Ephesians 4.
(Eph 4:22-29) You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

In order to build relationships, there are several elements that need to be considered.

1. **It takes time and attention to build a relationship.**

I want each one of you to think back to when you developed a relationship with your husband, fiancé, or special friend. I am going to venture a guess that you spent some time and attention finding out from others about this person.

You wanted to know what he did, where he liked to go, how he spent his time, and when you might cross paths. After meeting this person, I bet you spent more time listening to him describe these very things.

Some of you went so far as to like or start doing some of the same things he enjoyed didn’t you? The bottom line is you looked for common ground and common interests on which to build a relationship.

*You may add a personal story here - - -My husband and I grew up just a mile apart and shared farming, church, and even the school bus. We married a year after I graduated from high school. To this day, however, I still don’t like wrestling and he hates musicals. Nevertheless, we have found enough other activities that we love and share and have now been married for 48 years.*

Then, you started spending as much time as possible together.

We need to do the same thing to build a relationship with newcomers to our churches and neighborhoods.

2. **Relationships are built on honesty and commitment.**

How many of you have watched either a Lifetime or Hallmark movie that begins with a lie or a simple misunderstanding that is allowed to blossom into a love relationship? As you know, the truth always comes out and the relationship is severed.

In true Hollywood fashion, the couple usually works things out, but the lesson is there – deceit is dangerous and hurts everyone involved.

Keeping promises is a big part of commitment. When we break a promise, we break trust and the relationship suffers. When we keep promises, we demonstrate we are trustworthy and our relationships get stronger.
Lasting relationships must be based on truth and begin to grow deep. Just like our relationship with God must grow and deepen, our earthly relationships should also grow and deepen through love, time, attention, truth, and commitment.

Small group or table discussion

Leader instructions: Take 10 minutes to discuss the questions below in your group or at your table.

- Share your story of relationship building with a best friend, someone special or spouse, and
- What lessons can be applied to build relationships with newcomers, neighbors, and coworkers.

At the conclusion, ask: **What did you learn from your stories that can be translated into building relationships with other ladies?**

Limit responses to 5-8 minutes. Summarize and conclude with prayer.

**Leader: Thank the groups for participating.**

**PRAYER**

Pray for women to practice doing kindnesses through time and attention, and building relationships by keeping promises and being honest.

**SONGS:**

(Jot down the ones you have selected and have words or power point available for everyone.)

**MISSIONS and OFFERING**
CRAFTS

This month, you will need time to make or decorate an apron.

1. DIFFICULT: Demonstrate and send patterns home with the ladies. A very simple pattern is included in the participant’s activities workbook. Have ladies bring a machine and make the apron at the meeting. Some women will need to share their machines.

2. EASY: Purchase plain white aprons at a fabric store or hobby store that can either be stenciled or painted, or use computer transfers to iron on and decorate. This is the easiest of the ideas. You may want to charge a minimal fee to cover the cost of the apron.

Finally, the completed apron should be given to someone as an act of kindness toward building a relationship. No strings attached. (Ha!) Regardless of the rookie or professional level, this is a gift from the heart.

Announcements about next month’s meeting:
Focus

- We need to stop reacting to what people say and do, and learn to respond with love. Love maintains and preserves relationships.

Preparation

- Bring a soup tureen and ladle for the devotions table
- If you choose to have a soup contest, ask someone to be in charge, then start promoting the contest; if it is a soup pitch-in you will need someone to organize so all soups are not the same.
- Optional: Purchase a recipe box for each lady. Use index or recipe cards for recipes each month to be added. Alternative: The ladies can take notes on the cards and file them for future devotions.
- Obtain a small gift for each newcomer (packet of soup mix) to WMI; good idea to do this all year.
- Participant workbook or pages
- Index cards

Decorations (optional)

- Aprons, chef’s hats, dishtowels, pots, pans, mixing bowls, recipe books, utensils, etc.
- Add random Thanksgiving items into the mix of centerpieces, pumpkins, turkeys, pilgrims, etc.
- Options: Use things people donate or loan, or purchase items that will later be donated to a domestic shelter, mission field, or someone whose house has been destroyed.

Refreshments

- Soup (Recommended soup making contest to reduce the cost of refreshments on the group)
- Provide a silver ladle with pretty ribbon for the winner. (Spray paint works if you can’t find one.)
- Provide small Dixie cups for the ladies to taste each soup.
PROGRAM
- Opening prayer
- Refreshments (can be anywhere in the program) 30 minutes
- Icebreaker or activity
- Missions presentation
- Prayer for missions
- Songs: Let the Peace of Christ Rule in Your Heart, Let the Beauty of Jesus Be Seen in Me, Change My Heart O God, In My Life Lord Be Glorified, Reign in Me, Spirit of the Living God, Holy Spirit Rain Down, The Joy of the Lord, A Perfect Heart, A Heart Like Thine, Near the Cross
- Spiritual Challenge
- Crafts and fellowship

ICE BREAKER

Name that person

Divide into two equal teams. Give each person a blank index card. Ask them to write five little known facts about themselves on their card numbered from 1-5 with the most commonly known fact number one and getting harder until number 5 is something hardly anyone in the room may know.

For instance, number one may be my husband’s name is Bob or I have eight children. Number five may be I was teacher’s pet in third grade.

Collect the cards. Keep them separated into two teams. Draw 1 card from Team 1 and read to Team 2. Start at the bottom and if they can guess who it is by Clue 5, they get 5 points. If they do not know, then go to clue 4 and give 4 points if they guess right and so on.

Then choose a card from the Team 2 stack and read to Team 1 and have them guess using the same process.

Continue to alternate between teams until all the cards have been read and guessed. Award small prizes to the winning team such as candy corn or gum.

MISSIONS, OFFERING, PRAYER

SONGS

(Jot down the ones you have selected and have words or power point available for everyone.)
SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE

“How we react or respond to what people say and do can build up or break down a relationship. We can make a relationship stronger or weaker with our words and actions.”

I am sure most of you recall the research of Pavlov (Pav’-lof) and his famous dogs. Let me briefly review just to refresh the story in your mind.

Pavlov had a theory that certain stimuli would evoke specific reactions. To test his theory he rang a bell every day as he fed his dogs. When he brought out the food the dogs began to salivate in preparation to eat the scrumptious dish before them.

As time went on, he rang the bell and the dogs began to salivate, even without the presence of the food, proving that the stimulus of the bell elicited the desired reaction.

Physiologically in our bodies, there are automatic reactions that cause us to draw our hands away from a hot fire. That’s good. It is an automatic reaction. (Called autonomic in physiology.)

Unfortunately, some of us get conditioned, like the dogs, to certain stimuli that elicit specific reactions from us. Let me provide an example.

(Matthew 26:48-51) Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

Peter was an impulsive, reactive person. More than once he did or said something he later regretted. But, like toothpaste out of the tube, it is out there and you can’t put it back, so Peter had to deal with the consequences and guilt later for his reaction.

Most of us have someone in our life who just knows how to push our buttons. Can you think of someone right now who does this for you? It may be a child, loved one, or a colleague. What ever it is that person does, elicits the same reaction from us each time he or she does that behavior.

In your notebook or on a sheet of paper, write this person’s name or for complete privacy, give him or her a codename. You will refer to that name later, but will not have to share it.

Let me draw a model to help explain. (Leader will draw the diagram below on a black or white board or flipchart, or use the slides provided.)
We are so conditioned; the reaction time is very short and more or less, automatic, like Peter. That's not unique to any individual, we all share this phenomenon. The good news is that we also can learn to change it, with the help of the Holy Spirit. Most often our own determination and will is not enough to change old habits and behaviors.

A non-reactive person seeks to break that cycle of *stimulus/reaction* by lengthening the time between the stimulus and the desired “response.” Some people call this the “count to ten” model.

In this second model, the time between the stimulus and “response” is prolonged; a planned *response* is formalized instead of an automatic, knee-jerk, hand to fire reaction. Sometimes that may mean to walk away. Other times it may mean to say, “I’ll get back to you on that” or “let me think about that for a couple of days.”

It is never a good idea to *react* when we are emotional, as in angry, upset, or hurt. Too often this is how we respond to our children. They know which buttons to push and what reaction they are likely to get. That is not a response, but a reaction.

A cooling off time does wonders for our common sense and ability to reason out things. Sudden, unplanned, and off the cuff remarks are like the toothpaste. Once they are out there, you can’t take them back. The hurt is inflicted and the damage is done, the relationship is depleted and trust is gone.
(James 1:19-22) My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

(James 1:26) If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.

James was talking about that reaction when he said, be slow to speak and slow to anger. Anger is a destructive device to a relationship. Let’s practice this year being more responsive and less reactive as we develop new and lasting relationships.

******************************************************************************

Individual learning activity: Leader will ask the questions below and allow the group about 5-7 minutes to write down responses. Then ask if anyone would like to share an insight or learning she has had. Take 2-3 responses and affirm and thank those who participate.

- Reflect on the person (code name) you wrote down or a situation that just gets under your skin or pushes your buttons. How do you react to them? React, not respond. How do you react? Who would most benefit if you used this slowed down response?

- How would this be different if you could slow down, and respond without anger or emotion?

- How would that change your relationship with that person?

Now think back to last month’s lesson. Do you or do you not have a good relationship with this person who pushes your buttons? My guess is it is low or none at all.

Perhaps the “stimulus – response” would be better controlled if you started to build up and reinforce the struggling relationship.

Let’s close in prayer for help in our inclination to react and how to learn to respond.

**PRAYER**

For taking time for reflection before reacting and for slowing our response time. Love and bearing with one another, even children and spouses.
CRAFTS, FUN, FELLOWSHIP

Perhaps this month your church will be having a Thanksgiving Dinner for the church or the community. It may be a good time to make centerpieces for the tables, placemats, or individual favors.

I don’t have the pattern for all these, but I can offer some suggestions. Most ideas can be located by doing a search on Google or Bing.

Gather pine cones that are fat at the top and come to a rounded cone top. Lay them on their sides to make turkeys. Use the flat part to add a pipe cleaner neck and head of brown. Use a large, artificial leaf to make the tail. Use real feathers purchased at the hobby store for the wings. Make a cardboard base for feet to hold the turkey in place.

Purchase plain fall colored placemats; they come 50 -100 to a pack, reasonably priced. Have your group’s card-making, stamp-loving crafter bring stamps to decorate the placemats. Take them to a Senior Center or Nursing Home for the residents.

Purchase small pumpkins and clean out the insides. Cut off the top like a lid and use the pumpkin as a flower pot for the tables. Please fall flowers in the pumpkins. You can use a small jar inside to hold the flowers and some water. Baby food jars are just right.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Next month is your December meeting? If you have something special planned share the details with the ladies.

If you are having a gift exchange, provide the parameters for buying gifts. We always place a $5 limit on our gifts and are amazed each year at the creativity and treasures the ladies can find.
Humidity, Altitude, and Outside Factors Impact the Recipe

Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. (Titus2:2-3)

FOCUS

- We need to stop trying to control other people and control ourselves. Then we can influence people to make wise decisions. Our Christian witness is through influence.

PREPARATION

- Determine who will prepare the entrées. This is an opportunity to offer a casserole meal. That way you can offer 2-3 choices without having other vegetables, etc.
- This year you may want to publish a church recipe book. It can be done through a company, or talented computer ladies can do it themselves.
- Bring a casserole dish, a roasting pan, or a crock pot for the devotion table. Decorate.
- Optional: Purchase a recipe box for each lady. Use index or recipe cards for recipes each month to be added. Alternative: The ladies can take notes on the cards and file them for future devotions.
- Obtain a small gift for each newcomer (Christmas Candy) to WMI; good idea to do this all year.
- Participant workbook or pages
- Have a hula hoop for demonstration or if possible have several hoops for a contest.
- Take a camera for the picture of those who open the bags and put on the items

DECORATIONS (optional)

- Aprons, chef’s hats, dishtowels, pots, pans, mixing bowls, recipe books, utensils, etc.
- Blend some Christmas décor among your kitchen utensils
- Options: Use things people donate or loan, or purchase items that will later be donated to a domestic shelter, mission field, or someone whose house burns.
REFRESHMENTS
- Variety of casseroles; Christmas cookies, candy, etc.

PROGRAM ORDER
- Opening prayer
- Refreshments (Can be anywhere in the program) 30 minutes
- Song (Choose one or more): Take My Life and Let it Be, I am Thine O Lord, Open my Eyes, Open the Eyes of my Heart, In My Life Lord be Glorified, We Bow Down, Reign in Me, Cleanse Me, Spirit of the Living God, Let God be God in Me,
- Spiritual Challenge
- Prayer for self-control
- Offering
- Announce soup contest winner, if applicable
- Missions presentation
- Prayer for missions
- Crafts and fellowship

ICEBREAKER
Divide into two teams and provide several hula hoops to each team. At the sound of a bell or whistle, each lady must start whirling the hula hoop around her waist. When it falls, she passes it on to the next lady.

The team must count how many times the hoop rotates for each lady. The winning team will have the most total rotations at the end of 10 minutes. Give each lady a small, inexpensive prize.

SONGS:
(Jot down the ones you have selected and have words or power point available for everyone.)

SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE
In your mind’s eye, I want you to draw a circle around yourself and the people and things you have control over.

(Take a couple of minutes to allow ladies to think about what they control.)
Ladies, I hope your circle is very small, for in reality the only thing or person we have control of is ourself. And unfortunately some of us don’t do a very good job of that. (If you have access to a Hula Hoop, use that to demonstrate our area of control.)

