**“Gracious Communication”**

*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*

*(Philippians 4:8 NIV)*

*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.*

*(Ephesians 4:29 NIV))*

**T** … Is it true?

**H** … Is it helpful?

**I** … Is it inspiring?

**N** … Is it necessary?

**K** … Is it kind?

**TRUE**

* Is it true and factual? OR … is it a partial truth or fact? is it hearsay? Am I presenting my opinion as fact? Am I exaggerating? Generalizing? Making an assumption? Am I assigning unverified motives to others?

***Beware*** *of these sentence starters taking you into ‘the weeds’:*

* “Now I don’t know if this is true or not, but …”
* “Don’t quote me on this, but I thought she said …”
* “I think most would agree …”
* “I heard from Jill that …..”
* “No one …” “Everybody …” “They always ….” “She never ….”
* “Here’s what I think is going on …”
* “They never think about …”
* “He’s not interested in ……”
* “Have you heard anything about …” or “What do you think about …”

**HELPFUL**

* What are my motives? In saying: **This message … at this time … to this audience?**
* Remember **WAIT**: Why Am I Talking?

***Beware*** *of these sentence starters taking you into ‘the weeds’:*

* + “I probably shouldn’t say this, but …”
  + “I hate to say it, but …”
  + “Now this is just between you and me …”
  + “I wouldn’t say this to just anyone, but …”
  + “Please don’t repeat this ….”

**HELPFUL** (cont.)

* Is the information confidential or private?

***Beware*** *of these sentence starters taking you into ‘the weeds’:*

* + “I think this is confidential, so please don’t tell anyone …”
  + “This is confidential, but I don’t think they’d mind me telling you …”
  + “You’re a safe person to tell …. Did you know ….”
* Do I understand all aspects of the situation in order to speak equitably about it?

***Beware*** *of these sentence starters taking you into ‘the weeds’:*

* + “I don’t know the whole story, but my guess is …”
  + “I haven’t asked him directly, but I think he ….”
  + “They’re wrong … I’m sorry, but there’s just no other way to say it.”
  + “What reason could he possibly have for saying that? I don’t even care, I think he’s ………”
* Is it good and beneficial to my audience, the greater fellowship, and to any people I am referencing in the discussion? Could it be harmful in ANY way? (e.g., casting a bad light on an individual or group; causing confusion; stirring up emotions to gain support or just to enjoy the debate).

***Beware*** *of these sentence starters taking you into ‘the weeds’:*

* + “I know you can handle me saying this about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”
  + “I’m not going to dwell on this, but let me just say quickly …”
  + “You are close to Ted; what are your thoughts about why he did this?”
  + “I wouldn’t tell the rest of the church this, but …”
  + “I wouldn’t tell him this, because he wouldn’t understand … he would get defensive …. she would misunderstand … it would get too dramatic …”
  + “I know we’ll all agree that …”
  + “They come from a Methodist/Catholic/Baptist background and so they …”

**INSPIRING**

* Am I reacting, venting, thinking out-loud … or am I speaking with careful (‘full of care’) and thoughtful intention to glorify Christ while I am speaking? Am I being ‘impulsive’ or ‘intentional’ with my words and tone?

***Beware*** *of these sentence starters taking you into ‘the weeds’:*

* + One-liner bombs – usually sarcastic, humorous forms of opinion said too quickly for apt response.
  + “You know I don’t mean this, but ….”
  + “I’m frustrated that …”
  + “What concerns me is …”
* Am I mainly complaining, fretting, grumbling … or am I predominantly fostering hope in God and His good purposes?

***Beware*** *of this sentence starter taking you into ‘the weeds’:*

* “I know God is sovereign, but … “

**NECESSARY**

* Am I naming other people (by name or by group) in my conversation, and to what good and necessary purpose? Am I providing details/specifics that are not necessary?

***Beware*** *of these sentence starters taking you into ‘the weeds’:*

* + “If they were here I’d say this to them …”
  + “I don’t think she’d mind my saying this …”
  + “I’d like to pray for Mitch … I won’t go into detail, but he and his wife are struggling with their teenage son … yes, the older one … I’m not sure, something about parties at school … Yes, Mitch is a wreck about it …”
  + “The so-and-so’s left the church because …….”

**KIND**

* Have I truly listened, with patience? … Have I been non-judgmentally interested in the other’s perspective? Have I invited it out of care for them, and my own accountability?

***Beware*** *of these sentence starters taking you into ‘the weeds’:*

* “Yes, I hear you, but what I’m saying is …”
* “I’m just going to say this, and then I’ve got to go …”
* “I need to be honest with you about something, but I’ve got a meeting in 5 minutes …”
* “I disagree with that statement, and here’s why.”
* Again, am I considering the well-being of my audience, the greater fellowship, and to any people I am referencing in the discussion?

***Beware*** *of these sentence starters taking you into ‘the weeds’:*

* “I don’t want to taint your view, but ….”
* “I really like him, but I find that …”
* “She has a lot of strengths, but one thing she doesn’t do well is …”
* “She’s a dear sister in Christ, but ….”
* “He’s a brother and we have a good time together, but …”

*May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart  
    be pleasing in your sight,  
    Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.*

*(Psalm 19:14 NIV)*