

# MODULE 2: COMMUNICATION

## SESSION 7: PUBLIC SPEAKING

### Key Ideas for This Session:

- Effective public speaking requires preparation and practice.
- Good public speakers speak from the heart—they believe what they are communicating. Audiences quickly sense if a speaker is insincere.
- What you think about yourself and what you think about the audience affects whether you will be able to effectively connect.
- Key verse: Exodus 24:3  
*When Moses went and told the people all the Lord's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the Lord has said we will do."*

### Is Speaking Publicly Something You Enjoy or Something You Would Rather Avoid?

Many people are nervous or even afraid of speaking in public. If you are one of those people, you are not alone. The fear of public speaking ranks as one of the top fears for a majority of people—and even the best public speakers are often nervous just before they get up to speak. Fear of mistakes and embarrassment or being afraid of how others will respond to what we are saying, can prevent us from ever attempting to speak publicly.

Learning how to speak in front of groups takes personal preparation and lots of practice. In the same way that no one learns how to swim by reading a text book (at some point, everyone has to get in the water) it is important to keep working at speaking in front of people. It is a learned skill, and not typically a natural born talent. Many of the greatest speakers constantly seek opportunities to practice and look for new ways of becoming more effective communicators.

Our ability to speak in front of others is influenced by what we think about ourselves and what we think about the audience. Engaging public speakers speak from the heart and are genuinely interested in what they are communicating and care about the audience who is listening.

What is the greatest fear you have about public speaking?

---

---

What qualities and characteristics do great public speakers seem to have in common?

---

---

**ROLE PLAY**

Role play the following situation to try to understand the issue from a different perspective. Role play the SPEAKER's voice with anxiety and the FRIEND's voice with encouragement.

**FRIEND:** I heard you're speaking today. Nervous?

**SPEAKER:** Well, yeah, a little. I've never done this before. What if I just freeze?

**FRIEND:** Don't worry, everyone gets a little nervous. You're going to do great.

**SPEAKER:** But I'm not good with words. What if I get lost in my notes?

**FRIEND:** Just relax and be yourself. And take your time. If you get lost, pause for a moment and collect yourself.

**SPEAKER:** I don't know. I don't feel prepared. Maybe I should back out.

**FRIEND:** You still have a few hours before you speak. Let's practice.

The biggest struggle for people who are new at public speaking is overcoming their own doubts and gaining self-confidence. Describe what you observed in

the above conversation. What is the speaker doing? What does the friend do in response?

---

---

From your perspective, what is one thing a speaker can do that will increase his/her chances of having a positive public speaking experience?

---

---

In Matthew 28:18-20, the resurrected Jesus appears to the disciples and tells them, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Jesus’s disciples weren’t the best educated people He could have chosen. Yet He commissioned them on a very important assignment. What key words did Jesus use to encourage the disciples in this task?

---

---

If you were one of the disciples, how would it have affected you to hear Jesus speak those words?

---

---

One of the most famous stories of a reluctant public speaker comes from Exodus 3 and 4 in the Bible. God was commanding Moses to go to Pharoah, the Ruler in Egypt, to free the Israelites from slavery. Moses (who ended up becoming one of the greatest leaders of all time) did not have confidence, claimed to not have the skills and begged the Lord not to send him. Even though God Himself promised Moses in Exodus 4:12 that He would help him speak and would teach him what to say, Moses still begged that it not be him. In the end, Moses’ brother Aaron came with him, and God promised to help them both speak and to teach them what to do.

What does this story teach you about the topic of public speaking?

---

---

Why do you think God would choose someone who lacked confidence, skill set, and desire to be His spokesperson?

---

---

In Acts 17:22-34, the Apostle Paul spoke to a skeptical and hostile audience in Athens: *“Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.”*

How did Paul attempt to connect with his audience?

---

---

Do you imagine Paul’s tone of voice being respectful or sarcastic? (Explain.)

---

---

Good public speakers are those who strive for excellence in the content they are presenting, exhibit confidence in their role as communicator, and connect with the audience in an authentic, respectful way. Let’s explore these three values in Scripture.

**Excellence:**

1 Corinthians 10:31  
*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

**Confidence:**

Philippians 1:6

*Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Joshua 1:9

*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.*

**Connection:**

Hebrews 10:24, 25

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup>not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Hebrews 3:13

*...Encourage one another daily...*

Acts 2:46

*Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.*

How do these verses support someone who is nervous about public speaking? (Comment on them, one by one, below):

---

---

---

---

---

A barrier that affects every level of your communication and connection with others is your perception of self and your sense of self-worth. Self-worth is influenced by many things, both positive and negative. One thing we will consider in this session is the role that shame can play in a person's life.

How do you define shame?

---

---

Where do you think shame comes from?

---

---

Who are our shamers?

---

---

Shame can be healthy or debilitating. Healthy shame reminds us of our incompleteness and our lack. It is a shame that is meant to drive us to God. This shame keeps us in a proper relationship with God.

**Healthy shame:**

- Shows our true self without judgment
- Show us our own lack without judgment
- Show us our own limitations without judgment
- Is a warning sign that something is wrong
- Gives us a healthy perspective of who we are
- Drives us toward relationship with God/Creator and others

Debilitating shame holds us back from being all that God intends for us to be. This shame harms us.

**Debilitating Shame:**

- Exaggerates our faults
- It is chronic
- It is put on us by others
- It seeps into our whole being
- We are condemned by our memories (what we have done, what has been done to us)

When someone is struggling with debilitating shame, how might it affect their behaviour? (Please list a few things. Answers are at the end of this session.)

---

---

Unhealthy shame deepens a person's negative feelings about themselves. In contrast, God's unconditional love and acceptance restores self-worth and promises joy. Consider these verses as you meditate on what it means to be loved by your Creator.

Romans 8:1

***Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup> because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.***

Psalm 36:7

***How priceless is Your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.***

Daniel 2:22

***He reveals deep and hidden things; He knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with Him.***

If God knows you fully, and loves you unconditionally, what does that say about your worth—regardless of what you may or may not have done?

---

---

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

- *Discuss the importance of learning how to speak in public.*
- *Ask each person in your group to briefly describe a time where he/she spoke in front of a group or audience and how he/she felt.*
- *Read the story of Moses in Exodus 3 and 4. Tally up the number of excuses Moses made and how God counteracts each one. Reflect on how God believes in us, even when we don't believe in ourselves.*

- *In which area do you feel you need more work: CONTENT, personal CONFIDENCE, or audience CONNECTION? Which comes easiest for you?*
- *Struggling with debilitating shame can look like this:*
  - *High performance or performing below ability*
  - *Little/limited social interaction*
  - *Talking down about others*
  - *Addiction*
  - *Avoiding responsibility*

*Read Zephaniah 3:17 in your Bible and list five things God will do to show His unconditional love for you.*

*For those interested in learning more about shame (and for background for facilitators of this program), please refer to the “Shame: What is It?” article in the appendix.*