



COMMUNICATION

From Caves to Coffee Shops

Why What He Thinks
He Said, Isn't What She
Thinks She Heard

PJ McClure

Communication: From Caves to Coffee Shops
PJ McClure with Joe Tanenbaum

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Why What He Thinks He Said, Isn't What She Thinks
She Heard

By PJ McClure
with Joe Tanenbaum

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## **Introduction**

You're about to be blessed! Not because of the contents of this book, though I'm a little biased. Your blessing is on the way because of you.

You are reading this book because you have a desire to communicate better with the opposite sex, and that desire is about to be released. Once set free, your communication skills will take you places most don't dare, and let you travel in a style most can't imagine.

In 20 years of traveling corporate circles coaching executives and managers in the area of people skills, I developed a number of concepts and notions about how people need to interact for maximum benefit to all parties involved. Those concepts were effective for the most part and the participants saw large increases in their abilities, but there was always a nagging segment that didn't respond as well as the others.

When I found a situation of conflict or inefficiency between men and women, I stalled a little. The solution to the issues seemed simple enough, but I could not seem to get my solutions to take shape in a way that could be taught. Later, when I began releasing my teaching on mindset, a student of those teachings gave me my missing piece.

Richard had applied what he learned from my writing with great success and wondered if I would be interested in another resource about how people think. He sent me a book written by Joe Tanenbaum.

Joe had done years of research on the differences between men and women and how those differences created many of the issues I was seeing. His research collided with my concepts and gave shape to the things I had wondered how to express.

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I began using the concepts with clients and their understanding and results were immediate. Excited to learn more, I looked further into his work. What I found there was an opportunity.

Through Richard, who is a friend of Joe's, I was offered the chance to integrate his research with my concepts so they could be offered to the public. This book is the fruit that resulted.

I'm confident you will benefit from the contents herein. I look forward to your review and to hearing how you have improved your corner of the world through better communication.



PJ McClure

## Chapter 1

### So what do you want to Talk About?

Just imagine Og and Oola sitting around the cave fire, discussing the day's events, talking about the kids' futures, and solving their most intimate relationship issues. Lovely, isn't it?



I hope you can imagine it, because that is as close to the picture as you'll ever get – imagination! Discussions like this one never happened in primitive culture and have only been possible for about the last 160 years. Up until then, the primary concerns of most men and women were matters of survival.

“How do we eat and stay alive?”

As hard as it is for us to believe, conversations about plans for the weekend, fashions, and emotions have been part of the human picture for a very short period of time. Considering the length of recorded history, the need for men and women to communicate is still in its infancy.

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Of course, if we take a look around at how poorly most of us communicate with the opposite-sex it is pretty easy to agree that “infancy” is the best way to describe it.

Maybe more frustrating to the situation than even our lack of communication maturity is our ignorance as to what is going on within the person we are trying to communicate with. Our “reality” paints a clear picture of the faults and shortcomings of the opposite sex and, without knowing it, our own faults and shortcomings are being painted clearly by their “reality” as well.

“She’s too emotional.”

“He just won’t talk about his feelings.”

“She’s so flighty!”

“He’s too serious.”

“Why can’t she be more organized?”

“Why can’t he be more spontaneous?”

On and on it goes until we reach a point of overwhelm and decide that the other gender is simply incapable of getting it right. Their behavior does not match our behavior or expectations and so we are constantly disappointed in the result.

Stereotypes aside, communication between the sexes is a global problem. Thousands of people from very different cultural, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds as well as different countries have received this information. It has been presented through corporate and couple’s workshops, high school and college events, as well as medical and mental health presentations – a truly huge and diverse group of people. The feedback, however, is not diverse by any means.

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What becomes obvious in each setting is that men and women have a hard time appreciating each other. The female clients think the men are indulging in typical “male” behavior, while men are convinced the women are indulging in typical “female” behavior. They each believe there is something broken about the other and things would be great if only the broken could be fixed.

We have all heard plenty of jokes about men, women, relationships and marriage. Some of the jokes are funny and make us laugh at our circumstances, but unfortunately, jokes usually hide anger, misunderstandings and fears.

Despite all the real enlightenment achieved over the last couple of decades, the “battle of the sexes” still exists and continues to grow because we have limited understanding of the “enemy.” We may think that we understand the opposite sex because we use the same basic language (English, in this case). We further assume that a word and its meaning are the same for everyone, even though we know that the meaning of a word may change by region of the country, race, religion and certainly within generations. What we usually overlook is how words are interpreted due to *gender*.

The confusion really gets going when we see that each gender has different internal signals that define positive and negative feedback. Some of these signals are inborn and some are learned in order to survive in our respective environments. Even though survival is no longer an actual issue for most of us, we continue to experience and respond to the world using these signals.

Exploring these issues and presenting the findings is not intended to support the ignorant, chauvinistic attitudes of both men and women. However, some attitudes contain a seed of truth and it is important to investigate

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that seed to find the source of the behavior. When we understand the seed, we can better nurture what it eventually becomes in its mature state.

The goal of this book is to pose both answers and questions. Ideally, after reading, you will have a few answers that cause you to ask more questions of the opposite sex rather than assume you understand what is being said. The content and examples may seem primarily directed to women who are seeking to better understand men, however, men will benefit from learning more about their own communication issues as well as how to better relate to the communication styles and needs of women.

I predict your mindset will change and you will trust more by listening and seeking to understand the differences in male and female experiences. I also guarantee you will find yourself easily resolving situations that used to cause problems before you read this book.

Better understanding of how we interact can have impact in personal areas ranging from dating to marriage, friendships to parenting, and more. We do not always see communication difficulties through the lens of gender, so some of the simplest solutions go overlooked.

Gender-based differences affect our business lives as well as our personal relationships. I hope you will be able to take the information that follows and use it within your management style, corporate structure and leadership choices, as well as in the roles of your family. But be warned! You may begin to develop more compassion and trust for everyone around you as the understanding of different motivations and realities of

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men and women come to light. (That wouldn't be so bad, would it?)