When I place this Hula Hoop around me, this is about how much area I have control over. And sometimes, I don’t do too well at that. (Demonstrate how to keep the hula hoop in motion............if like me, it won’t take long to fall, but it will be fun.) The Hula Hoop falls, just like my actions of trying to control those around me.

Our lesson tonight is about self-control. According to Paul, self control leads to happiness and contentment and I think we would all like to be in that state.

Even those of us who have young children or even infants, don’t really have control over them. The best we can hope for is influence on them. Yes, we can make them do what we say, sometimes, but we can’t make them like it or even continue that behavior as they leave our homes.

You see, once we exercise self-control, then our circle outside of ourselves begins to grow so we can influence others around us. Let me explain there is a difference in influence and manipulation.

Manipulation is the use of influence and other deceptive techniques to gain the goals and ends of the one who is doing the manipulating. Underhandedness, sneakiness, and lying often are used to achieve the desired outcome. While influence is used, it is for selfish desire and getting one’s own way. It is about winning and others losing.

Unadulterated, genuine influence is the use of one’s own behaviors and beliefs to achieve the “right” outcome for the good of everyone involved. The goal is unselfish and concerns the other person and all those who are impacted by the ripples. This is about everyone winning.

(Titus 2:1-8) You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God. Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

You may kid yourself into believing you have control over your children, but stop and think a minute. You may control their environment, but their reactions and responses are pretty much their own. That’s why you spend so much time and make so many rules trying to “influence” them to change.

So, what is self-control and what does it mean in my life?
Self-control is the act of taking responsibility and ownership of one’s choices, habits, words, and even thoughts. Anyone can practice self-control. Many do a good job of self-control. Self-control is an expectation of modern society. If you can’t demonstrate self-control, often the legal system will take control for you and try to exert control over you.

In the Christian world, self-control is a fruit of the Spirit:

(Galatians 5:22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
(Galatians 5:23) gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

While we as Christians practice self-control, we can be assured the mind and spirit devoted to God has the prevailing help of the Holy Spirit to achieve Godly, self-control.

God also exerts influence in our lives, but He will never make our choices for us or manipulate us to do what He wants, even though He wants what is best for us. We will always have choice as an option.

Self-control, therefore, is our choice to allow the Holy Spirit to guide and lead us to make good choices, and to act and speak in a way that expands and enlarges our influence upon others.

How we behave and what we say will either enlarge or shrink our circle of influence upon those around us.

The question I want to explore is - How can I enlarge my ability to influence?

One thing that has been identified as growing influence is trust.

Think of someone in whom you have a great deal of trust and they have influence upon your life. What are the characteristics that have contributed to that trust and influence? Jot down those factors in the blank space below.

Ask: What are some of the factors that create trust?

(I hope some of the answers include honesty (walk the walk and talk the talk), time, attention, and love as we have studied previously. If not, remind the ladies of these attributes.)
(1 Peter 5:6-9) Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Remember Peter, the impulsive, reactive apostle? He learned a few lessons along the way. He says humble yourself before God. That is the first step to loving others with genuine God-like love. Only when you truly love can you cast others behaviors and actions on Him and act to control your own, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

When you positively impact and influence the people closest to you, your ability to influence others around you grows. It grows at church, at work and other places you frequent. People learn you are trustworthy. Therefore, they entrust you with bigger and wider responsibilities.

The one thing you have control of is your attitude. You alone can choose your attitude in any given circumstance on any given day, at any given time.

Victor Frankl, who wrote Man’s Search for Meaning, was a captive in a Jewish concentration camp during WWII. He watched many of the prisoners make rounds sharing their last morsel of food with others and distributing hope for survival. He called this attitude “the last human freedom.”

The Nazis had taken all freedoms and dignity away but they had no control over the attitude the prisoners chose to use in this situation. These men (prisoners) had a huge circle of influence on other prisoners and on the guards, due to their positive attitude.

Re-read Titus 2: 1-8 at your tables together. Discuss the answers to the following questions. (Allow 6-8 minutes)

How many times did he say to have self-control?

Who is to learn self-control?

What did the impulsive Peter say about self-control?

What is one of the fruits of the Spirit that helps with influence?

Say: When men (enemies) seem to take everything away from you, you still have the last human dignity and that is your choice to opt for a good, positive attitude and to respond accordingly.

As we exercise self control our circle of influence will grow. As our circle of influence grows, we can develop our relationships to influence our friends for Jesus.
**PRAYER**

Pray to enlarge and improve your influence with others as you learn self-control through the help of the Holy Spirit.

**CRAFT, GAMES, ETC.**

This may be your Christmas meeting/party. If so, you may want to have refreshments and a gift exchange at the end of the evening.

This has been a heavy lesson, so have fun and fellowship together. Some fun games are included at the end of this chapter. Be sure to reward winners.

These games are not in the participant book; you will need to make copies.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Next meeting date, time, location

**Who, what, when. Where, what to bring.........**
# Christmas Movies Trivia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Movie</th>
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**Christmas Songs**

Read the clues on the left and identify the Christmas Song.

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<td>6.</td>
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<td>52 decorated corridors</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>The hump riding trio</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>A dream for choppers</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>Peak oration</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>Question to the mother</td>
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# Christmas Songs Answer Key

Read the clues on the left and identify the Christmas Song.

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<td>Silver Bells</td>
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<td>O Holy Night</td>
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<td>Bye, Bye to bed</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>A dream for choppers</td>
<td>All I Want for Christmas is my ……</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Dozen yules</td>
<td>Twelve Days of Christmas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Peak oration</td>
<td>Go Tell it on the Mountain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Question to the mother</td>
<td>Mary Did You Know?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pointless Game

Do not copy this; read it aloud. Provide pencil/pen and paper for each player. I am going to read a list of actions or preferences. You will receive or lose points for each item. The person with the most points at the end of the game will be the winner. This is an easy sit-down game for everyone. (This can be customized to be more seasonal by adding Christmas, Thanksgiving, or other holiday activities.)

Take 10 points if you have ever been an angel (shepherd for men) in a Christmas play.

Add 12 points if all your Christmas Shopping is done.

Add 6 points if the majority of your shopping is done.

Add 13 points if all the gifts are wrapped.

Add 4 points if you have a dog at home.

Add 1 point if you have a cat at home, because this is a dog lover’s game.

Subtract 14 points if none of your gifts are wrapped.

Subtract 2 points if you have ever fallen asleep in church.

Add 10 points if you can recite the 23rd Psalm without looking.

Subtract 3 points if you have ever let your driver’s license expire.

Add 5 points if you have ever worn mismatched shoes.

Subtract 2 points if you like pineapple on pizza, because that is not of God.

Add 5 points if you have ever worn something wrong side out.

Add 4 points if you have ever burned dinner so badly and had to start over or go out.

Subtract 4 points if you have ever dented your car.

Subtract 8 points if you dented (your fault) someone else’s car.

Add 2 points if you have ever spilled something while dining in a restaurant.

Add 20 points if you can recall your first grade teacher’s first name.

Add 4 points if you talk to your plants.

Add 8 points if you name your cars and other possessions.

Total your points. Have a prize for the winner(s).
Another Version of A Pointless Game

The game is played like Upset the Fruit Basket. Everyone sits in a circle. The leader starts by standing in the middle and calling out… “Trade places if you have ever…” (Danced the Jitterbug, for instance)

Players who have done this activity then scramble and must trade seats with another. The leader tries to get a seat before the others. The last person standing is in the middle and must call another “Trade places if…” This is an active game for healthy players.

When you are in the middle, try to name something that everyone has done so everyone has to trade places, like “Trade places if you have ever eaten at McDonalds.” Be alert to when players are getting bored with the game and call a halt.

Musical Bags

Materials: Paper sacks, various funny items to wear. For example: a bright feather boa, a funny pair of glasses, a funny hat, scarves, gloves, mittens, goggles, aprons, toboggans, etc. Put one item in each paper bag and seal it shut.

For each table or small group of ladies, start with one or more sealed paper sacks with one item in it. Start playing some music. Try to collect enough items to have about 20 bags. Makes a great group picture.

During this time the ladies pass the bags around the table or their group. When the music stops, the person holding the bag has to open it and put on what is in the bag.

All the ladies who end up with the bag have to put the item on, go to the stage to "model" it, and have a group picture taken. Then the game is over.

Bloomers

Another variation is to seal a corsage in each bag, and announce from the stage that each bag contains "bloomers," and the one holding the bag when the music stops will be required to wear them for the rest of the evening. Many women will think there is a rather large pair of underwear in the bag and will do anything not to be holding it when the music stops. Very fun!

For this activity, I would have perhaps 2 bags at each table. It would also add more humor if one bag really did have an old fashioned pair of bloomers!
Right and Left Christmas Gift Exchange

Each gift is numbered as the ladies arrive. (Always have extra gifts for those who forget to bring one. Some may say they don’t want to participate, but encourage them to do so. It is always fun to receive.) Have all the ladies sit in one big circle. Each lady draws a number from a hat or container. There should be as many numbers in the hat as are numbered under the tree. When everyone has drawn, each lady goes and gets the corresponding gift under the tree. This could take a while if they have to search, so it works best for someone to pick up a gift, call the number and the lady with that number comes to get the gift. DO NOT OPEN the GIFT!
When all the gifts are taken, tell them you will read a story. Each time the word right is read, they are to pass their gift to the lady on their right. If the word left is read, they pass it to the left. Listen carefully as the words will be read several times. When the story is done, they open the gift on their lap.

Twas the night RIGHT before Christmas when RIGHT through the house
Not a creature was LEFT stirring, not even a mouse--
The stockings were hung RIGHT by the chimney with care,
in hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be RIGHT there.
The children were nestled RIGHT snug in their beds,
while visions of sugarplums danced RIGHT in their heads,
And mama in her kerchief, and I in my cap,
had just settled RIGHT down for a long winter's nap,
When RIGHT out on the LEFT lawn there rose such a clatter,
I sprang RIGHT from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the RIGHT window I LEFT like a flash;
tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
LEFT a luster of midday to objects RIGHT below.
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
but a miniature sleight and eight tiny reindeer.
With a little old driver RIGHT lively and quick;
I knew RIGHT in a moment it must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came;
and he whistled and shouted, and called them RIGHT by name:
"Now, Dasher! Now, Dancer! Now, Prancer and Vixen!
On Comet, on Cupid, on Donder and Blitzen!
To the RIGHT top of the porch! To the LEFT top of the wall!
Now dash away, dash away, dash RIGHT away all!"
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly
when they meet RIGHT with an obstacle, mount RIGHT up to the sky,
So up to the housetop the coursers they LEFT flew,
with a sleighful of toys and St. Nicholas, too.
And then in a twinkling, I heard RIGHT on the roof,
the prancing and pawing of each little RIGHT and LEFT hoof.
As I drew in my head and was turning LEFT around,
down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
He was dressed all in fur, RIGHT from his head to his LEFT foot,
and his clothes were all LEFT tarnished with ashes and soot.
A bundle of toys he had flung RIGHT on his back,
and he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.
His RIGHT and LEFT eyes, how they twinkled! His dimples\how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was LEFT drawn up like a bow,
and the beard LEFT on his chin was as white as the snow.
The stump of a pipe he held RIGHT in his teeth,
and the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath.
He had a broad face and a round little belly,
that shook when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly.
He was RIGHT chubby and plump, a RIGHT, RIGHT jolly old elf,
and I laughed when I saw him in spite of myself.
A wink of his LEFT eye and a LEFT twist of his head,
soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.
He spoke not a word, but went RIGHT straight to his work,
and filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk
And laying his finger to the LEFT of his nose,
and giving a nod, he LEFT up the chimney he rose.
He sprang RIGHT to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
and away they all LEFT like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he LEFT--out of sight,
"Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night! You may open your gifts.
Follow the Recipe

*(James 1:19-22)* My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

JANUARY

FOCUS
- We need a model and practice time so we can improve our communication style within all our relationships. Effective communication maintains trust and strong relationships.

PREPARATION
- Determine who will prepare the desserts.
- This year you may want to publish a church recipe book. It can be done through a company, or talented computer ladies can do it themselves.
- Bring a variety of cake pans and pie pans for the devotion table. Decorate.
- Optional: Purchase a recipe box for each lady. Use index cards for recipes each month to be added. Alternative: The ladies can take notes on the cards and file them for future devotions.
- Obtain a small gift for each newcomer to WMI; good idea to do this all year.
- Participant workbook or pages
- Clip clothespins for the icebreaker
- Signs and pins or tape for the Stupid Memory game

DECORATIONS (optional)
- Aprons, chef’s hats, dishtowels, pots, pans, mixing bowls, recipe books, utensils, etc.
- Options: Use things people donate or loan, or purchase items that will later be donated to a domestic shelter, mission field, or someone whose house burns.

REFRESHMENTS
- Dessert Bar or Ice Cream Bar with variety of toppings (This may be the last dessert for all those who made resolutions for weight loss in the coming year.)

