

Intro

Have been reading Joshua 22 - 24 recently. As I did, I felt God prompted me to do 3 sessions. This is one of these sessions. Here we'll be looking at talking first, not jumping to rash and hasty conclusions. Something we'd do well to take note of, especially as Christians.

The Bible Passage To Read

Joshua 22.6-34.

Exercise 1

Write up / project up the following phrases. Ask the young people what they mean / could mean. Add your own too:

Love you..

Thank you for your comments, we will take them into consideration..

I am unavailable to meet..

Your presentation was lively and different..

Exercise 2

Here are a set of simple phrases, along with ways of saying them. Read these out loud and after each one, ask the young people to say what the person saying it really means..

I love you (say as if you're in a hurry and don't mean the words at all)

I love you (say as if you really mean it)

I love you (as if you're saying, 'well I love **you**' - so emphasis is on the 'you')

Your work is very interesting (as if you're really interested in it)

Your work is very interesting (as if to say the work is 'different' and a bit strange)

Thank you or **You're Welcome** (as if you don't mean it at all)

Thank you or **You're Welcome** (sarcastically)

Thank you or **You're Welcome** (as if you mean it)

Thank you or **You're Welcome** (with emphasis on the word, 'you' or 'welcome' - as if you're saying it to someone you are attracted to).

A Scenario

A couple has had a good night out together, watched a movie, had a meal. The following day, the girl texts the lad that they do something else together.

She messages him: *"Hey, last night was amazing. I'd love to do something else tonight.. X"*

The lad already has something arranged. He texts the girl to explain this. The lad is in the middle of a lecture in a very busy day at college with coursework to hand in. He has to write a text quickly, to avoid being seen by the lecturer, and forgets to put an 'x' at the end of his text. He texts back quickly because he wants her to know he values her. He has arranged to watch a football match with his mates 2 weeks previously, the only night they can all watch the game together.

The lad messages back a bit later: *"Sorry, I would meet up, but playing football tonight with the lads. How are you?"*

The girl doesn't respond as she is disappointed, thinking that they had such a good night the night before. Why doesn't he want to do this again, she has been hurt before and is worried it's happening again. Her mind wanders and she thinks that the lad is putting his mates above her, why can't she go along as well, is he ashamed of her? She notices that he has not signed the text with an 'x' so takes that personally - and doesn't respond.

The lad wonders why the girl hasn't responded - what has he done wrong?

Questions about the above scenario:

1. How do you see this scenario? Can you relate to how each one feels?
2. How could their communication be improved?
3. What would you do to resolve this?
4. Can you see how people / you, easily jump to false conclusions?

It is amazing how many situations can develop for the worse simply because people don't talk, or do not communicate with each other effectively enough. This is a challenge for all of us to be more open, honest and up-front.. in a kindly and loving way.

Remember - do not attempt to sort problems out via text or email. You can't see a person's face or 'hear' the way they're saying something. So always phone or speak face to face.

A Movie Clip

You could show a clip from Bruce Almighty. The clip is where Bruce and his wife split up. This is partly because of Bruce's selfishness, partly because they don't communicate well enough as a couple.

Or you could show another clip where communication lines are twisted - you could even show something from the Mel Gibson movie, 'What Women Want' - as he can hear what the women are saying out loud, as well as what they really mean. Be careful, however, as although this movie is a 12, there are some 'dodgy' thoughts that Mel 'hears' !!

The Idol and the Background

The context of the Bible verses is that the Reubenites, Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh had been brought together by the leader, Joshua. He publicly declared how they had been faithful and obedient to God. He warned them to keep the commandments of Moses and to love God. Then Joshua blessed the people and they went their separate ways, each tribe to their land. Joshua blessed them and sent them off with gold and good things.

In verse 10-12 of Joshua 22, we read, "When they came to Geliloth near the Jordan in the land of Canaan, the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an imposing altar there by the Jordan. And when the Israelites heard that they had built the altar on the border of Canaan at Geliloth near the Jordan on the Israelite side, the whole assembly of Israel gathered at Shiloh to go to war against them."