I further promise to make this as fun to read and easy to implement as possible. Otherwise, it's useless. Discovering the truths hidden in our design and development can be a little academic if we aren't careful. Rest assured though, you will be nodding your head and even giggling a little at the examples as you relate to them.

You will also have "ah-ha" moments where a long held belief about the opposite sex (maybe one member of the opposite sex in particular) will collapse under the weight of what you have just learned. Embrace the opportunities for growth and please, focus on using the new information to work on yourself first. This isn't a hammer to go beating the other person over the head with.

If you are up to the challenge, the next chapter begins to unpack the subject of communication, what it is made of, and how it can break down. Sprinkle in a little biology and we will be well on our way to better, more harmonious lives for all.

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Summary

Effective communication between the sexes is a global problem

Modern communication (issues beyond survival and procreation) is still in its infancy

Each gender's version of reality complicates the situation

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Stereo-types can be damaging but generally contain some truth

Better understanding can improve every area of life

Ponder this

Who do you experience the most frustration with in communicating?

Do you tend to communicate better with your same gender or opposite?

What area of your life would improve the quickest with better communication?

Chapter 2

What are the Parts of Communication?

Approaching the bigness of life is quite a task. I have been blessed to spend my professional days helping people from all walks of life discover their desire for more in life and helping them identify and destroy roadblocks along the way. It's an amazing experience!

As varied and diverse as these clients are, there is always one consistent roadblock we must tackle together – communication.

No one has been gifted and called by God to live a life completely alone with no outside interaction. Some might think that would be ok, but generally that is because they struggle with communication.

Before we tackle the issues facing men and women alike, it is important that we understand communication as a concept so the issues and their solutions make more sense. Let's build the foundation by looking at communication as a model.

Building Blocks of Communication

The communication model has been explored, labeled and explained for years, and all of the renditions are essentially the same. For our purposes here, I want you to think of it as having nine basic components.



Data- Medium- Source- Encoding- Message- Interference- Receiver- Decoding- Filters

Don't fall asleep on me yet! These are important and we will hang a lot of the things we cover later on these components.

Data – This is simply the stuff moving back and forth, but without the application of filters (encoding, or decoding). Data is information at its purest. i.e.: A desire to know the time of day.

Medium – The channel we move the data along. Through the years we have developed more means of communication than existed previously. Starting with face-to-face grunts and hand signals all the way to talk-to-type texting and social media. The medium we use has a lot to do with how effectively we communicate. By the way, grunts and hand signals are still very effective in large groups of men.

Source – The person initiating a transfer of data. It has to start somewhere. This is where it starts to get complicated because people are involved. We start the process because of a need or desire to express information. In this case, this is the person who has a desire to know the time of day. Sounds simple, but as

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soon as we add a human element we bring other components into play that change the game entirely.

Source Filters – “Filters” is listed once in the list and applies twice in the model. Filters are the result of life experiences, expectations, education, upbringing, geography, ethnicity, biology, current mood and much more. The desire to know the time of day passes through this filter before ever being expressed. Our filters color everything and determine what we mean in our communication.

Encoding – The information placed around the basic data as a result of our filters. This includes tone of voice, facial expressions, body language, punctuation, capitalization, pace of speech and so on. This is where the simple desire to know the time of day has the potential to become more. As the request for the time moves forward (now filtered through our lifetime of experiences, current mood and expectations) it has much more than time of day attached to it.

Message – This is the data as it is put forward to a recipient after it has passed through our filters and been encoded. The message represents our expectation of what will be received and eventually returned to us.

Interference – Have you ever noticed that sometimes the world gets in the way? Interference comes from elements outside of both the source and the receiver in the model. Crowd noise, interruptions, slow connection speeds, autocorrected words, static... you get the picture. To complicate things further, we will frequently take the interference as part of the other party’s message, compounding an already precarious situation.

Receiver – Every message must have a receiver, even if you’re talking to yourself. Just as the source is a person

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who complicates things, now the receiver intensifies that complication. A variety of factors determine how the message is received and whether or not the original data (“What is the time of day?”) even gets through.

Receiver Filters – Here is the second appearance of filters in the model. Now we see, though, that this set of filters deals with all of the same things the Source Filters deal with AND an already encoded message, not just data. The Receiver Filters sift the message and re-colors it before ever determining its meaning.

Decoding – How we interpret the information surrounding the basic data as a result of our filters. The message may have been, “What is the time of day?” but it can be decoded to mean many things. The process of filtering and decoding something that has been filtered and encoded by someone else can result in a received message that is nowhere close to the intended message.

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### **Summary**

Communication has multiple parts and can be modeled

Each participant in communication brings unique elements to the model

Communication involves much more than transferring information

### **Ponder this**

Have you ever considered how much is involved in communicating?

Which one of the parts of the model impacted your understanding of communication the most?

Did any of the parts of the model give you an ah-ha moment?

## Chapter 3

### Working Through the Model

Can you see how intricate and messy communication can be? In this model we haven't even discussed the reply! All of the sudden, something that seemed difficult can spiral and compound in brand new ways.

Just from a simple data point ("What is the time of day?") we can find ourselves in a whirlwind of emotions, expectations and misunderstandings, most of them subconscious. For example...

He wants to know what time it is. In the split second that the question is formulating he is:

- Remembering other times he has asked that question
- The responses he's received previously
- How he felt about those responses
- The times he's asked her specifically
- How those specific occurrences unfolded
- Feeling like she's never ready on time
- Thinking she doesn't respect being on time like he does
- Deciding he doesn't want to fight or create tension
- Feeling embarrassed that he doesn't know the time
- Wondering what will happen if they are late...

On and on it goes.