PROGRAM
- Opening prayer
- Spiritual Challenge
- Song (Choose one or more): O Be Careful Little Feet Where You Go, etc., I Want to Be Like Jesus, Make Me an Instrument, I Would Be Like Jesus, O To Be Like Thee, Sweet, Sweet Spirit, Let God Be God in Me,
- Missions presentation
- Prayer for missions
- Refreshments (Can be anywhere in the program)
- Gift Exchange, Games, Fellowship
**ICEBREAKER**

This time, let’s play the over-used clothespin game. Buy some clip clothespin at the local Dollar Store. Give each lady 5 pins to attach to her blouse or top. Explain that each time she says the word “always” or “never” another lady may steal a pin from her. The first lady to notice the word, may steal the pin. Only one pin may be taken for each “slip of the tongue.”

Be sure to have a prize for the winner(s) at the end of the evening. You could have a tie so be prepared with extra prizes. The prizes may be simple candy bars, chewing gum, safety pins, or matches.

Play the Stupid Memory Game at the end of this lesson. This is the first meeting of 2014, so this game is about years that events occurred.

**SONG:**

Oh, Be Careful Little Mouth What You Say

**SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE**

*Assertive Communication* is a form of self-expression in which you stand up for your rights without violating the rights of others. Assertive Communication can be seen as the middle of a continuum between passive and aggressive communication. Many people refer to this as tact or diplomacy. Assertive communication is our goal as Christian women.

Let’s compare this communication style to a vehicle. Think of a 2004 SUV with 60,000 miles. She is comfortable, gets good mileage, carries several ladies and gets you to and from your appointments. She gets through traffic jams and parks easily. She is a functional vehicle. She is assertive.

*Passive Communication* is an indirect form of self-expression in which the person does not usually reveal his/her true thoughts or feelings. However, the feelings may be communicated non-verbally through gestures, facial expressions or posture. This is deceptive because the person may say one thing and appear to be saying something else. She seldom reveals her true thoughts.

This is the person who often holds real feelings inside until she explodes. Then the recipient of the shrapnel may not even be the cause of the explosion or know why she pulled the pin on the grenade.

If you compare this lady to a vehicle, she is likely the original VW Beatle. She can sneak in and out of a parking lot without being seen. She won’t run over anyone, but often gets run over herself. She will arrive at her destination, but it may take more time. She is experienced, and while the ladies may admire her, others wish she would park it. She toots her little horn quietly and no one moves. Later, she sits and stews about her circumstances.
Aggressive Communication is a form of self-expression in which the speaker states his/her wants and needs with no regard to the rights and feelings of others. The aggressors also use body language to support their behavior that may be demonstrative and intimidating.

The aggressor is usually honest and perhaps even brutally honest about her feelings. She is so forward, others often slink away or shut down to avoid the shrapnel which often flies from the aggressor.

When you compare this woman to a vehicle she is a bulldozer. She will run over anyone and anything leaving a trail of destruction behind. She is awkward, rampant, and out of place with the other vehicles. Women will avoid getting close to this artillery. She parks in an obvious spot and gloats over her ability to run things her way.

Passive-aggressive behavior is passive, yet quietly destructive, sometimes obstructive and resistant to following through with expectations in interpersonal or occupational situations. It can manifest itself as learned helplessness, procrastination, stubbornness, resentment, sullenness, or deliberate/repeated failure to accomplish requested tasks for which one is (often explicitly) responsible.

It is a defense mechanism, and (more often than not) only partly conscious and mostly habitual. For example a worker asked to organize a meeting might happily agree, but will then take so long on each task in the process and offer excuses such as calls not being returned or that the computer is too slow, that things aren't ready when the meeting is due to start. A colleague is forced to hurriedly complete the task, or the meeting is postponed.

While their behaviors are quite mellow and pathetic, the underlying message is to aggressively hurt, blame, or demean someone else, something or situation. The message is masked by the passive behaviors but is very clear to those who know the situation. She often plays the role of the victim.

This is such a difficult behavior to change because it may have developed over years due to some circumstances in which she was actually a victim. Once having used the victim role to get her way, she has honed it to perfection to manipulate everyone. As her friends, we are afraid to not do her will or she will make our lives miserable. She has a talent at holding people hostage.

This behavior is often demonstrated by a negative, pessimistic, pouting behavior. People with this personality style are often quite unconscious of their impact on others, and thus may be genuinely dismayed when held to account for the inconvenience or discomfort caused by their passive-aggressive behaviors. In that context, they fail to see how they might have provoked a negative response, so they feel misunderstood, held to unreasonable standards, and/or put-upon.

Others, however, are very aware of their behaviors because it has been so effective for them throughout life and has gotten them what they needed or wanted. These persons may take pride in their ability to manipulate others to get what they want, when they want it while not realizing why she gets her way.
Remedying this behavior can be difficult; efforts to convince the person that their unconscious feelings are being expressed passively, and that the passive expression of those feelings (their behavior) invokes other people's anger or disappointment with the person, are often met with resistance.

I have spent a lot of words on this subject because, unfortunately, many people who don’t communicate well, use this method. Therefore, I hope that education and descriptions may make some of us self-aware so we can begin to recognize our own behaviors, diagnose them, and take steps to improve our communication style.

(Note to leader: You may have someone in your group with this behavior who will be impacted, hurt, angry, or other emotional reactions when she becomes aware of her own behaviors. Pay attention to non-verbal clues and make sure a close friend encourages her in a non-threatening manner. Passive-aggressive behaviors that have been in place for years may need professional intervention. Talk to the pastor before the meeting if you have a special concern.)

To summarize passive-aggressive communication let me compare this to a vehicle. Since the passive lady was a VW Beatle and the aggressor was a bulldozer, let’s combine those vehicles. Imagine driving down the road in your SUV, and the VW pulls up behind you. She starts to tailgate and weave in and out as if looking to pass. Finally, as you near a straight place in the highway, she pulls around and politely passes you. As she nears your left fender, she puts on her right turn signal, begins to pull in front of you. At that point you can see huge, metal dozer tracks have replaced the tires as she clips your front fender, breaks your headlight and knocks off your bumper. She smiles and waves as she proceeds down the road.

That is how you feel after several conversations with the passive aggressive communicator. It is a daily encounter with fender benders and sometimes worse. She looks mild and meek but is strong and lethal.

Now that you have heard all four types of communicators, let’s take some time to think about our own communication styles. I’m going to pass out a worksheet for you to examine yourself. You will not share this with anyone unless you choose to do so.

(Play some quiet reflective music for this activity. Allow about 10 minutes or until you see ladies get restless or begin to talk among themselves.)

- Using the chart in your book, reflect on the description of the four communication styles and examine your own behaviors to see which one you use most often. When you are ineffective, what do you do and in what circumstances do you find you fall into this trap? You will not be sharing this with anyone.
- What do you need to alter this behavior?
If you are not finished, you can do that later at home.

We will complete this lesson next month, so be sure to come and get the full benefit of communications. In the meanwhile, pay close attention to the style you and others use when communicating.

If you find a good example of one of the styles, write it down and bring it to the next session and share, without using names please.

**PRAYER**

Wisdom, clarity, forgiveness, love, understanding, and courage.

**MISSIONS**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**REFRESHMENTS AND FUN OR CRAFTS**

**Another Stupid Memory Game- Name That Year**

Most of us associate events with things like births, deaths, and marriages on our own lives. This game is designed to see how close people can come to actual years of certain newsworthy events. This will work well if you have people of all age groups in your group.

Before the meeting, write years on 8 X 11 papers and post around the room, far enough apart for people to stand in a group by a sign. The years will cover from 1950 – 2008. If you wish to make it a medium difficulty game, put 5 years on one sign, i.e. 1950-1955. That cuts the signs down to about 26. For a real easy game, make the years by decades, 1950-1960. For a much harder game, put the exact years on the signs. (That’s over 50 signs of my math is correct.)

Read one of the events below, then say go. Players are to go to the sign they believe contains the date or date range of the activity or event you read. Each person who is in the correct year(s) is given 1 point. The person with the most points at the end of the game is the winner. (A good prize is a book of events, Useless Facts, Life Magazine’s Annual Review, etc.) Each lady must keep track of her own score.

Here are some examples, and be sure to use your own, including events from your church or community. Use any or all below.
1. The comic strip Peanuts first was published. (1950)
2. GI Joe came on the market. (1964)
3. Atari introduced Pong. (1972)
4. *The Church of the Galilean was built at Rocky Ford Rd.* (1975)
5. The first McDonalds opened. (1954)
8. The first space walk occurred (1965)
9. John F. Kennedy was shot. (1963)
10. Robert Kennedy was shot. (1968)
11. Martin Luther King was shot. (1968)
12. Smoking was linked to lung cancer (1957)
15. Post-it notes were invented. (1974)
19. The Beatles came to the US (1962)
20. Watergate (1973)
22. 911 (2001)
23. The Gulf War begins (1990)
25. First artificial heart placed in a human (1982)
27. First mammal is cloned successfully (1997)
28. Berlin Wall is built (1961)
30. Jean Benet’ Ramsey is murdered (1996)
31. Russia Launches Sputnik (1957)
33. Jonestown Massacre (1978)
34. Woodstock (1969)
35. First Cabbage Patch Doll (1983)
38. The Rocky Ford Free Methodist Church changed its name to The Rock. (2012)

Award a prize(s) to the winner(s).

Wrap up the clothes pin game and determine the winner.

Mention to the ladies that words like “always” and “never” are used a lot by aggressive communicators. One thing we can learn from tonight’s activity is that we are all guilty of using these words. We can learn next month how to be more assertive and what words to use that sound better to others and will thereby expand our influence and build trust in our relationships.

There are only two times that these words really apply:
1. God is always the same, and
2. He will never fail.
Follow the Recipe, Continued

*James 1:19-22* My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

**FEBRUARY**

**FOCUS**
- We need a model and practice time so we can improve our communication style within all our relationships. Effective communication maintains trust and strong relationships.

**PREPARATION**
- Determine who will prepare the desserts.
- This year you may want to publish a church recipe book. It can be done through a company, or talented computer ladies can do it themselves.
- Bring a variety of cake pans and pie pans for the devotion table. Decorate.
- Optional: Purchase a recipe box for each lady. Use index cards for recipes each month to be added. Alternative: The ladies can take notes on the cards and file them for future devotions.
- Obtain a small gift for each newcomer to WMI; good idea to do this all year.
- Participant workbook or pages
- Bottle filled with candy hearts and a prize(s)

**DECORATIONS (optional)**
- Aprons, chef’s hats, dishtowels, pots, pans, mixing bowls, recipe books, utensils, etc.
- Options: Use things people donate or loan, or purchase items that will later be donated to a domestic shelter, mission field, or someone whose house burns.
- If you are using this in February, add some Valentine’s Day decorations.
- Bring a valentine mold or cake plate for the devotion table and decorate.
- Challenge: Bring a food that is red or pink for a Valentine Pitch-In; someone may make meatloaf in a Valentine mold, etc.

**REFRESHMENTS**
- Dessert Bar or Ice Cream Bar with variety of toppings (This may be the last dessert for all those who made resolutions for weight loss in the coming year.)

**PROGRAM**
- Opening prayer
- Spiritual Challenge
• Song (Choose one or more): O Be Careful Little Feet Where You Go, etc., I Want to Be Like Jesus, Make Me an Instrument, I Would Be Like Jesus, O To Be Like Thee, Sweet, Sweet Spirit, Let God Be God in Me,

• Missions presentation
• Prayer for missions
• Refreshments (Can be anywhere in the program)
• Gift Exchange, Games, Fellowship

ICEBREAKER

Fill a jar with small heart valentines (the kind with sayings on them). Count as you fill the jar! Pass the jar around as everyone's arriving and let them guess or have the bottle sitting near where the ladies enter. Record everyone's answer and give a prize to the closest to the correct amount at the end of your event. You may draw for the bottle of candy or use it as the prize.

Pass around the handout with “heart” songs. Have the ladies leave it face down until everyone has a copy. Then allow 6-8 minutes to answer the questions.

Read the answers and give a prize(s) to the winner(s).

SONG:

Oh, Be Careful Little Mouth What You Say

SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE

Last month you may recall, we started the lesson on communication and the four styles of communicators. Your assignment was to observe communication styles during the month and capture any good examples to share with us.

Who has an example they can share without using names or events that would identify anyone, unless you have permission to share.

(Allow a couple of stories, share yourself, or move forward.)

What kind of communication style was described in the story?

If necessary, go back to last month and define each of the four styles, Passive, aggressive, assertive and passive-aggressive.
Let’s look at **why** we should use **assertive communication**. Communicating assertively increases the effectiveness of an individual’s process because it: *(The ladies will be filling in blanks as you read these.)*

- Is respectful to oneself and others.
- Leads to better feelings for yourself and others.
- Gives you self-control over your own behavior. (last month’s study)
- Tends to work better than being aggressive or passive.
- Increases your response options to avoid being reactive.
- Tends to help foster a sense of self-confidence.
- Fosters and maintains good relationships, which is our goal.
- Helps people really hear what you are saying, and
- Builds and maintains good relationships so we can be an effective witness.

Paul said, *(Col 4:6)* *let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

*(Matthew 12:34b)* *.... For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.*

*(Matthew 12:35)* *The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.*

*(Matthew 12:36)* *But I tell you that men will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word they have spoken.*

*(Matthew 12:37)* *For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.*

Learning to communicate assertively is adding the salt of grace Paul is talking about in Colossians.

The response to **aggressive** behavior is often retreat or defense. The person speaking appears to be on the attack, so the responder will either defend him/herself or return the attack. Neither response is effective communication.

