

MODULE 2: COMMUNICATION

When people are able to listen, learn from and understand the context of the world around them, they will flourish. They will have meaningful connection—which is crucial to everything. This module shows how good communication builds community through empathy, relationships, understanding and allows people to truly be there for one another. Most importantly, communication with the Creator results in transformation.

SESSION 1: PERCEPTION

Key Ideas for This Session:

- Good perception helps us understand a given situation accurately before reacting.
- Misperception is the result of our misreading or misunderstanding a situation or another person.
- Misperception can be greatly minimized by learning to understand ourselves better and by learning not to quickly “jump to conclusions.”
- Key verse: James 1:19:
My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

Are Our Impressions of People and Situations Always Accurate?

Perception is about “getting it.” It means to see or comprehend. It is a judgment resulting from awareness or understanding. We all rely on perception. It is vital in human relationships.

Effective communicators understand the role perception plays in our day-to-day interactions. How we perceive a situation, other people, and even ourselves, influences the quality of our communication and how it is received or understood by others. How we communicate can lead to relationships that are either healthy and satisfying, or a source of constant struggle.

How would you describe the majority of your relationships?

Good Perception:

Good perception enables us to see things as they really are. Good perception helps with all interactions. For example, it helps us determine the difference between an argument and joking around between friends. It helps us know the difference between a person merely having a bad day or being genuinely upset about something we said.

Why do you think good perception is so important?

Misperception:

Misperception leads to an inaccurate “read” of a situation and often leads us to thinking the worst of people (and their motivations and intentions). It means we are not positioned to give the person the benefit of the doubt.

Have you ever felt misunderstood or even misjudged by someone?

Describe a situation where you met somebody and your first impressions of him/her turned out to be wrong (either for good or bad):

List possible reasons why misperception happens:

Do you agree with this statement: Misperception can be a result of a double standard. We tend to judge other people by how we “read” their actions (what they did) while wanting them to judge us by our intentions (what we meant).

Implied or Intended Message:

Communication involves both the content (the words) and the intended meaning behind the words. Intended meaning might be communicated by the tone of a person’s voice, the way a person looks at you, the status or authority of the person speaking, or other factors that give additional meaning to the words.

Here is an example: What is the intended or implied message communicated by this classroom teacher’s request, “I need three boys to volunteer to help me move the large boxes at the back of the room.”

Identify the intended or implied message communicated by the parent who says, “Your brother never gets in trouble.”

ROLE PLAY

Use your perception of the situation to understand what is taking place. Role play the voice of the FATHER three times, each time with a different tone of voice (compassionate, frustrated, and indifferent). Role play the voice of the SON each time in a pleading tone.

SON: Dad, are we going to the game tonight? You promised we'd go.

FATHER: I can't take you tonight.

SON: But you already promised. You said we were going.

FATHER: It's not a good time.

SON: This always happens! Why can't you ever keep a promise!

FATHER: Something's come up.

Notice how the conversation can be perceived in three ways just by the father's tone of voice. What is your perception of why the father cannot go to the game, based on how he spoke to his son?

Did you hear different meanings from the same words in the conversation between the father and son? What caused the difference in meaning?

If the father would take the time to really listen to his son, what might he discover?

Explain what you think it means to "listen with all of our senses."

The Bible describes this scene as Jesus Christ was being crucified.

Luke 23:35

The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at Him. They said, 'He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is God's Messiah, the Chosen One.

Did the rulers really believe He was the Christ? What was the implied or intended message the rulers were communicating by their attitude and behaviour?

How might the way you sit in a group or in a class, communicate your attitude without you speaking a single word?

Biases:

Acts 4:13

When [the religious leaders] saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

Before Peter and John even opened their mouths, how do you think the religious leaders had perceived or seen them?

Proverbs 14:12 says:

There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.

Perception can sometimes be a matter of life or death. Can your perception of something or someone seem right, yet turn out to be a misperception that

leads to pain and suffering? Describe a situation in your past where your misperception led to a difficult or destructive consequence:

Wouldn't it be great to see the truth in everything? How many of you would like to walk into a room and know exactly what is what: Who is trustworthy, who is genuine, who can harm, or who can help?

Seeing the Truth Clearly:

The Bible refers to LIGHT a lot. Jesus is the light. God will light our path. We are encouraged to let our light shine. Think about each of the following verses and their meanings as you find them in the Bible.

Ephesians 5:13, 14

But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. ¹⁴For this reason, it says, "Awake, sleeper and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Psalm 119:130

The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

Why is light an important metaphor when it comes to perception?

What is the opposite of light?

The Bible provides guidance on how to pursue truth, helping us avoid misperception. This includes growing in wisdom, knowledge, goodness and patience. Read through the following verses and think about how you can apply these things to your life.

Wisdom:

James 1:5

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

What is the promise given in this verse?

James 3:17

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

If Biblical wisdom is described in this way, how would you describe foolishness (its opposite):

Knowledge:

Proverbs 3:5

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

What does it look like, to trust in the Lord?

Goodness:

Matthew 6:22, 23

The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

Rewrite this verse in your own words.

Patience:

James 1:19

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

Do you agree with this verse? (Explain.) What is the danger of being quick to anger?

Break into small groups and discuss the following if there is time, or think about these topics this week:

- *Define in your own words what perception means and explain why it is important.*
- *Describe ways in which we try to manage the first impression we give to others or the impression we have of others.*
- *Discuss some of the consequences or dangers of misperception and how you can avoid it.*
- *Think about ways you can improve your ability to perceive things correctly. Consider the Scripture verses provided in this session as well as John 8:32: "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*