With these things forming his filter, our source communicator encodes his message with the tonality, posture and pace that he feels will get the result he's

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after. Then, he puts the message into the medium (face-to-face verbal in this case) and waits for a response. Keep in mind most of this is subconscious and done out of training and habit.

On the way to the receiver, the message encounters some interference...

- One of the kids loudly asks where their other shoe is
- The blow drier is running like a jet engine
- A cell phone erupts with texts and social media notifications

The receiver gets the message and instantly puts them through her filter in order to decode the tone, posture, pace and words. In this process she:

- Remembers the times she's had conversations about the time
- Replays how those conversations made her feel
- Counts each time he has pushed her to hurry
- Wonders if this request is just a way to make her hurry again
- Gets a little aggravated that she is usually the last one to be ready
- Pictures the child's shoe laying in the living room
- Wonders why he can't just go find a clock
- Wishes he would change the ringtone on his phone
- Remembers she needs to schedule a hair appointment

Through this maze created by only two people during one pass of a communication, the possibilities of where it could end up are numerous. Change any one of these

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factors – especially the communication medium – and the possibilities all change as well.

It is because of these factors and how important good communication is that we must learn to function more efficiently. The example of him asking her for the time of day is purposefully set up to be a little stereotypical. It also reflects a number of biological and gender-learned behaviors and tendencies that we will touch on in this book.

Keep in mind as we go forward, some of the examples and information regarding male and female communication tendencies will seem over-the-top stereotypical and not everything will apply to every person. That's OK.

Because of upbringing, environment, education and a plethora of other factors that could be named, we are all unique. That said, we can learn a lot even in looking at the extremes.

In most cases today, we are more balanced in our approach to communication and interaction than our not-so-distant ancestors. Certain societal changes (some good, some not) have impacted how we behave.

In days gone by, girls were trained by women and boys were trained by men. Now, influences that range from better parenting and emotional intelligence to divorce and reality television have blurred the old expectations and given way to a new training model.

I happen to be a female-trained male because of being raised primarily by a single mom and my grandmothers. All of the male biology and tendencies are there, but some are curbed or altered due to that environment, so not everything applies. Still yet, I can see where many of

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the typical “guy things” show through and I can benefit by knowing they are there.

There’s no need for me to get upset and disagree with every point that does not hit me squarely. I note it, acknowledge that it does not apply, and move on. Eat the meat, spit out the bones.

You will likely find yourself and the people you know somewhere toward the middle as opposed to on either extreme, but the width of that span is what makes understanding so critical. Deeper understanding helps us apply what matters, when it matters.

That is the goal for the remainder of our time in this material. Take what fits and is beneficial for your situation and just take note of the rest. Chances are, you’ll come back here for pointers.

Approaching the topic of communication as an ongoing study is a good idea because so many of us have a lot of assumptions in this area. In fact, let’s start in the next chapter and identify a few of those assumptions.

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Summary

Communication is NOT just a simple exchange of information

Each member of a conversation brings their entire history to table

Because of personal filters, the encoding and decoding process can magnify potential difficulties

Items and events outside of the participants can interfere with communication

Stereotypes contain truth even though not each one will apply to everyone

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Both men and women can have tendencies that were trained into them by influential members of the opposite sex in their lives

Ponder this

Now that you are aware of their existence, what influences your filter?

Can you catch yourself “coloring” someone’s attempt at communication with your past experiences?

If the male/female stereotypes are the extremes, where does your training put you on the scale?

Are you willing to find the truth about yourself and those around you without having to make people fit into predefined categories?

Chapter 4

Assumptions and Expectations

We all know what assuming can do. When you bring the danger of assumption into the realm of communication it adds an entirely new element of risk. Blend that with gender differences and we go off the charts!

Women and men make continual assumptions about the other, and are not always willing to have those assumptions challenged. However, when we identify the misinformation and break open the assumptions to see what is really going on, our ability to understand each other takes off.

When asking men and women in a workshop setting why communicating with the opposite sex is so difficult, the number of assumptions is often hefty. To make matters worse, each gender thinks the solution is simply to “fix” the other.

As an example, male participants say that women should:

- Talk less
- Be less emotional
- Be less “romantic”
- Be less involved with others’ problems
- Laugh less
- Be more rational
- Be more serious
- Change less
- Be less sensitive

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Female participants say that men should:

- Talk more
- Be more emotional
- Be more “romantic”
- Care more about others
- Lighten up and be sillier
- Be more spontaneous
- Have more fun
- Be more flexible
- Be more compassionate

It’s easy to see how these “shoulds” can create a battle line of expectation. Each gender believes what they are saying is true and that these are facts and not opinions. The apparent deficiencies in the opposite sex are really nothing more than differences, but our negative perceptions make that hard to see.

When people say that men and women are equal and should be able to function the same way, they confuse the issue. In comparing and understanding the sexes we often confuse equal with same. Yes, the sexes are equal, but they are not the same.

In our attempts to secure societal equality, lines were erased that were intended to distinguish one from the other. Visually we can see we are not the same, biology shows us countless ways we are different, and still yet, well-meaning but over-zealous advocates for equality have attempted to convince us that there are no differences between the sexes. That we are the same.

We are not.

I want to suggest that life and society in general might be easier to manage if we were all the same. All the

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work and thought needed to treat people as individuals could go away and we could settle into a nice, luke-warm bath of mediocrity. Fortunately, that isn't the case and life, with all of its beauty and messiness, shows every waking moment that we are equal, but we are not the same.

Sorry to belabor the point, but the confusion between equal and same is where most of the false assumptions come from. Here are the primary assumptions that cause most of the problems in communication between sexes:

The opposite sex has the same information.

The opposite sex defines and codes words in the same way.

The opposite sex values the same things.

The opposite sex communicates for the same reasons.

Each of these assumptions can wreck communication by themselves, but combining them is a recipe for disaster. There are entire volumes of research on each one individually as well, but we will hit the high points with an eye toward what is practical. Yes, I will nerd out on you with a few things that I find fascinating, but I promise you will follow easily and it's really cool, too!