In contrast, the **passive** approach often angers or hurts the hearer, or makes them feel the issue is unimportant. Ultimately, passive communication is no more effective than aggressive communication. Passive communication seldom gets anything accomplished. To respond to an
aggressive communicator in a passive manner allows that person to continue in her aggression and renders you ineffective as well.

Let’s see what communication behaviors might look and sound like.

(It will add fun to your program if you have some very expressive people who could role play what a passive, aggressive, and passive-aggressive person might say in a situation. Have them act out the role and let the group guess what behavior they are demonstrating.)

Here is the situation: Your boss (you can play the boss or get a volunteer) has stormed into the room and is yelling so loud at you for an error you have made on the monthly report. Everyone in the office can hear his angry tirade and you are completely embarrassed by it. You respond this way - (Don’t announce the method, let the ladies guess.)

Actresses:
1. Passive – (In a quiet, whiny voice, avoiding eye contact, and perhaps crying a bit) “I am so, so sorry. I don’t know how that happened; let me have it so I can fix it right away. Please, I am sorry and it won’t happen again.”
2. Aggressive – (Yelling right back in a loud, firm voice, hands on hips, and getting in his face) “What do you mean there is a mistake? I checked that report twice! Let me see that! You always yell at me for anything I do right or wrong! If you didn’t have so many of us working in the same room, maybe I could get something right for once!”
3. Passive-Aggressive – (Looks just like the passive person; talks calmly but not as whiny, giggles a little as she begins) “Oh dear, I guess Jenny must have given me the wrong data yesterday, you know how busy she is (winks and nudges the boss). I probably should just quit and let someone else do my job. I’m sure you have someone in mind already. Should I fix this or do you want someone else to do it?”

The table in your program book will help you recognize the sound of passive, aggressive and assertive behavior. Listen to yourself during conversations and identify what style of communication you are using. When you are aware of your own communication, then and only then can you begin to improve. Remember, improvement starts at a personal level.

(Do not read this in the session; it is a tool for the participants.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Style</th>
<th>Words Used &amp; Voice Tone</th>
<th>Body Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assertive Communication</strong></td>
<td>&quot;I feel...&quot;</td>
<td>Eye contact, stance is non-threatening, gestures are meaningful not aggressive. Body language matches words being said.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is a form of self-expression in which you stand up for your own rights without violating the rights of others. Assertive communication can be seen as the middle of the communication continuum and is highly effective. “Chevy SUV”</td>
<td>&quot;When I hear...&quot;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I would like...&quot;</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;And then we can...&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Natural, clear, non-threatening.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passive communication</strong></td>
<td>&quot;I'm sorry...&quot;</td>
<td>Slouched, looks down often, avoids eye contact; cold sweaty palms, may fidget, body says retreat, may look pitiful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is an indirect form of self-expression in which the person does not usually reveal his/her true thoughts or feelings. However, the feelings may be communicated by non-verbal methods. “Volkswagen Beetle”</td>
<td>&quot;I'm really not sure...&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I shouldn't say this, but...&quot;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;If it is ok with you...&quot;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Soft spoken, pauses, wavering, rambling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aggressive communication</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Always&quot;, &quot;never&quot;, &quot;You&quot; statements, sarcasm, put-downs, disrespectful, Loud and shrill.</td>
<td>Stands, points, superior acting, hands on hips, solid with feet planted, clenched jaws, intimidating posture, body says charge. Body language is threatening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is a form of self-expression in which the speaker states his/her wants and needs at the expense of others rights and feelings. “Bulldozer”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passive-Aggressive communication</strong></td>
<td>&quot;I'm sorry...&quot;</td>
<td>Slouched, looks down often, avoids eye contact; cold sweaty palms, may fidget, body says retreat, may look pitiful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is a form of ineffective expression where the person does not verbally reveal her true feelings or thoughts, but expresses them non-verbally or indirectly by sniping and backbiting. “VW Bulldozer”</td>
<td>&quot;I'm really not sure...&quot;</td>
<td>Winks, smiles with a smirk, gets sick, resigns from committees, drops out of games, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I shouldn't say this, but...&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;If it is ok with you...&quot;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;I'm not going to...&quot;</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I’ll just quit, go home, get out of the way, etc....”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“She said, she did, she made me...”</td>
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</table>

Start reading here:

Let’s look at a model of communication that will help us learn how to be more assertive.

The "DESC" model is a four-step method for practicing Assertive Communication. Assertive Communication is not a routine or normal kind of language pattern for most of us. Therefore, a model can be an effective means to deliberately practice and subsequently implement into our conversations.
There are three types of conversations: play, fighting, and problem solving. Play is a social conversation meant for fun and mutual sharing of information. This "DESC" model does not need to be used in a playful setting.

Fighting is a result of differences and is typically a win-lose confrontation. Fighting is always a battle of wins and losses.

Problem solving is a systematic win-win method which can use the "DESC model to achieve a solution. This model will help us manage conflict situations with a calm, reasonable approach and avoid fighting.

Listed below are the steps of the "DESC" model and some words to guide your conversations. It is appropriate to rearrange the steps of the "DESC" model, when you feel the situation warrants a different approach. For instance, some people will be defensive if you begin with- "When I...” The better approach might be to start with- "I feel..." "When I hear...”

Now let’s see and hear what an assertive communicator looks and sounds like. (Have someone demonstrate the correct model or go through the steps in the table below. Just do one or the other. Acting is much more memorable.)

Remember, here is the situation: Your boss has stormed into the room and is yelling so loud at you for an error you have made on the monthly report. Everyone in the office can hear his angry tirade and you are completely embarrassed by it. You respond this way -

Assertive – (In a normal, perhaps even lower voice, making direct eye contact) “Mr. Jones, could we go into the break room for a minute? I am feeling really embarrassed when your tone is so loud and all the employees in the office can hear our conversation. I know I can fix this problem if we can discuss the mistakes quietly in private.”

What you just heard from our very capable actress, ______________, was an assertive response, not a reaction using the DESC model.

First she described how she felt, the situation that was causing her feelings, what she would prefer to do, and what that would accomplish.

Look at the steps in the DESC Model table in your book. Our actress put step 2 first and step 1 second. That was certainly appropriate for the situation at hand. She could just as easily started with Step 4 and said, “I can fix the mistakes if ……………”

So this model is a tool for you to learn and to use in situations that warrant effective feedback. You can adapt it to the situation at hand just as our actress did.

Just one more caution before we practice. There are many times when the speaker is so angry or emotional they will not hear anything you say at the time. It is always a good idea to say something like, “is this a good time to talk?” or “can I see you in the break room in about 30 minutes?”
Here is a good assertive comment, “I can see you are really upset right now, but I do want to talk to you about something. Can we meet Wednesday over coffee about 9:30?” That gives her an opportunity to cool off and you an opportunity to practice how to give your feedback.

What we are going to do now, is give each of you an opportunity to practice using the model. These pages are your resource tools.

APPLICATION

- Now, look back or recall that situation you wrote down earlier about someone or something that “pushed your buttons.” Use this model to write down and practice how you can lovingly confront that person about the behavior or words that offend you and ask for what you need.

The practice sheet is included in the participant workbook. You can do this as a group and learn from each other. After you write your response, read it to another at your table. Start by then asking, “How does that make you feel when I say that?”

Help one another refine your assertive feedback so it is acceptable to the listener. Be sure you are not being passive or aggressive, but assertive.

Allow 15-20 minutes for practice.

Personal note from the writer: It is really hard for me to confront individuals whose conversations are harmful to themselves and to others around them. I have learned to start with this:

“This is really hard for me to say, but I want you to know I care very much about our relationship, so I need to share something with you…” (i.e. the DESC model)

“When I hear words like “she made me” or “she said,” I feel you are not taking responsibility for your part in the argument. (In the absence of the other party, this also becomes gossip.) I think you would get a lot more cooperation and understanding if you would state how you feel and not accuse the other person.”

If that person is receptive to what I have said, I would teach her how to use the DESC model and give her an example.

Using the words, “I prefer” seem to be non-threatening to most listeners.
### "DESC" Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;D&quot;</th>
<th>Describe the behavior or the situation. Be specific and objective. Use the speakers own words whenever possible.</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When I...</td>
<td>When we...</td>
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<td></td>
<td>When...</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>&quot;E&quot;</th>
<th>Express your feelings in response to the behavior or the situation. Explain the effect the behavior or the situation has on you and/or the group. Empathize with the feeling of the other person.</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel....</td>
<td>Then I...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I understand that you....</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>&quot;S&quot;</th>
<th>Specify one or two changes you would like made in the behavior or in the situation.</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I would prefer...</td>
<td>If you do then...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I would like...</td>
<td>Then we can....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I want or need...</td>
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<tr>
<th>&quot;C&quot;</th>
<th>Consequences: Describe the consequences that you feel will be a result of the change.</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you do then...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Then we can....</td>
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</table>

(It is not necessary to read step by step the next few pages as they are meant to be tools for the ladies to practice. Go to the CONCLUSION.)

**EXAMPLES:**

Describe

*Describe* the person's behavior or the situation you are reacting to.

- **Be specific and objective.** Use exact words whenever possible.

*Examples:*

- When I hear the tone of your voice...
- When this amount of detail is required...
- When I receive short notice...
- When I hear you say "..."
Express

*Express* your feelings and reaction to the other person's behavior or the situation in a nonjudgmental way.

*Explain* the effects that the behavior or situation has on you.

*Empathize* with the feeling of the other person.

**Examples:**
- I feel...
- Then I...
- I understand that you...

Specify

*Specify* one or two behavior changes you would like the other person to make.

**Examples:**
- I would prefer ...
- I would like ...
- I want ...
- I need

Choose

Choose the *consequences* you are prepared to carry out.

- Consequences can either be positive or negative. Don't threaten. The goal is to reach a **win-win** solution.

**Examples:**
- If you do ... then ...
- If you don't do ... then ...
- We will be able to…
- We won’t be able to
Examples of Useful and Useless Feedback

Describe the specific behavior or incident--don’t use labels or make judgments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say this</th>
<th>Instead of this</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“When you don’t do your assignments...”</td>
<td>“When you’re irresponsible...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It bothers me that you don’t let the team have more say in decisions.”</td>
<td>“When you act like a little dictator...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“When you don’t speak up, I’m not sure what you’re thinking.”</td>
<td>“It’s obvious you don’t care about the team because you don’t speak up in our meetings.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Don’t exaggerate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say this</th>
<th>Instead of this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I’m impressed with your work on the customer hotline the past two days.”</td>
<td>“Your work is always better than anyone else’s.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Speak for yourself, not for anyone else

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say this</th>
<th>Instead of this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I am uncomfortable when you and Vic argue at the meetings.”</td>
<td>“Everybody hates it when you and Vic argue.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I liked the way you organized the management report.”</td>
<td>“The teams like the management report.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I was distracted in the meeting by your jokes.”</td>
<td>“Pat told me you were telling a lot of jokes in the meeting.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Talk first about yourself, not about the other person. Avoid using “you” statements. Use “I” statements.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Say this</th>
<th>Instead of this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I’m having trouble knowing how to keep the team on track when I see...”</td>
<td>“You keep getting us off track.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONCLUSION:

I hope this has been helpful to you. I don’t wish that any of you will have to use it, and yet if a situation occurs, that you will respond, not react, with a planned response using the DESC model.

In our role play, the assertive person was able to “respond” on the spot. She had obviously had practice and was getting good at being assertive. As we are learning this new behavior, we may need to take a “time-out” or say, “could I talk to you tomorrow?”
It is okay to say to a person, “I’m not very good at giving feedback or stating my opinion, but I have been practicing a model to help me. So while this may sound rehearsed, I want you to know, I care about our relationship and I wanted to rehearse and try to get this right.”

We are going to pray about our relationships that are struggling; those that need to have repairs and restitution, so as I pray, would you also pray about your situation and ask God to clarify what needs to happen and how to approach the situation.

I hope you can understand how communicating effectively can contribute to expanding our influence and building trust in our relationships. We are creating a strong foundation to enable us to witness to our unsaved friends and family.

As we will learn in a future lesson, prayer must always precede any confrontation. Often, prayer will solve the problem and confrontation can be avoided. Let’s pray.

**PRAYER**

Wisdom, clarity, forgiveness, love, understanding, and courage.

**MISSIONS**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**REFRESHMENTS AND FUN OR CRAFTS**

Since it is February, the month of candy, let’s play the Candy Bar game.
Use the first part of each one to name a candy bar. Number down your left side of the page from 1-25. I will read a clue and you write what candy bar that clue describes.

1. Famous swashbuckling trio of old - 3 Musketeers
2. Indian Burial grounds - Mounds
3. Galaxy - Milky Way
4. Red Planet - Mars Bars
5. Home of movie stars - Hollywood bar
6. Not laughing out loud - Snickers
7. Can't hold on to anything - Butterfingers
8. A famous author - O'Henry
9. A famous former baseball Player - Baby Ruth (yes, named for President Roosevelt's daughter but there was also a Reggie (Jackson) bar which would work)
10. Famous NYC street - 5th Avenue
11. Twin Letters - M&Ms
12. Superman's other identity - Clark Bar
13. A sweet sign of affection - Kisses
14. Favorite day for working people - Payday
15. What bees make - Bit o’ Honey
17. Pleasingly Plump - Chunky
18. Two female pronouns - Hershey
19. A feline - Kitkat
20. Single women looking for him - Mr. Goodbar
21. Round flotation devices - Life Savers
22. Sun Explosion - Starburst Candies
23. Bite w/crackling noise - Crunch
24. Determines who wins most games - Skor Bar
25. A Dry Cow - Milk Duds
Refrigerate Overnight

(/**\textit{James 1:19-22}\textit{)} **\textit{My dear brothers, take note of this:**
\textit{Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.}

**March**

**FOCUS**
- We need to speak less and listen more effectively to others. Often others need to vent or just be heard and we don’t have to say anything.

