



**Educate  
+ Engage**



FAMILY  
MATTERS



Communicating  
with Others

## OVERVIEW

Have you ever gotten into an argument with someone and realized that it was because of an assumption or a misunderstanding? Communication barriers like these tend to be the culprit most of the time when it comes to finding fault in arguments. We all know the story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears. Imagine how the story would have been different if Goldilocks had waited patiently on the front door step for the bears to come home and kindly asked if she could come in and visit with them. Instead, she assumed that she was welcome to intrude and try out their porridge and furniture. Because of an assumption that Goldilocks made, the bears came home to a mess and she had to flee out of fear due to upsetting the bears. To this day, Goldilocks still has three innocent bears as her enemy. Though this is a childlike example, the principle is true. We have the opportunity to either escalate or diffuse conflict with our words if we take the time to communicate effectively.

Before we dive into our lesson, think about a time you felt misunderstood. How did it make you feel? I need at least five of you to share out in one or two words how it made you feel.

*(Teacher note: If no one is sharing, you can have a few words prepared such as angry, frustrated, sad, or disappointed. Call out these words and have students give a thumbs up if it applies to them.)*

### Scripture Passage

Hebrews 12:14 (NIV)

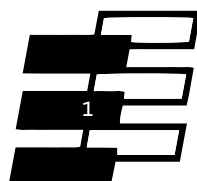
Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

## EDUCATE

How we navigate relationships toward other people has a lot to do with our holiness. Healthy relationships are founded upon our communication. It takes effort and energy to overcome communication barriers like the ones already mentioned. The goal of today's lesson is to equip you with biblical and practical tools that can be applied in your life so that you can pursue peace with everyone and be holy.

### Point 1: Identify communication barriers.

Many barriers can hinder the goal or outcome of our communication and relationship with others. For today's lesson, we will hone in on misunderstandings and making assumptions. Everyone is capable of misunderstanding and making assumptions but with the help of the Word, we



can overcome these tactics of the flesh (our selfish human nature) that create division. These barriers to effective and healthy communication are important to identify so that we can fulfill the law of the Spirit and live at peace with all people like our key Scripture states.

### **Point 2: Overcome misunderstandings by clarification.**

Aren't misunderstandings fun? Not really! No one likes to be misunderstood. Just a few moments ago, we identified a few emotions that being misunderstood can cause.

We can overcome misunderstandings by asking simple clarifying questions, such as, "I am not sure that I understand you. Are you saying that you do not want to go out today?"

Let's take a moment to brainstorm a few other clarifying questions that can be applied in everyday life in order to reduce misunderstandings.

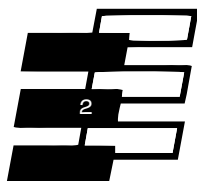
*(Tell students that you are going to give them ten seconds to think. This is called waittime, and it is very important in getting the response that you want from them. The silence might be awkward, but you are more likely to get better responses if you give them time to think. After 10 seconds is up, let students know that you are going to give them twenty seconds to talk to the person next to them about their ideas. If possible, walk around and listen to students share their ideas with the person next to them. After twenty seconds is up, share out loud what you heard other students say. You can have some answers prepared such as "Can you be more specific in what you are wanting from me?" and "I think I will understand you better if you provide more detail.")*

Identifying a misunderstanding when it is present by asking clarifying questions helps us in pursuing peace with all people just like our key Scripture states.

### **Point 3: Resist making negative assumptions.**

Sometimes, negative assumptions are built upon misunderstandings. Before we move forward, it's important to understand that assuming is not always negative. Assuming can include giving people the benefit of the doubt. For the purpose of today's lesson though, we are going to build upon our awareness of misunderstanding.

Let's say your friend tells you that they do not want to go out and do something fun with you because they do not feel like it. In this simple scenario, it might be easy to fall into the trap of misunderstanding. It would be easy to misunderstand a friend's reasoning in this situation and assume that they do not care about you or remember that they told you earlier in the week that



## Lesson 1

they would hang out with you. Without seeking to understand, it would be easy to assume the worst of intentions, become offended, and avoid your friend if you let your emotions get the best of you. Instead of assuming, once again, we can turn to pursuing peace by asking clarifying questions and turning to the fruit of the Spirit.

Turning to the fruit of the Spirit such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, goodness, and self control blocks us from getting offended when there is temptation to assume negatively.

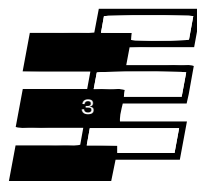
Referring back to our example, if you were to ask your friend a clarifying question and you are not satisfied with their answer, you can turn to the fruit of the Spirit in order to keep peace within your relationship before unhealthy assumptions are made. You can say to yourself, "Because I love my friend, I can tell that they need space. I am not exactly sure why they do not want to do something fun with me today, but this is an opportunity to show them that I love them and want to see the best in them."

What fruit of the spirit do you feel will help you most in maintaining healthy relationships with others?

Feel free to review the fruit of the Spirit by looking up Galatians 5 or write them on a whiteboard nearby for reference as some students might not know. By resisting the temptation to make assumptions about others, let us walk in the liberty and fulfillment that God has called us to in relationships by turning to the fruit of the Spirit so that we can "make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord."

### Closing

Today we have worked through our first lesson in our series. We discussed how misunderstandings and making assumptions can get in the way of effective and healthy communication with other people. As followers of Christ, we are commanded to do all that we can to live in peace with other people in order to pursue holiness. If we cannot get along with other people such as friends, teachers, coaches, bosses, and family members, it robs us of our peace. Without peace, we lack in holiness, and without holiness our relationship with God is hindered. We also discussed how asking simple clarifying questions can help us avoid misunderstandings, and leaning into the fruit of the Spirit can help us avoid the trap of making assumptions.



### ENGAGE

My challenge to you this week is to be on the lookout for anytime an opportunity arises in which a misunderstanding is present or a false assumption is on the horizon. Instead of letting your emotions get the best of you, let's apply what we have learned today in our daily relationships. Before leaving today, I want you to think about your takeaway. A takeaway could be something that you learned, connected with, or found interesting that you want to know more about. Let's have a few people share and then close in prayer.