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### **Summary**

Both sexes make assumptions about the other that make communicating more difficult than it is already

Each gender believes the solution to communication problems is to "fix" the other

The source of these assumptions is that we are the same

We are equal, we are NOT the same

**Ponder this**

Do you recognize some of the “shoulds” list in your own thoughts?

What things would you fix about the opposite sex?  
Think of one person in particular.

Do you agree that we are equal, but not the same?

Can you see how believing, “we are the same,” causes problems?

Are there other assumptions beyond the four listed that come to mind?

## Chapter 5

### **Assumption #1 – The opposite sex has the same information.**

The word information in this context does not mean data, necessarily. I want to show you a few biology factors that take information to a whole new level. In fact, when we're done, you will understand why a man and woman can hear or see the exact same thing (data) but perceive completely different things.

Everyone knows our brains are divided into two halves or hemispheres. Each half specializes in certain functions. The right brain is typically thought of as spatial (objects) and creative while the left brain is verbal (words) and step-by-step.

The thing that connects those hemispheres is called the corpus callosum. It is a bundle of nerve fibers that allow the two halves of the brain to communicate. It may or may not surprise you to know that women have more of these fibers than men do. Some research has shown up to 40% more!

In practical terms, this means that women are receiving more points of information about the exact same thing. In addition, this enhanced connectivity between the hemispheres leads to heightened eyesight, hearing, sense of taste and smell. All of her sensitivities are more developed than his.

Ladies, next time you are accused of being more sensitive, remember that you are. Again, there is a difference between more sensitive and too sensitive.

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Take this little biology lesson further. The information that women take in is also stored in more places in the brain and more easily accessible than for a man.

So what does all of this mean? Probably more than we will cover here, but the direct answer to assumption #1 is this: Men and women do not operate from a common place of information. If it feels like you are talking about different things while claiming to be discussing the same thing, you are.

Think of it in terms of a digital photo. We know that more pixels mean more clarity in the picture and a 40% difference in the number of pixels is a substantial difference. In terms of communication, we simply can't assume that we see the same things.

The male brain is more prone to specialization because of the connective structure. Therefore, his communications will be more direct and focused.

If a man comes home from eight hours at work and his wife asks, "How was your day?" he might answer, "Fine." That's it. To his wife it seems he is withholding information on purpose and needs to open up.

To another man that "fine" may say it all. Another man would look at his body language, tone of voice, or how long it took him answer and use those cues to determine what he meant. A woman will look for the continuation after "fine" because she expects that there is much more information to express. In truth, he's finished.

A woman could go to work for two hours, come home and be asked, "How was your day?" and still be talking a few hours later. She received considerably more than a man would through her senses and is better equipped to store, retrieve, and communicate that information, which automatically gives her more to talk about.

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Most people around the world would agree that men talk less than women and women talk more than men. Both statements are true, but now we can see why and release our judgment about the difference, thereby dropping one of our assumptions.

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Summary

Brain construction allows women to gather, sort, store, and retrieve information with more efficiency than men

Because of their increased ability to receive information, women are naturally more sensitive to their environment

Men's brains are more inclined to specialization and focus

Ponder this

Does it surprise you that there is an actual biological reason for perceiving the same circumstances differently?

Can you remember situations that frustrated you, but this information sheds more light on the issues?

How can you use this knowledge to better understand the opposite sex and communicate better?

Could this information change your expectations of the opposite sex?

Chapter 6

Assumption #2 – The opposite sex defines words in the same way.

It should be obvious that words and language are very important to communication. What you may be increasingly more aware of now is that the words and language used by men and women are very different.

Knowing what we now know about the differences in the amount of information received between men and women, conversations about color make more sense.

She says, “Those shorts don’t match.”

He replies, “Sure they do.”

Her: “How can you say those match?! The shade of that shirt is way off.”

Him: “What do you mean? It’s fine!”

Even something as objective as color can show differences in definitions.

He says, “I like the orange one.”

She points to one and says, “I think I like the tangerine better.”

Baffled he replies, “Yeah, that’s what I said. The orange one!”

Over and over again we see that it is easier for men to understand men, and for women to understand women. A large piece of conversations between sexes is lost because each automatically defines words differently.

“Commitment,” “responsibility,” and “bargain” are examples of highly charged words that have different

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meanings in different cultural contexts. Coming from my culture and experiences, “hard work” may have a completely different meaning than it does for you.

If we look further at the element of experiences as they relate to definitions, we can understand the problem more. Like it or not, male and female experiences in the same environment are not the same. My son and daughter are growing up in the same house with the same parents, yet still have different experiences that shape how they define words and meanings.

Additionally, if you don’t have a word in your vocabulary because your experiences have not supplied it, I will not be able to explain it to you effectively.

I remember in the 5th grade when Billy moved to our southern Missouri town from south Florida. He had never seen snow and simply couldn’t wrap his head around the concept of frozen water floating down from the sky. None of us could explain snow, even though we spoke the same language. However, when it finally did snow and the teacher let him go outside in it, he had an experience to build a definition upon.

When we tried to explain snow to Billy, it got frustrating for both sides. At one point someone pulled out a dictionary to give him the definition, but it still didn’t land. It was only through experience that we were finally able to communicate effectively.

While speaking professionally for more than 15 years, I have had the opportunity to speak to audiences of exclusively women, exclusively men and mixed-gender. Without fail, the easiest audiences to reach and connect with are those of all one gender.

In mixed-gender audiences, speakers always fight the battle to be relevant to both, but it never seems to

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happen at the same time. When the women are engaged and following, the men look confused or disinterested. When relating to the men, the women check out.

Learning the differences between the sexes and working to communicate effectively, a speaker can overcome this issue, but the natural tendencies for the audience remain. In small workshop groups, the dynamic is more obvious.