**PREPARATION**
- Determine the snacks and refreshments
- Optional to have a pasta bar for March, then decorate Italian or use your own ideas
- Our group traditionally has a Baked Irish Potato Bar every March
- Challenge: Ask members to bring foods that are green.
- Obtain a small gift for each newcomer to WMI; good idea to do this all year.
- Participant workbook or pages

**DECORATIONS (optional)**
- Aprons, chef’s hats, dishtowels, pots, pans, mixing bowls, recipe books, utensils, etc.
- Optional decorate for St. Patrick’s Day
- Options: Use things people donate or loan, or purchase items that will later be donated to a domestic shelter, mission field, or someone whose house burns.

**REFRESHMENTS**
- Pasta or Potato Bar (March comfort food)
- Obtain a volunteer hostess to prepare snacks or Irish Potato Bar; may ask women to bring a dish made with potatoes to share, can be bread, candy, cookies, baked potatoes, etc.
- If you use the potato theme, try to find a Mr. Potato head doll or game to add to the décor

**PROGRAM**
- Opening prayer for food and meeting
- Refreshments 30 minutes
- Missions
- Prayer for Missions
- Song (Choose one or more): O Be Careful Little Ears What you Hear, Speak Lord for Thy Servant Heareth, Open My Ears That I May Hear, I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say,
• Spiritual Challenge
• Prayer for effective listening
• Crafts, games, fun, fellowship

ICEBREAKER

Sit in a large circle and play the old, old “Telephone” game. Don’t tell the ladies what the purpose of this is; most have probably done this in their lifetimes. The leader will whisper a sentence in the first person’s ear and it is passed around the circle. When it reaches the last person, it is spoken aloud to see how it has changed or stayed the same.

Because of the nature of our program today, you will want to place a conspirator on the end who knows your goals and is willing to change the message partially to demonstrate the point that we don’t listen well. (It should still contain a key word or name that started.) It is ok to prep her ahead of time about what you are going to say.

For instance, you may whisper, “I heard that IHOP is going to stop having pancakes and just serve waffles next year.” Your colleague at the end may say aloud, “IHOP is going to serve waffles with every pancake order the rest of the year.”

Tell the ladies to speak slowly and clearly and try a second round. Again have your colleague botch this as well.

Write below what you are going to say. You can also use the example.

Optional Method:

This is a good way for the leader to watch “how” the message is passed along. Divide into two teams and form a line. Each person will turn so the person next to them can write on their back with her finger. Write a simple one-three word phrase on cards and hand it only to the first person in each line. She can only write the message one time on the back of the person in front of her. When the message reaches the end, ask the last persons to say aloud what was written on her back. If a person does not recognize what was written, she should do her best to write the letters she could identify. Messages like “I love Jesus” or “Praise the Lord” can often be guessed.

The leader should observe how ladies are writing the message, for instance, did she use one letter at a time, or did she write in cursive, was it small or large, fast or slow, some make their letters different than others, etc.? At the end, identify what and where some communication breakdowns may have occurred.

Have a second set of cards ready in case the group wants to try it again.

Message suggestions: “Jesus wept” - “Slow to speak” - “Quick to listen” - “Language”

MISSIONS
SONGS

(Jot down the ones you have selected and have words or power point available for everyone.)

“Do You Hear What I Hear” (Christmas tune)

(You may choose to use the song before prayer at the end.)

Said the speaker to the listening ear,
Do you hear what I say,
Listen to my voice, listening ear.
Do you hear what I say?
A message, a message,
Coming out your way,
I am trusting you hear what I say,
I am trusting you hear what I say.

Said the speaker to the listening ear,
Do you know what I mean?
Do you really hear what I say?
Do you know what I mean?
I’m sad, I’m sad,
This is not my choice,
There is more than words in my voice.
There is more than words in my voice.

Said the speaker to the listening ear,
Can you hear what I need?
Do you see beyond what I say?
Can you hear what I need?
I’m sad, I’m hurt,
My heart is broken dear,
I just need for someone to hear.
I just need for someone to hear.

Said the Savior to the listening ear,
Will you stop and listen? (Will you stop and listen?)
Listen to my children in pain.
Will you stop and listen? (Will you stop and listen?)
A look, a touch, a loving, listening ear,
It may bring them healing and hope,
It may bring them healing and hope.
SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE

I hope you have recognized we are in a personal building and growing process. Each month we add something else that can help us develop better people skills and therefore more effective and lasting relationships. From these relationships, we pray that people will come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. As we focus on newcomers, I trust some of this is also valuable and helpful to already existing relationships.

While we continue to add tools to our relationship building toolbox, it is important to note that many misunderstandings erupt from poor listening skills. This is true unfortunately at home, school, work, church, and other social places we come together.

When we recognize this defect in ourselves, then we can learn and practice some new and helpful methods to keep us out of this pitfall.

Let’s look at our key scripture for this month. *(James 1:19-22)* My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

There are five main components or elements in the communication process. Tonight we are going to look at only three of those components and next month we will explore the other two and learn some ways to be better listeners. Here are the five components:

1. The speaker or sender
2. The message
3. The pathway
4. The listener, or receiver
5. The feedback

If there is a problem or an interference in any of these components, then the understanding can go way off base.

Most of you have probably played the old parlor game called “gossip line” or “telephone line,” which we just did a few minutes ago. The results are often hilarious and have no resemblance to the original message that was sent!

Why is that? Because something happened in one of the five components that mixed up, contorted, lost or obliterated the message.

I must confess at this point, that we did “rig” the results so we could make a point about our listening skills. Will you forgive me?

Really though, how many of you have attended a meeting or a conference, sat right beside each other, listeneed to the same words come out of the speaker’s mouth and then when the two of you share the story, you heard different things?
You look at each other and say, “Did you attend the same session I did?” We laugh about that because we all have done it.

Why? Often because #1, we hear what we want to hear and #2, we hear through our own life experiences and put those right into the situation. This is why it is so important to send two people to important information sessions instead of one. It may be even better to record the sessions and play it back for everyone to hear from the speaker.

James said we should be quick to listen, but too often we are quick to answer and or offer our opinion. We in fact, fail to listen completely, but listen to only what we prefer to hear and finish the rest by ourselves. The number one reason people don’t hear correctly is they are already forming an answer of their own before the speaker is finished.

I think I see a few heads nodding yes, because we all do this from time to time. And not only do we have “selective” hearing, we can totally “turn off” the speaker and go somewhere else completely in our mind.

Let’s look briefly at each element in the process.

First, the sender plays a vital role in getting the message across. She initiates the process of communication. It is up to her to organize her thoughts and present them clearly and assertively.

Remember the passive, aggressive and assertive styles of communication we learned about last month? No one wants to listen to a passive communicator and hardly anyone can really hear what an aggressive communicator has to say because we turn her off. The best possibility of really being heard is to communicate assertively, using the DESC model. I am going to say that again - - The best possibility of really being heard is to communicate assertively, using the DESC model.

Yet, anywhere in the five elements there are distractions and interferences that can distort, confuse, and/or cause misunderstanding. Can you think of an event when you were trying to listen to a speaker, but something about the person kept distracting you from her message?

Who has an example you can share? (Allow 2-3 minutes for a personal story. If no one has a story share this: I went to a seminar on addictions and I was very interested. At the time, my son had some addictions issues with drugs and alcohol. The speaker was very professional, well-dressed, and her reputation as an addiction expert was impeccable. Unfortunately, I don’t recall a thing she said because I was so taken by her ability to wear 8 bracelets at the same time and all a mixture of gold, silver, copper, pewter, bling, and charms. Her message got lost in my mesmerization of her style. They also made a bit of noise each time she moved her arm.)

The next element in the path of communication is the message itself. What is the content or goal of the sender? Is it composed in a way the receiver will be able to hear or read and understand?
What is the biggest hindrance in the presentation of the message? Language.

Absolutely it is true if we speak different languages we are going to have problems communicating. But, what if we speak different dialects or come from different cultures? Might not our use of local words and phrases trip us up?

Not only do our accents differ, but some of our words and meanings also differ. One example I can think of that has always confused me is that I have some relatives who use the phrase “Sunday week” to mean what I say as “a week from Sunday.” Consequently, I never really know when they are coming to visit until they show up on my doorstep.

Does anyone have another example of words or phrases that your friends or relatives in other areas of the country use that are different from ours? (allow a couple of responses or move on)

We must insure our message is written or spoken in a way the receiver or audience can understand.

The third element of communication is the pathway, channel, or method of communication.

This channel travels from the speaker to the receiver. How many of you remember the old hand-cranked telephones that had party lines?

Our party line had about ten people on it. Each ring was unique and identified which family home the call was for. Our ring was one long ring and one short ring. No one else was supposed to answer that call but our family. If it rang three short rings, that was for our neighbor down the road. Unfortunately, anyone could pick up the phone and listen to our conversation. It wasn’t polite but there was always at least one lady who would do that and she knew everything about everybody.

Sadly, many things could interfere with getting a call. Sometimes a storm would blow down the poles that carried the line and no one could get calls until they were repaired. Sometimes if too many picked up their telephone receiver, lots of static would interfere with hearing our caller. And sometimes, if the operator just failed to make a good connection from the incoming to the outgoing call, we couldn’t hear anything at all.

That doesn’t happen too often today with modern technology, however there are still things that can interfere in the lines of communication. That is one of the reasons face to face communication is still the best method when the message is vital to be accurate.

One of the things I dislike about email is no one can hear my tone of voice or see my facial expressions. When I send a message the receiver has no idea if my intent is light, medium, or serious. That is why, when you get some of my messages you may see a smiley face or the ever popular LOL (laugh out loud) to insure you have interpreted my message in the same vein it was intended.
Okay, so tonight we have looked at the speaker, the message, and the pathway. Next month, as I mentioned earlier, we will focus on the receiver and feedback. Then the best part is learning some tips to help us become better listeners. And that is something I am sure we can use at home and at work, as well as in church and in Christ’s service.

**PRAYER**

Pray for those who need someone to listen and for those who will be the listeners.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

This month, I need you to save all your empty toilet paper rolls and paper towel rolls and bring them to our next meeting. We will make a cross form the rolls.

**ACTIVITIES, GAMES, CRAFTS**

If you have a Potato Bar for refreshments, here is a fun game.
Potato Trivia

1. In what country did French Fries first get created? _________________________

2. In what country was the potato chip first developed? _______________________

3. Name the popular 60s song and dance. _________________________________

4. A very fast-paced game. _____________________________________________

5. Dress up potato dolls. _______________________________________________

6. Kids “choosing” rhyme. _____________________________________________

7. Vice President who messed up “potato.” ______________________________

8. He’s in the garden. _________________________________________________

9. Sloppy, wrinkled dress. _____________________________________________

10. Insignificant issue. _________________________________________________

11. A controversial issue. ______________________________________________

12. Stop splitting hairs. _______________________________________________

13. Yam __________________________________________________________________

14. Ordinary type fellow. _______________________________________________
1. US
2. US
3. Mashed Potato
4. Hot Potato
5. Mr. Potato Head
6. One Potato, Two Potato
7. Dan Quayle
8. Potato Bug
9. Potato Sack
10. Small potatoes
11. Hot Potato
12. You say Potato, I’ll say Patato
13. Sweet Potatoes
14. Common Tater
Refrigerate Overnight, Continued

*(James 1:19-22)* My dear brothers, take note of this:
Everyone should *be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.*

**APRIL**

**FOCUS**
- We need to speak less and listen more effectively to others. Often others need to vent or just be heard and we don’t have to say anything.

**PREPARATION**
- Determine the snacks and refreshments
- Determine the refreshments and who will provide them; our ladies love a Mexican Pitch-in, we do it every year. Another activity we like is having a baby shower for the local Pregnancy Care Center. We decorate for a baby shower and play baby shower games and often have a speaker come from PCC. A baby Cake and punch are the refreshments.
- Obtain a small gift for each newcomer to WMI; good idea to do this all year.
- Participant workbooks or pages
- Materials for crosses

**DECORATIONS (optional)**
- Aprons, chef’s hats, dishtowels, pots, pans, mixing bowls, recipe books, utensils, etc.
- Be sure to add some spice with décor from the theme you choose for April – Mexican, Easter, eggs, baby showers, etc.
- Options: Use things people donate or loan, or purchase items that will later be donated to a domestic shelter, mission field, or someone whose house burns.

**REFRESHMENTS**

**PROGRAM**
- Start the crosses craft so the primer can dry
- Opening prayer for food and meeting
- Refreshments 30 minutes
- Missions
• Prayer for Missions
• Song (Choose one or more): O Be Careful Little Ears What you Hear, Speak Lord for Thy Servant Heareth, Open My Ears That I May Hear, I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say,
• Spiritual Challenge
• Prayer for effective listening
• Crafts, games, fun, fellowship

**ICEBREAKER**

If you are making crosses, this will be your first activity.

Read the note to the leader at the start of the Spiritual Challenge for a leader possible object lesson here.

**MISSIONS**

**SONGS**

(Jot down the ones you have selected and have words or power point available for everyone.)

