

Ye Stars of Light

Happy Sabbath to everyone.

This week, we are continuing our examination of the concept of communication. Naturally, this is not a new topic. In fact, as long as I've been a CSDA, communication has been a central theme of our ministry, and one that I would like to see taken to heart by our membership to an even greater degree than has been done so far. The inclusion of good communication principles can only improve the interaction among the brethren, and will equip us that much more powerfully to reach out to others with the Gospel Message.

In our last meeting, I briefly went over five "questions" that we should ask ourselves when contributing to our online meetings. These are designed to ensure a number of things, including as clear a set of communicated messages as possible, and an avoidance of unnecessarily long discussions over matters that can often be cleared up more quickly. I do not want us to think, however, that these are only applicable to our Sabbath discussions and New Moon meetings. These principles can be applied to all our discussions, including with friends and family members.

When a Christian speaks, it should not be in the same way that the world does. A very important passage of the Bible, which I don't believe gets enough attention, is this one: "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, 'Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole, be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.'

"This is the Stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the Head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.'

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Yahshua." (Acts 4:8-13)

Should this not be our experience as well? Let none say, "I cannot speak well," or "I am not intelligent enough to share the Gospel." Yahshua chose His followers specifically so that glory would go to the Father for the message, rather than to the messengers for their cleverness. When the Spirit-filled believer speaks, it will be known to the open observer that he has "been with Yahshua." There is something about the speech of one who leans on the Spirit for wisdom and wording... but we must have confidence, trust in Yah, to allow this to happen. Notice, I do not say to "make" this happen. I do not say to learn how to do it... I say to "allow," because the Scriptures tell us that we must simply be willing, and then "it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost." (Mar 13:11)

But if this is the case with the Gospel, it should also be the case among us as well in our other communications, who dwell one-with-another in this atmosphere of Heaven.

It was suggested that perhaps an acronym of some kind, summarizing the questions I proposed last week, would be useful to help us remember the relevant principles, and this past week I have been considering this prayerfully.

The following verses were brought to my attention:

“Praise ye Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all ye stars of light.” (Psa 148:3)

“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” (Dan 12:3)

As we know, the “stars” in Scripture are symbolic representations for Yah’s angels, which are His messengers, His spokes-persons, His communicators. The stars of Heaven are instructed to praise the Creator, and as lights in a dark time we turn the lost to righteousness in accordance with the prophecy of Elijah and the great Christian commission.

As such, when I considered the principles I discussed last week, it seemed that the acronym S.T.A.R.S. would be not only convenient, but also quite fitting in a spiritual sense. The list required almost no modification, except for one point, which went from “Newness” to “Significance,” keeping the same principle. Here, then, is the acronym explained point by point.

The first “S” of STARS stands for “Significance”

As I mentioned earlier, this was originally “Newness,” since the question was whether the comment we are about to speak will teach others anything new, or will the answer to the question I am about to ask teach me anything new. On reflection, though, significance is even better, because sometimes our brethren need to be “taught” something that is not necessarily new, but may be some significant principle or doctrine that they may have missed for some reason or another.

As such, the question then becomes, “Does my comment or question have spiritual significance, either to myself or to those who hear me?” Generally speaking, a significant contribution will be a “new” thing or, at least, a “renewed” thing that Yah is calling us to consider in a new light.

The “T” of STARS stands for “Timeliness.”

The question to ask is, “Is my comment or question timely?” Will it disrupt the flow of the conversation, either by going back to an already-closed topic, or jumping ahead to something new too quickly? It is our responsibility to let our brethren know what we are experiencing as we communicate with them. If we believe a matter is not yet settled, we must let this be known before the group agrees to move on, or else, if we fail to do this, the best approach is to re-introduce it at a later time, possibly through some other means, and not interrupt the conversation as it moves forward.

On the other hand, we as a group should ensure that a current matter is settled before jumping ahead to a new one. Often, as the moderator, I will ask if there are any more questions or comments on a matter before either closing a meeting or moving on to another agenda item. It is certainly the case, of course, that some people need time to think about a matter before responding – and this is better than merely speaking quickly for the sake of speaking – and so in such a case it might be best to say something like, “I have some thoughts on this... let me take some time to think about it and I will share it when I have it,” or perhaps even, “I would like to bring this matter up for further discussion later on.” In so doing we can take control of our reactions without unduly taking control of the meeting time.

The notice of a desire for further discussion does not disrupt the flow of the conversation, but at the same time lets the brethren know that there is more to be said.

Now, one “special case” of this involves when a matter is raised for voting. In such a case, we would hope that the issue is either very clear, or that (in as many cases as we can) we have suggested the matter for consideration beforehand. That way, the meeting can be held to discuss any concerns that have already come up in our previous thoughts about the matter, and the vote can be held after a reasonable time.

As with all these points, this is a principle, not a law... of course, we must be flexible with the way that such things are put into practice, but if we all commit to following the essence of these ideas, then we should see an even better, even smoother, manner of communication among ourselves.

The “A” in STARS is “Accuracy.”

Is the comment we are about to make accurate? Or, if it is a question, will the answer to the question I am asking lead to an accurate revelation of the truth? We know the commandment to refrain from bearing false witness against others, but we know that we can also bear witness for or against ourselves through our words, through our testimony, (Jer 14:7, Job 15:6) and so we have a responsibility to ensure that our speech is to-the-point, free of misleading exaggeration, and representative of truth so far as we know.