If we are discussing a female topic, the men look confused and are waiting (and struggling) to understand what the women are relating to. Conversely, while discussing a male topic, the women have the same experiences of frustration.

The men think the women are conspiring to make them feel stupid and the women think the men are being deliberately vague by not describing the topic better.

If we were speaking with someone from another country that did not know our language, we would expect to put in extra effort to reach mutual understanding about what different words mean. Instead of labeling the opposite sex as ignorant, naive, or stupid, perhaps we need to put in the extra work to understand them better.

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### **Summary**

Definitions have more to do with our experience with a word than our academic knowledge of it

The information we receive about an object can determine how we define it

Until we have an experience with a word, our ability to understand it is limited

Communicating with women or men exclusively is different than a mixed audience

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Understanding that we may define words differently can help us communicate better

**Ponder this**

Have you ever felt like a member of the opposite sex was being evasive or mean-spirited in a conversation?

Is it possible that some of your frustrating conversations could be about definitions?

How much more patient would you be in explaining a word to someone from another country than you would a close member of the opposite sex?

## Chapter 7

### **Assumption #3 – The opposite sex value the same things.**

Value is a moving target. Most often applied to commerce, value comes into play when discussing price. What one person finds immense value in and will pay a premium for, I might find absolutely no value in and think the other person wasteful or weird without actually knowing if that is the case. The reverse is also true.

What we value in terms of communication is a serious matter that leads to serious misunderstandings between the sexes. Once again, we are discussing differences, not right or wrong.

The topics of conversation are subject to value judgments and are a great place to start debunking this assumption. In a combined psychology and communications study, male and female participants, ranging in age from 17 to 80 years old, were given a questionnaire about the conversations they have with their same-sex friends. From the list of 22 topics of conversation; work, movies and television turned out to be the most frequent topics for both men and women.

Women showed more time spent on the topics of relationship issues, family, health and reproduction, weight, eating and clothing. Men spent more time on the subjects of music, current events and sports. Anyone shocked so far?

Women deal more with personal and emotional issues than men. With the exception of sports heroes and public figures, women talked more about other women than men talked about other men.

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The most important piece of information from the study, in my opinion, was not about how the sexes value topics differently. What was also uncovered is that topic was not as important as the purpose and delivery of the conversation. The real differences surfaced here.

Men felt that the purpose of their conversations with other men was for the freedom they felt, the ability to play and the camaraderie. They enjoyed not having to be so careful about what they said and thought the conversations were more fast-paced, contained more humor and seemed to be more practical than their conversations with women.

Women also mentioned ease and camaraderie; however, the definition of the terms was significantly different. To women, ease and camaraderie meant empathy and understanding (which involves careful listening, as well as the ability to communicate). Women wanted to know that they were not alone and liked the feeling of sharing and understanding with one other without worrying about sexual connotations or undertones.

In terms of value, women spoke of their female conversations in terms of something they needed, not just liked to have. Less than half of the men felt the same way. This difference in value gives way to doomed expectations.

Think about the misunderstandings that come about when a woman wants to engage in something she considers essential with a man who could take it or leave it? More on that in a bit.

What we need to realize at this moment is that men expect women to interact in the same non-emotional, fast-paced style as their male friends would or as he

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would for her. The conversation would be very casual, but very practical and fun.

Women want men to be interested in more personal and emotional issues, as she is for him, without the “bottom-line” men always seem to need. Women also expected their conversations to be fun, but obviously the definitions of fun are quite different.

If this assumption is to be blown up with the rest, we will have to consider why we are entering conversations and adjust our expectations accordingly. It is critical to understand that the best conversationalists in the world are interested in fulfilling the needs of the person they are speaking with. Be that person.

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Summary

We approach conversations based on what we value about communication

Men and women not only value differing topics, but the way we communicate too

Women value deeper, more empathetic conversations

Men value fast-paced, looser conversations

Great conversationalists focus on the needs of the other person more than their own

Ponder this

Do you have a hard time finding value in the topics of the opposite sex?

Are the opposite sex’s methods of communicating difficult for you to engage in?

How can you seek to meet the needs of the other person in the conversation?

Chapter 8

Assumption #4 – The opposite sex communicates for the same reasons.

On any given Saturday my wife will make a comment about some room or feature in our house. This is the house we built after our last one burned to the ground and is built on the same foundation as the old one. It is also the first house I ever conceived and drew myself.

Having been through the experience of building and then living in the house, there are lots of things that I would do differently knowing what I know now. That said, I don't talk about those things unless there is an opportunity to do something about them and I can see a practical way of getting them done.

My wife, on the other hand, will talk about the things she sees at any given time and with no bias toward practicality at all. When she first started mentioning things she would like to have differently, I almost took it as a personal offense. At first it was as if she was condemning my creation or a bit of work done by a contractor I had chosen.

I quickly learned that she wasn't judging at all, but only expressing what she would like. My personal feelings out of the way, I listened carefully and would begin to think about how the job could be done. The trouble here is that she might have three different ideas about one space and did not seem pressed to pick one.

Furthermore, she might talk about five separate projects in the span of two weeks and seemed to place the same amount of emphasis and priority on each. My mind swirled with how impractical some of the projects were

by themselves, let alone all of them in such a short time.
“Good grief woman! Back off!”

OK, I didn’t really say that, but the feeling was definitely there. What I learned in that time and have since helped other couples and business colleagues understand is that my wife, I, and men and women in general often communicate for different reasons.

Two people can approach the same subject, but have completely different reasons or purposes for doing so. There are some longstanding social expectations and even some biology that underpin these differing approaches, but I have a simple way to look at it. If you’re willing, go with me on this.

In Town Versus out of Town

I spent much of my childhood in a rural area, living on a dairy farm. The nearest town of any size was 45 miles away, but there were a couple of “towns” along the way that could meet our smaller needs. In truth, they were barely wide places in the road, but typically they had one building that housed a post office and general store with a gas pump or two out front.