“Do You Hear What I Hear” (Christmas tune)

(You may choose to use the song before prayer at the end.)

Said the speaker to the listening ear,
Do you hear what I say,
Listen to my voice, listening ear.
Do you hear what I say?
A message, a message,
Coming out your way,
I am trusting you hear what I say,
I am trusting you hear what I say.

Said the speaker to the listening ear,
Do you know what I mean?
Do you really hear what I say?
Do you know what I mean?
I’m sad, I’m sad,
This is not my choice,
There is more than words in my voice.
There is more than words in my voice.
Said the speaker to the listening ear,
Can you hear what I need?
Do you see beyond what I say?
Can you hear what I need?
I’m sad, I’m hurt,
My heart is broken dear,
I just need for someone to hear.
I just need for someone to hear.

Said the Savior to the listening ear,
Will you stop and listen? (Will you stop and listen?)
Listen to my children in pain.
Will you stop and listen? (Will you stop and listen?)
A look, a touch, a loving, listening ear,
It may bring them healing and hope,
It may bring them healing and hope.

SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE

Note to leader: If you are really brave, you can start this devotion as the ladies are working on their craft. If I was you, I would go down to the bottom of this page and ask the question, what are some elements of a good listener? Then ask, “How many of you found it hard to listen to me and work on your cross at the same time?” If the ladies are honest, most will answer yes. Then tell them, this was part of the lesson. Finish this part of the cross and start the lesson again at the right time.

(James 1:19-22) My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

Last month we talked about the first three components of the listening process. What were the three?

The speaker, the message and the pathway.

Who can tell me something about the speaker?
The message?
The pathway?

Okay, that’s a good review for diving into the remainder of the components.

The next element is the receiver or the audience.
Today we are going to focus on the single receiver to whom James is encouraging to be quick to listen and slow to speak. We have two ears and one mouth for a good reason, yet we love to talk and can’t wait, often by interrupting, to share our opinions and thoughts.

Proverbs 1:5 says, “Let the wise listen and add to their learning…” Pro 22:17 says, “Pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach…”

We can all benefit by improving our listening skills. We can become more productive, more influential, and more persuasive. Better than that, we can avoid lots of conflict and misunderstandings by being a better listener.

Who of you knows a good listener? Without giving any names, tell us what are the elements or characteristics that make you say she is a good listener?

(Take 2-3 minutes for sharing)

Who of you can think of someone who either never listens well or never really hears what you say? Again no names, but what are the clues she is not listening?

(Take 2-3 minutes for sharing)

Let’s review what the author has to say about being a good or active listener. (To the leader: As you read and expound on these points, call attention to those which the ladies have identified as they shared, such as Sherry told us about her friend who always closes the door…….)

There are several kinds of listeners, passive, partial, selective, active and complete. Of those, we should strive to become an active, complete listener. There are five elements in active listening:

1. Pay attention
   a. Stop whatever you are doing, put your pencils down, wipe your hands on the dish towel, close the laptop, etc. (This was the point of the activity earlier, when people continue to work on the activity at hand, they don’t completely listen.)
   b. Turn off radios, TV, etc.
   c. Try to eliminate outside distractions, noises, and unexpected visitors
   d. Make eye contact with the speaker
e. Do not prepare what you are going to say next
f. Listen to the emotions and body language
g. Do not interrupt

2. **Show you are listening**
   a. Smile and nod appropriately
   b. Lean forward toward the speaker
   c. Do not cross your arms or tap your foot or fingers
   d. Occasionally say ‘yes’ or other encouraging remarks, ‘I see’
   e. Ask permission if you want to make notes – not about your responses

3. **Provide feedback**
   a. Repeat back to the speaker what you thought she said and ask if you understood correctly
   b. Ask questions only to clarify something already said
   c. Ask the speaker to “tell me what you mean by …”

4. **Defer judgment**
   a. Allow the speaker to finish, except for clarification
   b. Do not counter argue or defend until the speaker is finished and you have clarified what she has meant

5. **Respond assertively**
   a. Use the DESC model to respond appropriately that we learned in January
   b. Don’t react; Don’t be afraid to delay answering until you have had time to plan your response; sometimes when we refrigerate overnight the batter or cookie dough just gets better
   c. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Keep in mind, many times a good listener does not have to respond at all. The speaker may just want to vent or have a sensitive, caring listener. Giving advice is not our job unless she asks for it. Then we must do so with caution.

Remember, part of being a good listener is keeping confidences and that builds trust which makes and maintains relationships. Good listening is one of the ingredients in our recipe for relationships.

Gossip is the sinful practice of repeating to others what you should keep to yourself. Sometimes it is a confidence someone has spoken to you, and sometimes it is something you have seen or been told by another. Regardless of the source, gossip breaks trust and spoils relationships.
The final component of the communication process is **the feedback**.

Feedback enables the sender to know if the message got through and if it arrived in tact or as she intended. Imagine someone taking action as a result of the message that made it thorough on our “Telephone” earlier. Look back at step five above for tips regarding feedback. When the feedback is complete, it has made a complete cycle and returned to the speaker.

In other words, when someone is confiding in you or giving you an important message, you should repeat the message back to them to confirm you heard it right. “What I hear you saying is…” or “Let me see if I have this right, you said…” It is exactly what the title says, feed back to the speaker what she just said to you.

Our first response may be, “You want me to what?” When it could better be, “Would you repeat that so I can be sure of what I heard?”

These phrases may sound artificial and practiced, but how else can we be sure we understood the speaker correctly, if we don’t repeat what we heard her say?

It takes a lot of concentration and practice to become a good listener. Unfortunately, our old habits are hard to break and we continue to rehearse in our minds what we are going to say next rather than continue to listen to the complete message of the speaker.

James is exhorting us as Christian women to be quick to listen and to be deliberate to listen. Listening is easier when you are not distracted and when you focus on the speaker. It may help, at first, to repeat in your mind what she is saying. If you find your mind keeps going back to fixing lunch, then ask respectfully if you can talk another time. It is not fair to her, or to you, to ‘pretend’ to listen.

If you can’t put aside all your own thoughts and concerns, you may be surprised that what she says and what you hear are completely different! Be quick to listen! I will conclude with the same verse from James as translated in The Message:

*(James 1:19, The Message)* Post this at all the intersections, dear friends: Lead with your ears, follow up with your tongue, and let anger straggle along in the rear.

**PRAYER**

Pray for those who need someone to listen and for those who will be the listeners.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**
**ACTIVITIES, GAMES, CRAFTS (optional)**

Just in time for Easter, we will make these lovely Toilet Paper crosses. When finished, they will look like black metal, or you can spray with silver, gold, or make it look floral, whatever complements your décor.

★ It would be best to construct these at the start of your meeting so the primer will have time to dry before painting. Be sure to cover tables well, make sure floors are protected and have the area well ventilated, or go outside to prime and paint. It is a messy craft, we highly suggest going outside to apply primer and paint.

Each lady will need about 6-7 empty TP rolls or 3-4 empty paper towel rolls, scissors or roller cutter, access to a glue gun, primer spray paint, and spray paint in the choice of colors. You can purchase cans of primer at The Dollar General Store, as well as colored paint. Have several colors available and purchase the ‘metallic.’

Flatten the paper roll and cut the two ends off each of the rolls. I then cut (with a rotary cutter) the flattened rolls into approximately 1 inch pieces. Each piece should be the same width for a nice looking finished product.
If it starts to come apart, put a spot of hot glue on the inside to hold together.

When you have all the pieces cut, arrange four pieces like a flower and hot glue at the center tips to hold in place. This is the basic part of the cross. Each cross will need 6 complete flowers. In the picture below, they are not glued, just laid out to show you the 6 flowers.

Then you will need to glue in a vertical line, four of the flowers, gluing together two tips. You may want to draw a straight line on a piece of paper to lay under your flowers to make sure your cross does not lean to the left or right. In the drawing below, I have placed a horizontal and vertical line to demonstrate where the centers of each flower should be.

When you have the vertical piece completed, add a flower to each side of the second flower, creating the horizontal part of the cross. Glue the tips.

Then, take 4 single pieces and place one at each of the ends of the cross and hot glue.
After you have glued all the pieces together, prime the entire piece with spray paint primer. This cannot be skipped; otherwise your paint will look blotchy. Wait the recommended time and then spray paint to your desired color.

If you need more instructions or ideas, click on the link below.

Link: http://fullofgreatideas.blogspot.com/2012/01/paper-roll-cross-two-actually-on-my-0.html
Share Recipes

*(Galatians 6:9-10)* Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

*(2 Corinthians 9:10)* Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.

**MAY**

**FOCUS**
- Love is the starter for creating all delicious relationships. Throughout the year, we have learned to build trust and build relationships. One of the best methods to reach out to women is to be a helper and to do good and kind things for her.

**PREPARATION**
- This year you may want to publish a church recipe book. It can be done through a company, or talented computer ladies can do it themselves.
- Collect food for a pantry or someone in need
- Optional: Purchase a recipe box for each lady. Use index or recipe cards for recipes each month to be added. Alternative: The ladies can take notes on the cards and file them for future devotions.
- Obtain a small gift for each newcomer to WMI; good idea to do this all year.
- Participant workbook or appropriate pages

**DECORATIONS (optional)**
- Aprons, chef’s hats, dishtowels, pots, pans, mixing bowls, recipe books, utensils, etc. If there is room meet in a kitchen.
- Options: Use things people donate or loan, or purchase items that will later be donated to a domestic shelter, mission field, or someone whose house is destroyed.

**REFRESHMENTS**
- Whatever you have decided for this month
PROGRAM ORDER

- Opening prayer
- Refreshments (Can be anywhere in the program) 20 minutes
- Icebreaker
- Songs: Make me A Servant; I am Happy in the Service of the King, Is There Anything I can Do for You? I Love You with the Love of the Lord, I Will Serve Thee, Make Me a Blessing, Reach Out and Touch, Who is on the Lord’s Side?
- Spiritual Challenge
- Prayer for new relationships
- Missions presentation
- Offering
- Prayer for missions
- Crafts and fellowship

ICEBREAKER

Break into small groups of 3-4 and share a story about a time when someone helped you when you were in need, or someone just for no reason did a good deed for you. Describe how that made you feel. Allow 10 minutes for the activity. Give a 5 minute and 2 minute warning.

Ask: Would anyone like to share her story? Have a story ready of your own or one you know about in case no one shares.

SONGS

(Jot down the ones you have selected and have handouts or slides available for the attendees.)
SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE

If you were walking down the streets of your hometown and noticed a starving child sitting by the street begging for food what would you do?

The first response might be to cross to the other side of the street, like the Levite did in the story of the Good Samaritan.

Another response might be to pass by the child and offer to pray for her and her family to find a home and food. That isn’t necessarily a poor response, yet the hunger remains.

The third response would be like the Good Samaritan and help the person in distress.

Listen to what Paul said to the Galatians:

*(Galatians 6:9-10)*  Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Paul is exhorting the believers in Galatia, and us today, to provide and do good to those who are in need. In his words, he says first to your fellow believers and second to all people.

As we walk down that familiar street, Paul is saying regardless of physical ability, appearance, color, race, culture, age, religion, or sexual orientation, we are to do good to all people. In other words, he would not expect us to even have a checklist in our mind, but to just “do it” as Nike would proclaim.

There are those who may argue the child is just a pawn of her parents to get sympathy and thereby get a bigger donation.

While we are to be good stewards of what God has given us, I believe God wants us to be wise and yet generous. I believe if we are going to err, it should always be an error doing the right thing. God will not condemn us if we are duped by the needy, but rather if we ignore them.

Let’s read what Paul said to the believers at Corinth:

*(2 Corinthians 9:9)*  As it is written: "He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

Righteousness means a right relationship with God. So when we give to the poor we are in a right relationship with God. We don’t need a checklist, a background check or an evaluation sheet filled with criteria, we just need to love and do good. I believe Micah said it well:

*(Mic 6:8)*  He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.
Let’s continue to read what Paul said to the Corinthian believers about doing good:

(2 Corinthians 9:10) Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.

Adam Clarke said this in his commentary on verse 10:

“The sower, as we have already seen, is he that gives alms of what he hath; and God, who requires him to give these alms, is here represented as providing him with the means. As in the creation, if God had not created the earth with every tree and plant with its seed in itself, so that a harvest came, without a previous ploughing and sowing, there could have been no seed to deposit in the earth; so, if God had not, in the course of his providence, given them the property they had, it would be impossible for them to give alms. And as even the well cultivated and sowed field would be unfruitful if God did not, by his unseen energy and blessing, cause it to bring forth, and bring to maturity; so would it have been with their property: it could not have increased; for without his blessing riches take wings and flee away, as an eagle towards heaven. Therefore, in every sense, it is God who ministers seed to the sower, and multiplies the seed sown. And as all this properly comes from God, and cannot exist without him, he has a right to require that it be dispensed in that way which he judges best.”

As we build new relationships with newcomers in our church, our neighborhoods, at work places, and even in our families, we must look for needs and do what we can to sow kindness, and to relieve pain and suffering.

What’s in it for us?

(2 Corinthians 9:11) You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

(2 Corinthians 9:12) This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.

(2 Corinthians 9:13) Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.

(2 Corinthians 9:14) And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you.

(2 Corinthians 9:15) Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!
Doing good comes from God who first gives to us. Look around you now. Not just in this room, but in your environment. Who can you help?