The “R” in STARS is “Relevance.”

I hope it can be seen what we are truly doing here. I hope that the two Great Commandments in the Law, the character of Yahshua, the Gospel message, can be seen in these five principles. If we have love for our Father in Heaven, we will want, with all our hearts, to be able to clearly express the “mind of Christ” that is within us to others. If we have love for our neighbor as ourselves, we will show them respect. We will esteem them better than ourselves. (Phil 2:3)

In considering this particular point, whether our question or comment is relevant to the ongoing discussion, we show others courtesy and respect, indicating that we are paying attention to what they are saying, and that we are interested in their communication. If we find ourselves (or are corrected for) breaking in with new subjects – generally of primary interest to ourselves – we are revealing a focus on “self” rather than others, and a disregard of the principles on which the Commandments were built. Thus, this is no small matter for those seeking to be among the 144,000.

Of course, even the world can respect an individual who speaks in a relevant manner. A sign of mental instability, perhaps even possession, is incoherent speech, which means speech that has no apparent connection to the environment with which a person is involved. Now, if the beginning of wisdom and knowledge is the fear and respect of Yah, then we can only conclude that a disregard of Yah and His principles will inevitably lead to confusion, foolishness, and ultimately insanity.

Let us, in our conversations, not display even the “smell of smoke” of disorder and confusion. Let us ensure that our discussions are engaged, and responsive, acknowledging those around us.

The Spirit, I should add, will sometimes lead a discussion in unexpected directions. Sometimes one topic may be used of Yah as a springboard to another subject, and this is perfectly acceptable. But again, we

must ensure that even with our handling of inspiration, “all things” are done decently and in order. (1Cor 14:40)

The final letter, the second “S” is “Sanctifying Power.”

Does the comment we are planning to ask, or the comment we are planning to make, contribute to the sanctified and sanctifying atmosphere of our environment? Can others be blessed by what we say, or will the answer to what I am asking bless me toward increased godliness?

We are called-upon by our Father to be a blessing to our brethren. When we read the oft-repeated passage, “And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” (Eph 4:11, 12) where do you see yourselves in that list?

Do you see yourself at all, or are you just a bystander, a receiver of these blessings? But let it be plainly understood, none can simply “receive” the blessings that suit a soul for the Heavenly Kingdom. This was one of the first lessons that Yah taught me after becoming a CSDA. If I have heard a blessing, a truth, then I am responsible for sharing it with others. If I am not in that list above, somewhere, then I am not truly receiving from my Father because, the gifts that He gives are not only designed to save, but to make us into those things, those living instruments by which others are, in turn, saved from death and destruction.

Our words must have sanctifying power, without any work of the flesh in their motivation. It is only in this way that we will shine, like lights in the darkness, as beacons of holiness in a world given over to sin. The angels, Yah’s messengers, are represented by stars. By means of our sanctified communication, we do the work of Yah’s messengers, including those Three Angels that bring the everlasting Gospel to mankind.

So to summarize, our acronym, STARS, stands for Significance, Timeliness, Accuracy, Relevance, and Sanctifying power.

Now, lest any think that this is too simple, too basic, then let us consider human definitions of spiritual concepts. People say, “We must have courtesy, sensitivity, and perception.” All Christians probably say such things, or similar. But do they know what those things mean?

Do they really understand these things if they are content participating in, or watching, the persecution of others? Do they really understand these things if they have no heart for the lost and dying? More generally, people say, “God is Love, and Christians are all about love.” But again, most do not know what that means, not in the Biblical sense of that term. They do not know what it means to love Yahweh, for they disregard His commandments. They do not know what it means to love their neighbors as themselves, or else they would love the truth when it is presented before them, and take it to the world.

Let such things never be said of the genuine Bride of Christ. But we cannot go on into the meat of the Gospel until we have properly laid the foundations, so let us, here, commit to an understanding of these most basic principles, so that never again need to review them except with the newly-converted.

This week, I have presented once again a matter that I raised last week, but with a renewed emphasis. It is not often I am led to speak on such close topics one after the other, but I believe our Father is calling us to make firm decisions with regard to the people we are to be, both individually and as a collective body. I believe souls are in the balance on the very ideas I have shared last week and this week, therefore let there be serious soul-searching to root out any lingering defects that prevent us from grasping the truth of this and other matters.

These questions that we ask ourselves, these STARS principles that we may now learn, they are not intended in the least to stifle or shorten conversation. The lights that Yah has created were designed to be seen, never concealed. (Mat 5:15) Yah, by His message, desires to encourage more, and more frequent, conversation; but as we do that, we also want to ensure that this is spiritual, refined communication. We want our ability to speak, both to one another and to the world, to be significant in both length and content.

We are responsible for our words, and, to a degree... we are responsible for the words of our brothers and sisters. If we see a defect in communication in one of our brethren, and do not do what is in our power (in love) to correct it, we become responsible for their continued error to a certain extent. And if a soul is lost due to their roughness, or due to their lack of skill in a matter we have previously discerned, then we share in the guilt of that transgression.

We communicate for several reasons, but to express Agape first and foremost, and if we cannot effectively do this, we have a work to do in becoming more like our Father in Heaven. Let us be about that, our Father's business.

David.

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