In this environment you learned to be resourceful with your needs and to sometimes just go without. I watched my dad, uncle and grandparents fix things that broke with the parts of other broken things. We gardened, hunted, fished and raised the animals that provided milk, eggs, meat and so on.

When we had an issue that couldn’t be solved on the farm, our in-house solution did not work and the “store” didn’t have it, we would often wait it out. Maybe it would run broken or sometimes simply go away. Maybe the weather, season, or need would change.

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As a last resort, we would load up and go to town. Each trip to town had a very specific purpose and the amount of time and money needed was allocated before we ever left. Once the task was accomplished, we were on our way back.

My parents were divorced by the time I was 3 years old, so I spent the other part of my childhood in a more urban setting and saw quite a different approach there. While living in a city that had everything you could need within a few minutes walk or drive, your reasons for going places were very different.

If something broke or a need arose, there was usually someone very near who could help. Even if you handled it yourself, everything you needed to do it was at hand.

The ready access to everything made moving around in the city a different experience too. Sometimes we would go to stores or the mall “just to look around.” The whole attitude toward the city and the reasons for being in it were completely foreign when compared with the rural reasons.

This little trip down memory lane actually frames the most effective analogy about communication between the sexes I’ve ever heard. Buckle up! We’re headed to town!

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### **Summary**

Men and women communicate for different reasons

Even if the subject is the same, genders may approach it for different reasons

Where we live determines how we approach situations

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**Ponder this**

Can you see cultural examples of how living in different environments effects how we see and handle situations?

Do you try to handle situations “in-house” first or do you automatically look outside of your immediate influence?

Could this difference in approach point to communication failures in your life?

## Chapter 9

### A Little Town Called “Communication”



Imagine if you will that the town/city in our story is called Communication, and its residents are primarily women. Because they live in Communication, their attitude and usage for it are completely different than men, who live in the rural areas surrounding the city.

When we view communication from this geographical context we can look at the differences with a little less bias. Each gender uses the city of Communication differently and therefore has completely different approaches and comfort levels.

The road to Communication varies depending on the man or the male-trained female. Some live as far away as possible while others are comfortable living just outside the city limits. Development of the road is anything from a hand-cleared path through the woods all the way to a well-maintained highway. Regardless, it is traveled for the same reason.

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In general, men are very careful about how they use their energy resources. We won't go deep into the biology or thousands of years in training behind this, but a man will use as little energy as possible to complete a task or solve a problem. This is not due to laziness, but rather practicality.

### **The Skinny On Fat**

Men expend and replenish energy (fat) differently than women do and so their approaches to most things are determined, subconsciously, by their use of energy. Think about it ladies... How many times have you been aggravated that a man in your life can lose weight faster and with less effort than you?

The difference is how fat is stored, accessed and burned by each gender. Men store, access and burn fat in such a way that supports quick, intense periods of energy. However, when that energy store is depleted, so is he. To recover the energy fastest, men typically disengage from activity.

This pattern of the energy allocation, use and recovery plays in to how, or if, a man will end up in our town, Communication. Before a man will travel the road to Communication he goes through a couple of phases. If the solution is reached in either of these phases he won't load up and head to town at all.

### **Mulling**

First is a phase we'll call mulling. This is where the problem or need first shows up and his first response is to consider all of the options. Men use less energy in mental activity than physical activity so his first move is inward.

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Similar to the example of changes my wife and I would make to our house, my first response is to go through the various angles in my mind before even talking about the project. At the beginning stages of a project that we have agreed to do, I can often be found sitting and studying every nut, screw and nail before ever picking up a tool.

In those times I am considering what it will take in terms of material, time, energy and expertise to get the job done. The last thing I want to do is get in the middle of a project and hit an issue that could have been easily anticipated. When that happens, I have to re-evaluate and reallocate my resources, which is a waste of time.

This is different than perfectionism, which is a fear of getting started because you might make a mistake. Most men are not afraid of the mistake, but no one wants to start without having considered all of the obvious steps. Far worse than making a mistake is reaching a stumbling block that could have been avoided with just a little thinking. That, for a man, is embarrassing.

The biggest advantage to mulling for men is that the solution may be an easy one and require very little energy to implement. Problems solved at this stage are a big WIN. Because men put such a premium on energy expended, this stage allows them to save as much as possible and not put a requirement on someone else's energy by bringing them into Communication.

### **Stuffing**

If mulling doesn't provide the solution, men go to the next stage, stuffing. This is the equivalent of continuing to operate machinery when you know it's broken. A man will basically stuff the problems into his body to see if the situation will change. As tough as we would

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like to be, every unresolved problem men stuff into their brains affects the rest of their bodies in an adverse way.

By deliberately ignoring an issue for the sake of energy conservation, men bring on a laundry list of health issues that could be avoided with a trip to Communication. Men die an average of eight years earlier than women from 15 major stress-related diseases. The stuffing causes stress that often results in, or at the least contributes to, their deaths.

In spite of all the statistics and men's health public service announcements, it still appears that most men believe that holding things inside is better than talking. Ignoring the warning signs from their bodies, men approach this stage thinking that because the problem is inside, they are still somehow in control. Ignoring pain was a great feature for fighting battles and braving the elements for thousands of years, but is a potentially damaging carryover to modern lifestyles today.

### **Communicate**

When all else is exhausted or has simply failed, a man will resort to a trip to Communication. By the time he reaches this stage he is seeking outside help to reach a solution. The trip to town is for a very specific reason, not a joyride or a way to pass time. These trips take the most energy and also expose the man as being unable to solve his own problem. The sooner he can get the solution and head back home, the better.

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Summary

Men approach much of life based on how they will use their energy resources

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There are two phases men go through before communicating. Mulling and Stuffing

Communication is the last result to problem solving for a man

Communicating about a problem shows that man could not solve the problem on his own

Not communicating more freely exposes men to more stress-related diseases

Ponder this

Do you recognize any of these tendencies in yourself?