Remember, help is not always provided by money. Often help is food, a ride, gas, medicine, mowing, cleaning, baby sitting, parent sitting, and just visiting.

Paul is very specific about how we are to care for our families.

(*1Ti 5:8*) If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Then he also advises us to care for believers:

(*Galatians 6:10*) Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Doing good and meeting needs is another link in building and maintaining relationships – relationships that may one day bring a friend to Jesus Christ.

A friend of mine recently posted this on Facebook and asked us to share.

“For anyone who may have a need... Did you know the people that are the strongest are usually the most sensitive? Did you know the people who exhibit the most kindness are the first to get mistreated? Did you know the one who takes care of others all the time are usually the ones who need it the most? Did you know the three hardest things to say are I love you, I'm sorry, and Help me.”

I put that here to remind us that sometimes we are the one in need. When that occurs, we need to be gracious and willing to ask and receive help from others. Often that is hard to do. Remember, God blesses those who are helping. He blesses you when you help.

If you don’t allow others to help you in a time of need, you may be robbing them of a blessing God has for them. Let’s pray.

**PRAYER**

Pray for wisdom and generosity, a spirit of kindness and servanthood, and the courage to ask for help when we are in need.
MISSIONS

PRAYER FOR MISSIONS AND OFFERING

CRAFTS, FELLOWSHIP, GAMES, etc.

Plan here your games or activities. There is a paper game on the next page if you choose to use it.
A “Good” Game

Fill in the blanks with a word or phrase using the word “good” or completing something that is good.

1. The good _____________ brings good _____________ out of the good _____________ up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. (Matthew 12:35)

2. To do a favor for someone is a ________________________________

3. To make someone feel better ________________________________

4. June, July, and August ________________________________

5. Forever ________________________________

6. Give and it will be given to you. A good _____________, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the _____________ you use, it will be __________________________ to you." (Luke 6:38)

7. She will do good things for you if you are ________________________________

8. Hey, ________________________________, what you got cooking?

9. To have a great understanding ________________________________

10. Intelligent, resourceful, common sense ________________________________

11. Long lasting tires ________________________________

12. To feel no guilt ________________________________

13. Paves the road to hell ________________________________

14. A blessing in disguise ________________________________

15. All the time ________________________________

16. According to Genesis, a time to die ________________________________

17. Hard to find ________________________________

18. A word to the wise ________________________________

19. Break a leg ________________________________

20. Pink and black sweet treat ________________________________

21. In shape ________________________________

22. How things work together for ________________________________

23. Clint Eastwood’s famous movie ________________________________

24. "His master replied, ‘Well done, ________________________________! (Mat 25:23)

25. Song from “Oklahoma” ________________________________
A “Good” Game
ANSWERS

1. Man, things, stored
2. A good turn
3. Do good
4. Good Ole Summertime (40’s song)
5. For good
6. Measure, measure, measured
7. On her good side
8. Good looking (country song)
9. Good command of
10. Good head on your shoulders
11. Goodyear
12. Good conscience
13. Good intentions
14. A turn for the good, turned out good, etc.
15. God is good!
16. A good old age
17. A Good Man (song)
18. Good advice
19. Good luck
20. Good and Plenty
21. Good condition
22. For good to those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose
23. The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly
24. Thou good and faithful servant
25. O What a Beautiful Morning
Presentation is Everything

(1 Peter 3:15) But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

(1 Peter 3:16) keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

FOCUS

- We have all the communication tools we need to create new relationships and help them grow into deep, lasting friendships. It is time to share our faith with our friend.

PREPARATION

- Determine the refreshments and who will provide them; our ladies love a Mexican Pitch-in, we do it every year. Another activity we like is having a baby shower for the local Pregnancy Care Center. We decorate for a baby shower and play baby shower games and often have a speaker come from PCC. A baby cake and punch are the refreshments.
- Bring something appropriate to the theme for the devotion table.
- Obtain a small gift for each newcomer to WMI; good idea to do this all year.
- Participant Workbooks or pages for this month

DECORATIONS (optional)

- Aprons, chef’s hats, dishtowels, pots, pans, mixing bowls, recipe books, utensils, etc.
- Options: Use things people donate or loan, or purchase items that will later be donated to a domestic shelter, mission field, or someone whose house burns.

REFRESHMENTS

- You decide this month

PROGRAM

- Opening prayer for food and meeting
- Refreshments 30 minutes
- Missions
- Prayer for Missions
• Song (Choose one or more): Tell Me the Story of Jesus, We’ve a Story to tell to the Nations, Share His Love, I Am Free, Testify, Carry the Light, I Love to Tell the Story, I’ll Tell the World that I’m a Christian, Lord, Lay Some Soul Upon my Heart, Pass It On, Our God Reigns, Be Bold Be Strong, Let the Redeemed, Saved, Saved, Saved, He Touched Me, He Brought Me Out, Mighty to Save, The Stand,
• Spiritual Challenge
• Prayer for effective service and witnessing
• Crafts, games, fun, fellowship

**ICEBREAKER**

**“What if” Game**

Copy this page and cut apart each number. There are 20 questions here. If you need to you can create more. Place the pieces in a jar or cup for the ladies to draw from. Pass the container and ask each lady to draw only one and think about their answer for a minute. Explain that money and time are not issues in this game.

You should also draw one and start the game with your answer.

If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go? Who would you take with you?

If I gave you $10,000, what would you spend it on? Why?

If you could watch your favorite movie now, what would it be? Why is this your favorite?

If you could talk to anyone in the world, who would it be? What would you talk about?

If you could wish one thing to come true this year, what would it be? If this is too personal, go to your second wish.

If you could live in any period of history, when would it be? Why?

If you could change anything about yourself, what would you change? What would you not change?

If you could be someone else, who would you be? Why?
If you could have any question answered, what would it be?

If you could watch your favorite TV show from any era, what would it be? Why?

If you could have any kind of pet, what would you have? What would you name it?

If you could do your dream job assuming you are in your thirties, what would it be and in what area of the country?

If you had to be allergic to one thing, what would it be? What would that change for you?

If you sat down next to Jesus on a bus, what would you talk about?

If money and time really was no object, what would you be doing right now?

If you had one day to live over again, what day would you pick? Why that day?

If you could eat your favorite food now, what would it be? Why do you think that food is more special than another?

If you could learn any skill, what would it be? What would you do with that skill?

If you were sent to live on a space station for three months and only allowed to bring three personal items with you, what would they be?

If you could buy a car right now, what would you buy?

**CONCLUSION:**

I hope you had fun with this. As we play a game like this, others in the room get a fresh look into who we are and what we are about. It is openness and sharing that also are building blocks in relationships and establishing trust. When others know things about us, they are more likely to share things about themselves.
SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE

This is the evening some of us are going to get a little nervous. Now that we have all the tools, it is time to share the gospel. All these months we have been learning how to build relationships so that through those relationships we can bring a friend to Jesus Christ.

Some of you are thinking, “I don’t know any verses by heart,” or “I don’t know what to say,” when in fact, you have the words right before you. Your own personal testimony of how you used to be, who you used to be, what you used to do and who, what, and how that all changed because of Jesus Christ are all the words you need.

*(1 Peter 3:15)* But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

*(1 Peter 3:16)* keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Peter said, “Always be prepared to give an answer for the hope you have…” Not about someone else’s hope, but your own. It is easy to say the Bible tells me so, but what if she doesn’t believe the Bible is the Word of God?

Start with your own story. Because of your friendship, your now solid relationship, she may know part of it already. Make sure she understands that ‘once’ you were this way and since Jesus you are this way.

Just so we are all on the same page, what is this hope we have? The hope of eternal life through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I trust you share that hope with me. If you do, why do you? That’s what Peter is saying here; tell others why you have this hope.

Be ready to defend it. If you were to be questioned or accused, why do you have this hope? The Greek word for reason in this text is ‘apologia’ which means to defend, as if being accused in a court. In other words, can you give such a good defense as to be found not guilty of a crime?

In this case, can you give such a good reason you can be found guilty of having this hope?

On the other side of the coin, there are many who read about it in the Bible, believe the Bible, but they still don’t have this hope. Why do you have this hope?

Just for a few minutes let’s look at the people Peter is writing to and think how they might answer this question. Most of these are Jewish converts, from Judaism and the law, to following the way of Jesus under grace. Some are likely gentiles who were converted from Paganism and idol worship.
Why do they have a hope for eternal life? Because they have believed by faith in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus our Lord. They have even believed the Messiah that was spoken of by the prophets, in the Old Testament, is the Jesus who came to life in Bethlehem.

For the Jewish converts, they already believed in God. In fact, they sternly and firmly believed in God. It was a miracle for a God fearing Jew to believe God had a Son and that Son was an equal with God. They had been steeped in the law and the Ten Commandments which say there is only one God and thou shall have no other gods. A “one God” community.

On the other hand, the gentiles had many gods they worshipped and sacrificed to for favors and answers. How could there be only one God?

So what answer was Peter looking for when he told them to be ready with an answer?

I can’t give you a definitive answer because I am not Peter, nor did he tell us exactly what he wants us to say. I can give you an example, but each of you, like those ancient brothers and sisters, must be ready to give your own answer. I don’t think there is a “one size fits all answer.”

I think he does lead us in the right direction. Let’s look down at verse 18 and begin to read as he continues.

(1 Peter 3:18) For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.

(1 Peter 3:19) through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison

(1 Peter 3:20) who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,

(1 Peter 3:21) and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

(1 Peter 3:22) who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

Bottom line is we have hope in eternal life because not only did Jesus die for us, but He lives today and sits at the right hand of the Father, where He has gone to prepare us a place that where He is we may be also.

Leader instructions: Please write out your own conversion story and use it in place of mine or ask one of your ladies to share hers. (Your local stories will be much more effective; mine is here only as an example.)

(I, personally, have faith in this gospel of Jesus Christ. I believe he was born in a manger, accused of blasphemy against God, arrested, tried, crucified, died, was buried, and rose on the third day. I believe He showed himself to the disciples and some others after His resurrection and then ascended into Heaven where He sits at the right hand of the Father today.

Why do I believe that amazing story? Because I believe in the Bible and what I have heard at church for years and years? Yes, but it is more than that! Because I have experienced the love and forgiveness of my own sins through
the grace of our Savior. I know by the reassurance of the Holy Spirit I have been changed. I know I once thought about things I no longer think. I know I did things I no longer do or even want to do. I know I no longer say or talk the way I once did regardless of which crowd I am with. I know I can love and forgive people who are unlovable and unforgiveable by worldly standards.

On June 6, 1966, I came to the realization that if I died that day or night, I would be eternally lost. I knew what all that meant because I was raised in church. My husband, Dave, had a severe automobile accident and could have lost his life. Through that accident, God sent His wonderful grace to draw me to Him.

We had an infant son at the time, and it hit me right in the heart, that I could have been a single mother raising a child alone. I was desperate to get to church and give my heart to the Lord. I know I could have done it right there, but I wanted to be at church. I wanted to share that experience with the saints who knew how to pray, and pray loud.

Some of you will have a much more exciting testimony of change in your life. One that may even be more convincing than mine, but that’s my story and I’m sticking to it.

You see, I am just like the ancient gentiles. I had many gods I worshipped every week. There was no time in my life for the God of Abraham. I had the gods of education, money, entertainment, raising children, and making a home. There was no time for God and church. I was too busy.

But God reached down from Heaven, and I felt this huge uneasiness and even fear pulling me to church. So I went and confessed my sins and He forgave me and touched me in such a way I knew without a doubt I had been touched by the Spirit of God.)

God meets all of us differently and right where we are in our need. So I have a reason or an explanation for the hope I have. Do you? And are you ready to give an answer about your hope?

Paul was challenged when he was arrested and placed before the Sanhedrin. Let’s turn to Acts 22 and read what Paul said: (For the sake of time, you can summarize Paul’s story in your own words.)

(Acts 22:1) "Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense."

(Acts 22:2) When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet. Then Paul said:

(Acts 22:3) "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today.

(Acts 22:4) I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison,

(Acts 22:5) as also the high priest and all the Council can testify. I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

(Acts 22:6) "About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me.

(Acts 22:7) I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, "Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?"

(Acts 22:8) "'Who are you, Lord?' I asked. "'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,' he replied.
(Acts 22:9) My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.

(Acts 22:10) "'What shall I do, Lord?' I asked. "'Get up,' the Lord said, "and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.'

(Acts 22:11) My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

(Acts 22:12) "A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there.

(Acts 22:13) He stood beside me and said, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very moment I was able to see him.

(Acts 22:14) "Then he said: 'The God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth.

(Acts 22:15) You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.

(Acts 22:16) And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'

That is the testimony of who Paul was, what he did and how he was converted. Let’s go back to chapter 9 and read how he was changed.

(Acts 9:20-22) At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?"

Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.

Paul’s conversion is a lot more exciting than mine, yet my story will speak to some, Paul’s story will speak to some, and your story will speak to some, especially your friend you have developed this relationship with.

So how are we to share? Peter tells us:

(1 Peter 3:15b) Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,
(1 Peter 3:16) *keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.*

(1 Peter 3:17) *It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.*

- With Gentleness
  - No need to yell or raise our voice; be kind, not using words that deliberately make others feel demeaned or humiliated
- With Respect
  - Others religion, race, creed, upbringing, reputation, and so forth, especially not implying that Free Methodists are the only folks going to Heaven
- With a Clear conscience, so no one can speak bad of you
  - Not implying you are better than others, more deserving than others, more important than others, or that you will say when you go home, “I wish I hadn’t said that.”
- Why? It is better to suffer for good than to do evil.
  - Knowing the consequences of evil and sin are eternal death, it is better to suffer unfair, unearned, persecution than to risk going to hell and eternal damnation.

