



Trend Alert:

HOLIDAY COMMUNICATION

By Walt Mueller

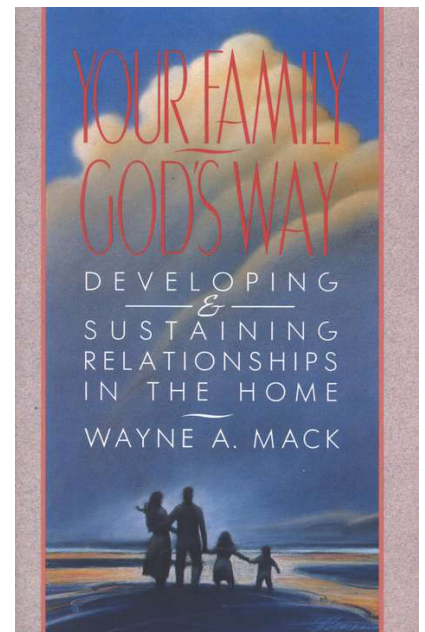
Trend Alert: Holiday Communication

Thanksgiving and Christmas... They're almost here. And if your family is like mine, the holiday season affords you more time than usual to spend together. Your kids are home for a few extra days of vacation, you spend more time around the table at meals, and you might even be spending extended periods of time together in the car as you travel to visit family and friends. The good news is that all this time together opens doors for communication.

But communication with our teenagers is not always easy. The cultural and developmental differences between our generation and their generation sometimes makes it difficult to communicate effectively with each other. In addition, the fact that some or maybe all family members are "wired up" to their hand-held devices adds an extra challenge at our efforts to communicate. While we might be satisfied with blaming our poor communication on our teens, the burden falls on us as parents to be dissatisfied to the point where we take the burden on ourselves to do what we can to improve our intergenerational communication.

Dr. Wayne Mack offers some very helpful communication advice in his book, *Your Family God's Way*. He lists a number of "circuit jammers to family communication" that can clog the lines and weaken relationships. Parents, the burden falls on us to be sure that we aren't adopting any of these harmful communication patterns. Here are five communication "circuit jammers" to avoid as you spend time with your children and teens this holiday season:

Excessive negative talk. This takes place when we constantly complain, find fault, and seldom affirm or talk about the positive virtues of our kids. Excessive negative talkers rarely acknowledge the good things happening in the world, the church, or their family. These verbal purveyors of gloom and doom foster a depressing atmosphere in the home. Home becomes a place where heaviness, rather than happiness, prevails. Look for the positive, and talk about it!



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Mind-reading speech. We throw a real monkey wrench into our communication with our kids when we assume and tell them what they really meant by what they said. If you've been the victim of someone who's told you, "You can't fool me. I know what you meant," you know how quickly communication breaks down. Just to be sure, ask clarifying questions so that you get at the heart of what they're trying to say.

Verbal manipulation. Because we're older and more experienced than our kids, it's often easy to enlist verbal attempts to control, manipulate, or punish our kids. Statements like "You'll be the death of me yet," "I wish you had never been born," and "You're just no good," destroy relationships. Think before you speak, and choose words that build up rather than tear down.

Cotton candy speech. If cotton candy is the main component of your diet, watch out. Likewise, homes built on conversation that is superficial, lacking depth, and void of substance will weaken and starve. Relationships

will be shallow where serious issues and deep concerns are never discussed. Look for and make opportunities to talk intentionally and deeply about God's Word, current events, and your teen's cares and concerns. Since it's Christmas, talk about the amazing wonder of God coming into His world as a human being. . . and all that means for us.

Knee-jerk speech. A quick, thoughtless response is usually an unwise response. Hastily spoken words are seldom profitable. Choose your words carefully by thinking before you speak. Maybe we should more regularly heed the words of Proverbs 18:13 – "He who answers before listening – that is his folly and shame."

Have a blessed time celebrating the holiday season with your family. And, may your communication with your kids bring honor and glory to Him!

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For more information on today's youth culture, visit the website of the Center for Parent/Youth Understanding at www.cpyu.org.

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