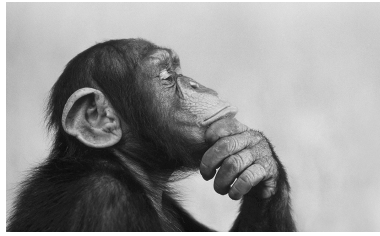


"Do You Want to Know What *I* Think?"

Allan Pole



Theme: Choosing the right opportunities to speak up can make or break your relationships.

Text: Proverbs 9:8-9

Here's a thought: A Buddhist proverb observes, "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear."

Open with the video clip "It's Not About the Nail" at www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4EDhdAHrOg.

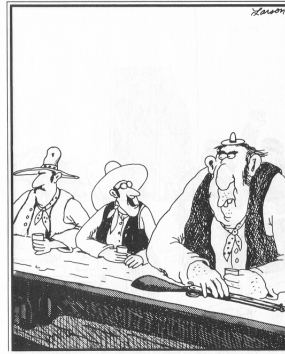
King Solomon shares a great insight for relationships in Proverbs 9:8-9:
8 Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you. 9 Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning. NIV

Here is Proverbs 9:8-9 in the New Living Translation:
So don't bother rebuking mockers; they will only hate you. But the wise, when rebuked, will love you all the more. 9 Teach the wise, and they will be wiser. Teach the righteous, and they will learn more. NLT

You've heard of selective hearing. Let's talk about selective speaking.

Your goal is to help others:

Not Just When *You* Are Ready



When Solomon refers to a mocker in Proverbs 9:8 he uses a strong word that could refer to someone who scorns advice. However, the principle of social sensitivity we glean from this could also refer to someone who just wants you to listen and understand rather than “fix” them.

I am learning to ask my wife Brenda, “Do you want to know what I *think* or do you just want me to *listen*?” We males particularly tend to rush to solving problems rather than taking the time to understand the problems of others. In our early years of marriage Brenda would come home from work and vent her frustration over something her boss or coworkers said or did. I would think to myself and typically blurt out, “How dare they! You need to go back there tomorrow morning and give them a piece of your mind!” You can imagine the frustration that Brenda would have felt and you can imagine how quickly she would have been unemployed if she had followed my advice.

I am grateful to one of my teachers, Bob Logan, who introduced me to the concept of “just in case training vs. just in time training”. “Just in case training” emphasizes the transfer of large volumes of information from the teacher to student with less concentration on application while “just in time training” seeks to capitalize on teachable moments when the learner sees the immediate relevance of the information that the teacher is imparting.

Stop and think about how much the Son of God would have had to share with His disciples! Jesus had come from heaven to earth and He wanted His followers to know what He knew. Trying to take in all that He had to share must have been like trying to drink from a fire hydrant. Immanuel – God with us – showed incredible self-control by providing input in manageable doses.

Jesus told His disciples in John 16:12-13:

12 I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. NIV

Jesus was preparing His disciples for the time when He would no longer be with them physically. He knew His departure was coming soon and He was going to send the Holy Spirit to lead, counsel and empower His followers.

It takes great faith to believe the Lord will teach and correct people when the time is right and they are ready. It requires *me* to step off the throne and let *Him* take charge. It means I must set aside my pride and my agenda for God's work and will to be accomplished in others in a time and way that is not necessarily mine.

A Buddhist proverb observes, "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear."

I am told that Dudley Daniel, the original leader of the NCMI apostolic team, is really good at providing counsel and input only when it is requested. This takes great humility and patience to wait for people to ask for my input when it is just bursting to get out. It demands self-control and sensitivity to know when I have said enough and my listeners have heard all they can absorb.

Jesus reveals His teaching strategy in Matthew 13:11-13:

11 He [Jesus] replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand." NIV

The Lord was continually watching and listening for people's openness to spiritual truths. He would not always speak plainly but He would sometimes veil His points with parables then wait to see who would press in for more clarity. What a brilliant way to sort through those who were open to hear and those who were not!

The next time you are about to express your opinion stop and ask yourself, "Am I saying this for *my* benefit or for the *other* person's benefit?"

Your goal is to help others:
Not Just When *You* Are Ready

When *They* Are Ready



Watch and listen for “teachable moments” in those you influence. Are people *really* asking for your input? If they are, what kinds of questions do they ask? Listen closely – do you get the sense they are prepared to make some adjustments, if necessary, or are they simply looking for people to agree with them?

American author John Steinbeck (1902-1968) quipped, “You know how advice is. You only want it if it agrees with what you wanted to do anyway.”

I have spent far too much time and energy trying to counsel people who keep asking the questions until they find someone who agrees with them. What happens when you suggest to someone an adjustment in thinking, speech and/or behaviour? Do you sense openness or resistance? Do you get a green light, yellow light or red light?

Someone recently asked me what I thought they should do about a situation they faced. The answer seemed obvious to me as several Bible passages came to mind – several of which I had just shared with the one asking the question. I bit my tongue as I resisted the urge to quote the Scripture and to spoon-feed the answer. Instead, I asked this person to ask the Lord about how He would handle the situation.

Beware of becoming an incurable problem-solver. People more frequently need a listening ear and probing questions rather than a solution to their problems.

Kings and queens would come from far and wide to hear Solomon’s wisdom yet he writes in Proverbs 20:5, “The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out.” NIV

I recommend to you the teaching of Mark Gregston of Heartlight Ministries (www.heartlightministries.org), who has some great advice in “Parenting for Today’s Teens”. I have learned from him and from a coaching course I took with CoachNet (www.coachnet.org) to ask open-ended questions. Examples of open-ended questions are:

How do you feel about this challenge you face?

What are your options for solutions?
Which option do you think is best?
Why do you feel this option is best?

Ask closed-ended questions sparingly. If you can answer a question with only a "yes" or "no" response, then you are answering a closed-ended question.

Beware of leading questions, attempts to put words in someone else's mouth. A leading question is a question which subtly prompts the respondent to answer in a particular way

(www.mediacollege.com/journalism/interviews/leading-questions.html).

Leading questions are generally undesirable as they result in false or slanted information. For example:

Do you have any problems with your boss? This question prompts the person to question their employment relationship. In a subtle way it raises the prospect that there are problems.

Tell me about your relationship with your boss. This question does not seek any judgment and there is less implication that there might be something wrong with the relationship.

The difference in the above example is minor but in some situations it can be more important. For example, in a court case:

How fast was the red car going when it smashed into the blue car? This question implies that the red car was at fault, and the word "smashed" implies a high speed.

How fast was each car going when the accident happened? This question does not assign any blame or pre-judgment.

Listen in on this conversation in Matthew 19:16-24:

16 Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" 17 "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." 18 "Which ones?" the man inquired. Jesus replied, "'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, 19 honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'" 20 "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?" 21 Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. 23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the

kingdom of God." NIV

How would you have felt if you were Jesus watching this young man walk away? Disappointed? Angry? Frustrated? I sense disappointment in Jesus but I don't sense anger or frustration.

Frustration is a sign of a blocked goal. Do you feel yourself getting frustrated when someone isn't listening to your advice? If yes, what are you trying to accomplish in this conversation or in this relationship? If your goal is to get people to do what *you* think they should do, your frustration level will be high and your relationships will be filled with tension. If your goal is to be obedient to the Lord and say *what* He wants you to say *when* He wants you to say it, then you and your relationships will be filled with peace. As a result, you will become a much more attractive and inviting person.

The next time you are ready to give advice stop and ask yourself, "Does this person *really* want to know what I think?"

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When *They* Are Ready**

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