Do you recognize any of them in someone you know?

Have you encountered frustration in communicating because of them?

Will knowing this help you be more sensitive in how to communicate?

Chapter 10

Sexes in the City

Once he's arrived in Communication, a man will find whoever he feels like he can trust to give him the solution. Gender really doesn't matter as much as what the interaction will be like. After a few interactions with the female residents of Communication, the "Communicators," he starts to seek out other visiting men. It isn't that the ladies were not helpful, but the interactions took too long, went places he did not intend, and took too much energy.

The other visiting men understand that the man would not be there unless he was at the end of his rope. Therefore, when one man expresses a problem or need to another man, he gets a rather quick and direct answer. It is not perceived as rude or curt, but efficient and exactly what he was looking for.

A man's inability to resolve an emotional or intellectual issue takes a lot of his energy and focus. The quicker he gets back on track, the more appreciative he is of the interaction. When this happens, Communication isn't such a bad place to be.

On the occasion that a resident Communicator seeks out a visiting man to chat with about what's on her mind, we see a slightly different problem with the same root. The man makes an assumption at the beginning of the interaction that may or may not doom the whole conversation.

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Quit Trying to Fix Me!

Because a man comes to Communication to get something resolved, he comes to the conversation believing the Communicator wants something resolved too. He listens intently, gives his full attention and allocated energy until he has a solution. However, when he gives her the solution to the issue, he is sometimes met with hostility and frustration.

This is the single most common complaint from women regarding their conversations with men – “He is so bottom-line and is always trying to fix me!”

Confused, the man wonders about the point of the interaction. Anytime he comes to Communication, he wants a solution so he can get back on track. He has assumed that the residents here have gone through the same process he has before deciding to come to town. He treats them as he would like to be treated.

These people that live in Communication are different though. They live here, so they do not always see the immediate need for resolution. They live here simply

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because they like Communication. Yes, a Communicator will need a solution sometimes, but the process is very different and confusing to a man.

Where men mull and stuff as the pre-communication process, women communicate as a part of the process. Most women say they do not know if they even want someone else's input until they have *talked it out*. At that point, it may already be solved, deemed unimportant, or possibly determined it needs more exploration.

The residents of Communication seem to value and use their energy differently than the visitors and there is biology to support this notion. Remember, men have one type of fat, which they store, access, burn and recover differently than women.

Women have two types of fat and just as many years of societal training around how it is stored, accessed, burned and recovered. In addition to the type that men have, women have an additional, harder type that is accessed last and burns more slowly.

A man's energy and strength is often more intense and directed in the short term, but women can easily outlast men in terms of energy. Additionally, she does not have to shut down in order to recover. Because of her separate energy stores, she can continue on in conversation or activity while regaining her energy.

This issue of energy matters in Communication because the energy that the visiting men covet is readily available for the Communicators. A woman is at home in Communication and does not see it as an energy drain because she has more energy at her disposal than a man.

Understanding the differing views of communication helps us see why men usually only express themselves

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for a resolution and how it is possible for women to express themselves for no other reason than to simply express themselves. When the two meet without knowing this or setting expectations, a conflict, or at the very least confusion, is bound to arise.

Grasping the different reasons for communicating is the key to destroying our fourth assumption. There is a place where visitors and residents can meet and everyone can truly enjoy themselves. It will take more understanding and effort than most of us have given previously, but it is worth it.

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**Summary**

Men communicate to find a solution after they have processed internally

Women can communicate as part of their processing and are not always seeking a solution

This difference in why we communicate leads to misunderstandings and hurt feelings

There are biological reinforcements for why the genders approach communication differently

These differences are meant to be managed, not eliminated

**Ponder this**

Have you ever felt like someone was always trying to fix you or your problem?

Have you ever wondered why someone got so offended when you offered a solution?

Do you see a difference in the way men and women use their energy in life?

## **Chapter 11**

### **Snap Back from Analogy**

Before you unpack your bags from our little trip to Communication (you gotta admit that's a fun analogy), let's cover a few possible solutions to the friction between the "visitors" and the "Communicators."

The first step is acknowledging that we are dealing with differences, not deficiencies. Each gender is wired in a unique way so that we can have commonalities while still specializing. The beauty of this design is what allows us to complete each other (to borrow a Jerry Maguire line) and live bigger, more fulfilling lives than we could apart.

Biology definitely plays a role in how we approach things naturally and neither sex should deride the other about those differences. This is not a matter of right and wrong, but of being suited for certain things better than others. This is also not an excuse to bow out of or force aspects of communication on to the opposite sex. Understanding brings a deeper sense of compassion and with it the ability to get along.

Finally, we have to see a difficult but liberating truth that our differing biology, values, and reasons expose – men and women are not meant to be together continually. Each gender needs time apart from the other and time with the same. Girl time and guy time are not just excuses.

Now that we've acknowledged the differences, we can look to solutions that can make our time together in Communication more enjoyable for everyone.

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**#1 – Talk about the differences.** Ladies, let the guys know you want to be more efficient so that a conversation about differences will help you both. Give him a timeframe or objective and allow him to mentally allocate the amount of energy it will take. Then please, honor the time or objective.

By establishing and honoring timeframes consistently, you will find that he will more freely engage in conversation because he can trust you with his energy. When a man allocates energy for something and it begins going outside of his set boundaries or the objective doesn't get resolved, discomfort and frustration set in.

Remember when you asked him to move the living room furniture? He agreed without a fight, but after he moved the couch four times, only to have it end up in the same place... you know the time I'm talking about. From his standpoint, there was no objective reached and his energy allocation was violated. It may seem silly, but learning to work within this difference changes your life.