There was a bit of a tricky situation. Maybe you've been in tricky situations - ones where there has been a lot of misunderstanding. So what do we do when this happens? Well, one good rule is never to accept what someone has heard that someone else has said or done. If you want to try to get to the truth, go right to the source, the original person. All kinds of situations can be avoided if we would all just do this.

Going To War?

In the Bible, there was a situation where Israel was all ready to go to war with these tribes. Why? Well, they thought that the altar that had been built, was to an idol, and not to God. They were upset because of what Joshua had said, what the people had said, all the good things the tribes had been given.

Question - is it right to go to war or get angry?

Well, in this instance, Israel was acting as a judge for God's rules. This was no angry statement about going to war. This was to defend God, his laws, his holiness and his great name. Sometimes, it is OK to be angry with things, if this anger is a controlled anger - one that is outraged

because God's name is being misrepresented or perverted. It is *NOT* OK to go around attacking people or abusing people, as some Christians do. This also dishonours God and does God's family no favours at all.

The Confrontation

Joshua 22.15-20: *"When they went to Gilead—to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh—they said to them: 'The whole assembly of the LORD says: 'How could you break faith with the God of Israel like this? How could you turn away from the LORD and build yourselves an altar in rebellion against him now? Was not the sin of Peor enough for us? Up to this very day we have not cleansed ourselves from that sin, even though a plague fell on the community of the LORD! And are you now turning away from the LORD ? ' 'If you rebel against the LORD today, tomorrow he will be angry with the whole community of Israel. If the land you possess is defiled, come over to the LORD's land, where the LORD's tabernacle stands, and share the land with us. But do not rebel against the LORD or against us by building an altar for yourselves, other than the altar of the LORD our God. When Achan son of Zerah acted unfaithfully regarding the devoted things, did not wrath come upon the whole community of Israel? He was not the only one who died for his sin.' "*

Notice that Israel did not go all guns blazing into war. No, they decided to talk first, to go and confront those who they believed had wronged God. Israel went directly to the tribes of Reubenites, Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh to present their case.

What do you do when outraged? The Bible tells us to go and talk to the person who has wronged us first of all - Matthew 18.15-19. In these verses, we see the importance of getting right with each other, with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Why? Because Matthew 18.18-19 tells us of the power of when 2 or 3 people come together in agreement. How can we be in agreement and experience God's power if we are divided and unhappy with one another?

In the confrontation, let's look at the points that were made to see that this was a Godly anger that had been stirred up in the hearts of Israel. Write down on paper the points that they made

The Answers:

- How could you break faith with God like this?
- How could you turn away from the Lord?
- How could you build an altar in rebellion to God?
- Haven't you learned from the sin of Peor (and consequences on all

- of us) not to turn away from God?
- Do not make God angry with all of Israel by rebelling.
 - We'd rather you shared our land than live on defiled land if that's your problem
 - Don't build any altar other than for God, please
 - God's punishment for the sin of Achan has showed us that God punishes many for the sins of one person

So, the argument was about not dishonouring God, and about fearing the consequences of sin. Today, we'd be very wise to think in this same way. Let us not dishonour God. And let us remember that God is Holy and worthy of respect, and that one day we'll all stand before him when he will have Jesus judge all of us.

They Listened

It is true that much of communication is about listening, not talking. It's not just about listening, but about how you listen. We can all name people that we know really listen to us, and those that don't. In Joshua 22.21-29 we find that Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh listened to what Israel had to say and they answered them, telling them that the altar was built to Almighty God, and not to anyone else.

Let's think about what they said.. Write down how the tribes replied:

The Answers (basically):

We are willing to be judged by God if we are wrong, or have rebelled
The altar was built to God as a witness to all that we will worship the Lord

The Resolution

A successful piece of conflict management is a resolution. We do need to resolve things. The Bible tells us in Ephesians 4.26, *"In your anger do not sin : Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry."* This is an excellent principle. Resolution means true forgiveness, both ways, even when this means we have to forgive every day until we have released someone from the hurt they may have caused us.

In Joshua 22.30-34, we find that Israel understood and accepted what had been done - and that the altar had been built to God as a witness (see verse 34). The people were glad, praised God and there was no more talk of war (verse 33).

Prayer To End

Talk about communicating effectively, talking to people, getting right with people, truly forgiving. Then thank and praise God.