



Communication Gaps

By Ferdie J. Deering

Mankind was in close communion with God before the sin of disobedience, and people apparently understood each other pretty well before they undertook to build the Tower of Babel.

At Pentecost, the apostles miraculously were given power to speak the gospel in different languages and be understood.

But now, we often have difficulty in transmitting ideas to each other in our own native language!

The Apostle Paul wrote: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." He might have love, knowledge and the gospel, and still fail to communicate.

People may hear biblical names and terms used daily without comprehending their holy nature. Knowledge of these words might be limited to vulgar or profane conversation and dirty movies or TV.

Before such people can know the truth, they must hear it in words that convey their true meaning.

There are many gaps in our communications, such as the "generation gap" or the "attention gap." And then there is the "empathy gap" that often exists between Christians and others.

Whether we intend to do so or not, and even if we are not aware of it, all of us continually are communicating something to those around us, and it may not always be what we think it is.

Young people are trying to tell us older folks something by the way they style their hair and the clothes they wear, but the message sometimes seems to be garbled in the transmission. So it is with Christians trying to transmit the gospel message.

Greeters at church doors and the members themselves also are delivering messages to visitors and non-members, but impressions received might not be the ones intended. Senders and receivers may not be speaking the same language, even if it is all English.

The Christian religion includes a considerable amount of symbolism. It may be beautiful, but it is not always clear to believers and it could be downright confusing to outsiders.

Worship services, in most cases, would be incomplete without music, and generally it is much appreciated by the congregations.

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There are times, however, when one may wonder whether hymns were selected for their meaning, their melody, or just because they were handy in the hymnal.

Hymns are filled with symbolism, some of which may be rather imaginative, even though scripturally based. This may not bother those with musical talent, but many of us who have "tin ears" have to focus on the words. Understanding isn't always easy.

Most Christians probably would be startled and perhaps resentful if a stranger approached and bluntly asked: "Are you a Moslem (or something else)? If not why not become one, right now?"

The Golden Rule should be applicable in our efforts to communicate the gospel. Results of our missionary zeal could be better if we took time to establish a basis of understanding.

Unquestionably, different approaches are desirable to different people. This is not an appeal for uniformity or slackening in communications, evangelism or worship.

It is simply a suggestion that consideration be given to the manner in which the recipient may interpret our messages, as well as to the content, meaning and intent of the messages sent.