I want us to practice sharing our testimony tonight before we leave this meeting. It will be much easier to practice among the sisters who love and respect you. When you get home you may want to write out your conversion story and read it from time to time.

Start to pray for the Holy Spirit to open the door for you to share with your new friend. You have been diligently building a relationship account with her.

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Let’s divide into groups of four.

Someone who is an outgoing person, share your story first. Don’t start with when you were born since we all want to go home tonight. You do not have to include all the details. Share what you are willing about who you were and what you did and how that all changed when Jesus came into your life.
Then, if anyone else is willing, share your story. We will take about 15 minutes to do this, then we will close in prayer.

12-15 minutes (If many are sharing, allow more time, if possible, so the ladies can practice sharing their testimonies.)

**PRAYER**

Pray for the ladies to have courage and boldness. Pray for the minds and hearts of friends to be open. Pray for the Holy Spirit to go before you and open doors.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**ACTIVITIES, GAMES, CRAFTS**

Continue the fellowship created by sharing your testimonies.
Sweet Temptations

(Galatians 6:1-3) Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore her gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks she is something when she is nothing, she deceives herself.

FOCUS

• We have the tools we need to lovingly, gently confront behaviors that are un-Christ-like in our Christian sisters and help them grow and mature in their Christian walk.

PREPARATION

• Have another salad pitch-in or? Go out to a restaurant
• Optional to have a pizza party
• Obtain a small gift for each newcomer to WMI; good idea to do this all year.
• Participant workbooks or pages

DECORATIONS (optional)

• Aprons, chef’s hats, dishtowels, pots, pans, mixing bowls, recipe books, utensils, etc.
• Options: Use things people donate or loan, or purchase items that will later be donated to a domestic shelter, mission field, or someone whose house burns.

REFRESHMENTS

• Salads, Pizza, Chips & Dips
• Flip-flop cookies

PROGRAM

• Opening prayer for food and meeting
• Refreshments 30 minutes
• Missions
• Prayer for Missions
• Song (Choose one or more): I Will Arise, Be Strong and Take Courage, Let God Arise, The Battle Belongs to the Lord, Sweet Hour of Prayer, Pray about Everything, I Love you with the Love of the Lord,
• Spiritual Challenge
• Prayer for effective listening
• Crafts, games, fun, fellowship
ICEBREAKER

You may skip the icebreaker as everyone should be fully acquainted. If you have a guest, go around the room and make introductions and tell something about yourself. (Since the guest may not have been prepared with Flip Flops, be sure to partner her to help someone.)

SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE

(Matthew 18:15) "If your brother (or sister) sins against you go and show him (or her) the fault, just between the two of you. If (s)he listens to you, you have won your brother (sister) over.

(Matthew 18:16) But if (s)he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'

(Matthew 18:17) If (s)he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if (s)he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him (her) as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

(Matthew 18:21) Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother (sister) when (s)he sins against me? Up to seven times?"

(Matthew 18:22) Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

Probably the greatest sin among women friendships is that we just flat out don’t confront failures or sin in one another. We see it, we pray about it, we often “talk” about it to others, but we are afraid to confront the person who is in trouble.

Let me say right up front, talking about it to others is sin in itself, unless it is asking your pastor for advice.

Second, praying about it is essential, however, stopping there is like telling a starving child you will pray for them and not giving them anything to eat.

All year we have been learning and practicing how to build relationships. We build relationships to mutually love and care for one another, to witness about our salvation, and finally to confront our sister in time of failure.

It is absolutely vital this be bathed in prayer, rinsed with forgiveness and love, and dried with some advice from a trusted pastor or counselor. I have seen these attempts to confront fail because the confronter did not use good communication methods or was very judgmental.

Let’s look at some reasons these attempts to confront our sisters fail:

1. There is no relationship between the two persons, or
2. The confronter uses “You” words and blaming tones, rather than the DESC model we learned in January.

3. The confronter has ineffective communication skills.

4. We misunderstood what the speaker was saying or intended to say.

5. The confronter thinks she is better than the speaker. (judgmental)

If we look seriously into the reasons for failure, then we can try to learn from those failures to do this more effectively.

1. **There is no relationship between the two persons.**

As a general rule, if there is no relationship, there should be no confrontation. The exception is when you are the person’s spiritual leader, counselor, or pastor. Hopefully that would mean there is some degree of a relationship in place.

If you do not have a relationship with the person, then I encourage you to talk this over with your pastor, write out what you will say, and use the DESC model to organize your thoughts. Your pastor can role play the situation with you and give you practical advice. You may want the pastor to be with you during this process.

If the pastor is the person you need to confront, then go to a trusted confidant who will help you practice. The second reason for failure is:

2. **The confronter uses “You” words and blaming tones, rather than the DESC model.**

Use “I” statements like “I feel” when … Take ownership of your own feelings and don’t blame another for them. Never get in the other person’s face and point your finger or use any threatening behaviors and gestures. This only puts them on the defensive, as I myself would be.

3. **The confronter has ineffective communication skills.**

Practice using the DESC model. Do a role play with the pastor or a confidant. Write out how and what you will say to get the conversation started. This is nearly the same as the previous reason. It is just too sad that we all didn’t learn how to argue fairly before we got married, isn’t it? Never act on hearsay. Any confrontation must be done only about things you have observed or heard with your own ears. Don’t try to act on another person’s behalf. If they have a problem, you may coach them, or go with them, but never do it for them. The fourth reason for failure is:

4. **We misunderstood what the speaker was saying or intended to say.**

This is a common miscommunication because we all interpret things through our own lenses. I am sure you have experienced a time when 3-4 people have heard the same conversation and yet each listener heard something different. Also, we often hear what we want to hear or what we expected the person to say. Remember our session on good listening?

Doctors do not prescribe until they have a diagnosis nor do judges pass sentence until they have all the facts. A salesperson tries to collect your personal needs before she tells you she has the
solution. In our wisdom, however, we hear partially the first time and “jump” right to a conclusion.

The step we most often omit is **clarification**. It is so simple yet so overlooked. We love to jump to conclusions and even expect the worse from some people. If we would just take the time to say, “What I heard you say was…” or “Did I understand you to say….?”

Be careful not to use “you” statements as in, “you said.” Ask what they said. Once the statement is clarified it is then our opportunity to respond, not react.

We should always try to understand what the other person is saying before we respond. How do we know if we are right? We must ask! We should not try to be understood in return until we first are positive we understand the other person. Imagine how we could communicate effectively if we all practiced this principle.

You might ask, “Why should I do this if the other person doesn’t do it or even care to try?” Because you are a Christian and you are to practice love, forgiveness, and self-control.

Now let’s try it. We are going to use our best empathetic listening skills, clarify what we heard, and respond using the DESC model. The last failure is the confronter thinks she is somehow better than the one she is confronting.

5. **Paul admonishes us not to think we are any better than the person we are confronting, even if we perceive (s)he has committed wrongdoing.**

How many times have we opened our mouth and stuck our foot inside? Have we not been confronted ourselves at times because we said or did something wrong? Jesus told us to love our neighbor as ourselves, not more and not less. If we love ourselves more than our neighbor and think more highly of ourselves, then we are disobedient.

“All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” That means ALL! Humility goes a long way when confronting another about sin or a bad attitude. Being open about your own failures and making special effort to preserve the self-esteem of the other person enables you to face her again.

While it may embarrass us, it is reassuring to share a time when we made a mistake and someone came to us in love to help correct our path. Our goal is **not** to make anyone feel bad about themselves but to encourage them to get back on the right path. End the confrontation with reassurance of love and acceptance, and have prayer together, then and there.

What happens when we fail to confront someone who is falling away? It reminds me of an old episode of Murphy Brown, which some of you may recall. There was an employee at the newspaper that was very irritating to listen to. When they would congregate around the water cooler to chat, they would quickly scatter when he joined them. They all liked him and he was a good reporter, but he just drove them crazy the way he talked.

As the story unfolds, the man gets fired and the crew feels sad for him but go on about their jobs. One day while at the water cooler, the man pops in for a visit. They are all happy to see him and find out he is doing well at another newspaper.
They share a few stories and laughs about the good old days, when one of them gets bravely honest and shares how irritating his talk was to them. They all agree and laugh together. He gets quiet and looks seriously at them and says, “But you let me get fired!”

They said nothing to him and let him get fired. Ladies, if we let our friends fall away and say nothing to them, we “let them get fired.” To say it bluntly, we may let our friends spend eternity in hell because we were too afraid to confront their failures.

We are not the “religious police” or the judges and juries of our peers, however, we will know them by their fruit. Matthew makes it pretty clear, (Matthew 18:15) “If your brother (or sister) sins against you, go and show him (or her) the fault, just between the two of you. If (s)he listens to you, you have won your brother(sister) over.

Be careful not to misuse this verse to be the guardian of the church or the women’s group. We must never act on something someone else has told us. Matthew says, if she has sinned against you. If you have seen or witnessed this first hand, then go to her.

Then let’s put that together with what Paul said to the Galatians, and we must go ‘gently.’ (Galatians 6:1-3) Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore her gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks she is something when she is nothing, she deceives herself.

When he says ‘carry her burden’ I think he means to pray for her and walk in her shoes. Further, don’t ever think you are better than her or you may also be tempted.

I was told a story about a young lady who took a job at a Christian agency. She did not dress like the other women. Some of the women were concerned about her witness at the agency. Some felt her supervisor should go to her and confront her about her apparel.

The supervisor went to prayer and asked several of the ladies to also pray about the matter. After several days of prayer, the supervisor reported she was feeling strongly she should not go to the young lady and asked them to continue to pray about the matter.

Three weeks later, the young lady came to the supervisor and asked if she would go shopping with her to get some more appropriate garments for her new job. And they did!

Haven’t you heard, “Prayer changes things?” Confrontation is good, modeling is better, but prayer is best. Always confide in your pastor when you feel there may need to be confrontation. And always pray before confiding or confronting. Then go back and rehearse using the DESC Model to maintain your relationship with this person.

**PRAYER**

Pray for the ladies to have a balance of courage and consideration. It takes courage to confront and a bushel of consideration as you do it. To pray for wisdom to know when and where and to seek Godly counsel before making a move. Pray also if we are on the receiving end of such confrontation that we set a great example to our sisters. Help us to apologize, forgive, really
listen to what is being said, and thank the person for the courage to help us be better and grow in grace. We must be the example of the behavior we want to see in others.

CRAFTS/ACTIVITIES (optional)

Your group may want to choose one or the other, instead of making both. The wreaths are more expensive to make than the flower pots. The picture looks really easy, but in fact, this is hard to do. You must use the largest flip flops you can find and the smaller the cup the better. We found mugs were too big, and cause the flip flops to curve upward. Punch cups or tea cups can be found at Good Will for a very reasonable cost.

Since summer is here, let’s get out our flip-flops and make something new. Ask the ladies to bring cleaned up, or buy 7 pair of new flips for a wreath. They will also need to bring one pair and 2 matching cups for the flower or herb pots. You may want to have one of these made in advance to display, so the ladies have a better idea of what to bring. Flips that have a design on the bottom make really nice wall hangings. These are great for a summer porch, by the pool or a vacation cottage or as a gift. Plain flips can be embellished with flowers, buttons, or bling.

Go to a nursery and purchase small starts of various herbs or flowers and potting soil. The ladies will plant the herbs in the coffee cups. (Caution the ladies not to overwater as there are no drain holes in the cups.) Also have a bag of potting soil available.

Place a picture hanging hook on the back of each flip-flop. Position the cup in the flip-flop between the straps. Glue the straps if you feel it is unstable. Plant herbs or flowers in the cup.
For the wreath, plan ahead if you want to hang this outdoors and use weatherproof materials. I used a flat Styrofoam wreath and used floral pins (look like giant staples) to anchor the flips and covered them with flowers or bling. You may prefer to use a wire or grapevine wreath for outdoors. You can also downsize to a smaller wreath and use children’s flip-flops. Can spray with acrylic spray for outdoors to extend life of wreath. You can also choose to use 1-2 colors that coordinate with your location to be placed. Make one in school or college colors for your child or grandchild. Be creative – sunglasses and a visor make these more fun, etc. Add a sand bucket and shovels for kids.
Our Flip Flop Party

One garden hose wreath just for fun.
Flip-Flop Cookies

You can actually purchase cookie cutters in the shape of flip-flops and decorate them. Or, you can purchase cookies, such a Nutter Butter, put icing on two the same – to make a pair, and use twizzlers or another icing to make the straps. Lots of fun and tasty too.

I saw these on Pinterest and Facebook.

How to make it

1. To make a pair, frost two oval-shaped cookies or use a toothpick to dab frosting on each cookie where the straps will be attached.
2. For wide straps, snip the rounded ends from a sour gummy worm, cut it in half, and slice each half lengthwise, leaving one end intact. For thin straps, cut rope licorice into four 1-3/4 pieces, cut one end of each piece on an angle, and pinch together the pointed ends to form two pairs.

3. Press the straps, connected ends first, into the frosting. Use more frosting to add gummy candy jewels. Let the cookies set for 20 minutes. Serve them on a dish towel spread on a beach of graham cracker crumbs. (How about a beach towel?)