Guys, set aside the time and energy to talk about these differences with the women in your lives. Ask them to let you know if they want help with the subject of the conversation or if they just want to talk. You may actually experience a sense of freedom when you realize that a woman may simply want to do out loud what you do in your head. Many times, your presence while she processes is all that is needed.

**#2 – Develop an attitude of trust.** Instead of assuming that the other person is being deliberately vague or demanding, believe they are telling the truth. This doesn't mean you have to automatically believe everything said, but maintain an open mind.

Sometimes people will say something from their point of view that does not make sense to you. For example, you're with someone who says they feel cold. You, however, think it feels like an oven. What they've said doesn't make any sense from your perspective and could be taken as whining or manipulation.

If we aren't careful, this kind of simple interaction could escalate to a fight. Instead, you could believe they are telling the truth and do feel cold. From here, seek a win-win instead of trying to establish who is right.

They say, "Brrr. I'm cold."

You might say, "Really? I'm feeling warm. Would you like my jacket?"

Simple and life changing.

**#3 – Assume the other person is trying to communicate and trying to understand your communication.** Most people are trying to get along and prefer to have situations resolved. Like you, they are probably doing the best they can with the information

they have. Of the thousands of people I've worked with only a couple have been purposefully inconsiderate.

This is where effort makes the difference in successful or failed communication. If my attitude going into a conversation is that the other person is only out for what they can get from the interaction, the slightest obstacle to understanding reinforces my poor attitude and makes communication impossible.

When I believe that the other person is making their best effort to understand me and to reply in a way that I will understand, I am much more tolerant of any miscommunications. One of the best ways I have found to encourage this kind of approach is the following solution...

**#4 – Treat the other person as if they are from a different culture.** When I am speaking to someone from a different country or culture, the presence of miscommunication is expected. Instead of demeaning or judging the person though, I seek to clear the miscommunication up so we both understand each other more effectively. Our differences are a source of interest in this case, not frustration.

People often approach me while at conferences or speaking engagements whose first language is not English. If they are very new to the language they might confuse a past or future tense of a word. They might say “inside” instead of “outside,” or call someone “not ugly” instead of “pretty.”

No one takes these as personal affronts and instead, gives the person better information and a chance to adjust. I don't believe we have the right to be annoyed with the way a conversation goes until we have politely given the other person better information about how we

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like to communicate and have given them a chance to respond. Always remember that we are typically in the same position they are in.

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Summary

Troubles in communication are due to differences, not deficiencies

Acknowledging and understanding the differences brings compassion and the ability to get along

Men and women are not meant to be together continually. Girl time and guy time are legitimate needs

There are simple, powerful solutions to the bulk of our communication issues

Talk about the differences

Women- Tell him you want to be more “to-the-point”

Men- Ask upfront if she wants help or just to talk

Manage the differences, stop trying to eliminate them

Develop an attitude of trust

Believe they are telling the truth

Maintain an open mind

Seek a win-win

Don't try to establish who is right

Believe the other person is trying to communicate and understand you

Most people want to get along

Like you, they are doing their best

Make your best effort to understand

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Treat the opposite sex as if they are from a different culture

Don't be surprised by miscommunications

Seek to clear up miscommunications instead of judging them

See the differences with interest, not frustration

Don't take it personal

Give better information to help them make adjustments

Ponder this

What situations in the past week could have been helped with these suggestions?

How can you implement this mindset to make your communication better?

How willing are you to put these in practice?

Chapter 12

Wrap it Up

I am willing to admit that there are certain personal and professional situations where the other person, often of the opposite sex, is being deliberately difficult to get along with. Maybe it is a form of revenge or retaliation and they are not interested in changing.

Through the years I have seen numerous examples of verbal and emotional abuse that will not be overcome with a communication strategy. Time after time, the abused spouse or child tries to breakthrough and connect with the abuser, but to no avail. I would never suppose that a clever analogy or handful of solutions could fix a situation that has such deep emotional ties.

My hope for such situations is that this book will improve communication in every way it can and lay the foundation for the deeper work that must be done. With counseling, love, and a lot of forgiveness, even those issues can be put behind you.

In cases where we are not dealing with abuse, there are other obstacles to improving communication. For example, we give the other person better information about us and request a different way of communicating, but they do not respond. It is possible they...

- don't know how to alter their behavior or
- are simply unable, for whatever reason, to make the change.

We have to also admit that the change may be happening, but not quite fast enough for us.

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Finally, our communication with someone may not be effective or enjoyable because we are overly sensitive or narrow in our perceptions. For example, I do not like to be called *big* if someone is referring to *muscular* because in my mind it denotes *fat*. I'm also not a fan of anything I own being called *cute*. Don't ask. Just know I've got as many of these weird things as anyone else.

Unfortunately, we often overlook our own issues or perceptions and usually assume it is something to do with the other person. Communication between people can be complicated and even more so between the sexes. With a little extra effort and using all of the information you've learned here, many of those difficulties can be managed or overcome.

To really get from this life what great communication affords us, it is our efforts in using all that God has given us that makes the difference. The purpose of communicating then is not what we can get from it, but how it empowers us to serve others.

Communication can solve a direct problem or help someone see a problem that needs a solution. In my own life I see communication as the opportunity to give encouragement, and as a result I am encouraged. Good communication is a salve to a wounded soul and water to those who need refreshment. My prayer is that you will become the most skilled communicator possible and people will look at you and say, "My life is better because you are here."

Final Points to Ponder

What will be the first item from this book you use to improve your daily communication?

Which area of life do you think will benefit the fastest?

- At home
- At work
- Friendships
- Extended family

Are there specific realms of communication you would like more information about?

What would you like to tell PJ regarding the content of this book?

Please come over to my Facebook Page at <http://FB.com/PJMcClurebiz> and share your thoughts, breakthroughs, and requests. I'll be there to answer you personally and really want to hear your stories and review of this material.

Be your best,

PJ McClure
Isaiah 50:4

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