



Chaplain's Office  
University Passage Resource

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Communication scholars are aware that in and through communication all of life is created. That may seem like a bold statement, but it is through the Bible that God communicates with us each time we open it up. I recently heard a pastor say, "If you want to hear God's voice, read your Bible. If you want to hear God's audible voice, read it out loud." The Bible is the primary source for God's communication with us. It is through the Bible that God communicated to us the instruction of the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. And it is through our communication with God and others that we live out the Great Commandment and Great Commission.

While it is *through* communication that we engage in all of life, it is ultimately *how* we communicate that determines the fullness of our life. If I am to love my neighbor as myself, I need to understand how my communication with others is impacting their understanding, perception, and interpretation of that love. When I think of the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself, I can't help but also think of John 13:34, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." When you consider loving one another as Jesus has loved us, that paints a very intimate, nuanced, and familiar kind of love. Jesus knew exactly where others stood in terms of their understanding or lack thereof, he knew exactly how others perceived him, and he knew how accurately and inaccurately they were interpreting his words.

If we are to properly communicate love to our neighbors we too must seek an intimate, nuanced, and familiar approach to understanding our neighbors in all their fullness. Jesus was able to speak directly to the heart of others, like the woman at the well, because Jesus knew their heart intimately. While we don't have the natural ability to do so, like Jesus, we can at least strive toward that kind of intimate understanding. For us, this takes time spent in relationship with our neighbors asking questions, listening intently to their responses, seeking clarification, and coordinating shared meaning. With a Jesus like approach toward love and understanding, it drastically changes *how* we communicate and *how* we love others.

I firmly believe that through our communication, we can *encourage* others to become, in reality, what they were intended to become in God's original design. I also firmly believe that if we are not careful, we can also *discourage* others from becoming, in reality, what they were intended to become in God's original design. The only way we can ensure that we do the former, rather than the latter, is by loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. If we put God first, seeking His guidance and instruction in and through all forms of communication we will undoubtedly *encourage* others to become, in reality, what they were intended to become in God's original design.