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## The Free Flow of Truth — Lesson 13

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***Thesis:** A healthy church does not run on rumors, assumptions, and half-truths. It runs on clear truth, honest questions, humble listening, and shepherds who lead in the light.*

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### Lesson Targets (What This Lesson Must Accomplish)

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## Opening Truth

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Church problems do not usually begin with one dramatic explosion.

They begin with a quiet leak.

A small concern is not addressed.

A question is ignored.

A decision is misunderstood.

A rumor becomes a “fact.”

A brother stops speaking openly.

A sister starts saying, “I heard...”

Before long, the church is no longer walking together in trust.  
It is walking around each other in suspicion.

The tragedy is that many of these wounds were preventable.

When truth moves freely, the church becomes steady.  
When truth gets locked up, fear and friction take over.

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## 1) Communication Breakdowns: How They Start and Why They Spread

Communication is the transfer of thoughts between people.  
But church communication is more than information—it is *spiritual oxygen*.

When it breaks down, people do not stop thinking.  
They simply fill in the blanks.

And when a church runs on blanks, it runs on:

- assumption
- speculation
- private interpretation
- rumor
- emotional storytelling
- selective hearing

The result is predictable: distrust grows, unity shrinks.

### What Communication Breakdown Looks Like in a Church

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A church cannot stay healthy when nobody knows what's going on,  
and nobody feels safe speaking honestly.

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## 2) Truth Must Flow From Saints to Shepherds

A church cannot be shepherded wisely when the shepherds are blind.

If elders only hear information through:

- rumor chains
- angry outbursts
- anonymous criticism
- late-stage explosions

then they are being forced to react instead of lead.

A strong church has saints who speak truth to the elders early—before the fire spreads.

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### A) Acts 6: The Pattern of Honest Reporting Without Division

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The early church faced a serious internal issue:

***“Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews...”***

*(Acts 6:1, NASB 1995)*

This was not a petty gripe.

It was a unity threat.

Neglect creates resentment.

Resentment creates factions.

Factions create spiritual collapse.

Yet notice what happened:

- The issue was voiced
- The leaders took it seriously
- The church worked together
- The mission was protected

- The unity was preserved

The lesson is powerful:

**God does not teach His people to pretend problems do not exist.**

He teaches them to deal with them righteously.

## Acts 6: What Mature Communication Looks Like

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A church that cannot talk about problems honestly will not solve them biblically.

It will either explode later—or rot quietly.

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## B) 1 Corinthians 1: Chloe's People and the Necessity of Reporting

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Corinth had division.

Not just disagreement—division that exalted men.

***“For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe’s people, that there are quarrels among you.”***

*(1 Corinthians 1:11, NASB 1995)*

Some people treat reporting as “stirring the pot.”

Scripture treats honest reporting as necessary when the church is sick.

Chloe’s people did not “betray the church.”

They refused to let the church pretend everything was fine.

That is courage.

That is love.

That is loyalty to Christ.

A church that forbids truth-telling creates the perfect environment for:

- manipulation

- hidden sin
- corrupt influence
- quiet intimidation

Truth must be allowed to travel upward.

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## **C) Why Elders Need Input From the Church**

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Elders are not omniscient.

They are men:

- with limited time
- limited visibility
- limited information
- limited access to private struggles

If saints do not speak honestly, elders cannot shepherd wisely.

Some saints live behind smiles.

Some carry shame.

Some cover conflict.

Some hide spiritual collapse until it becomes a disaster.

A healthy church makes it normal to say:

- “I’m struggling.”
- “I need counsel.”
- “Something is happening and it’s dangerous.”
- “We are drifting.”
- “We need help.”

That kind of openness does not weaken the church.

It strengthens it.

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### 3) Truth Must Flow From Shepherds to the Church

The church is not a machine to be controlled.

It is a family to be led.

While elders must protect privacy and handle some issues discreetly, they also have a duty to:

- teach direction
- explain decisions when needed
- prepare the church for change
- warn the church of danger
- build trust through clarity

When the church is constantly surprised, trust erodes.

When the church is informed wisely, trust grows.

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#### A) Shepherds Lead by Light, Not by Mystery

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When leaders rule behind fog, the sheep feel unsafe.

Fear always fills information gaps.

That fear then mutates into:

- suspicion
- resistance
- bitterness
- power struggles
- emotional polarization

Wise elders learn the difference between:

- what must be private  
and
  - what should be communicated clearly
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## **B) Financial Clarity Protects the Church From Distrust**

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Elders do not “own” the church’s funds.

They administer them for the Lord’s work.

Saints give freely, and their consciences engage with what is done.

Therefore, clear reporting protects peace.

When there is financial silence, people start writing stories in their heads.

That story might be false—

but false stories still damage trust.

### **Financial Communication That Protects Unity**

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## **C) Elders Shape Spiritual Climate Through Communication**

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Elders are responsible for more than administration.

They must be sensitive to the spiritual condition of the church:

- apathy
- materialism
- gossip
- doctrinal drift
- moral weakness
- lack of future leadership

A church often declines slowly.

The first symptoms are usually dismissed.

But wise elders communicate before decline becomes collapse.

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## **4) The Free Flow of Truth Requires Mature Character**

Communication problems are not merely “systems” problems.

They are heart problems.

A gossiping heart turns information into a weapon.

A proud heart turns counsel into insult.

A fearful heart turns questions into resentment.

A rebellious heart turns leadership into “control.”

So the real question is not only:

“How do we communicate better?”

It is:

“What kind of people are we becoming?”

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## **A) Saints Must Speak With Reverence, Not Agitation**

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The church belongs to Christ.

Leadership belongs to Christ’s design.

Truth belongs to God.

So speaking about leadership is not casual talk.

It is holy ground.

Words can either:

- steady the church
- or
- poison the church

If saints do not fear what their tongues can do, they will eventually do damage.

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## **B) Elders Must Listen Like Shepherds, Not Like Politicians**

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A politician listens to protect power.

A shepherd listens to protect souls.

Shepherd listening includes:

- patience with weak saints
- discernment with chronic complainers
- firmness with rebels
- gentleness with the broken

A shepherd learns who is:

- honest and wise
- hurt and confused
- angry and dangerous
- unstable and manipulative

And he gives each one the kind of listening that protects the church.

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## **5) The Greatest Threat: Rumor Replacing Reality**

When information is absent, people create it.

When truth is delayed, people “interpret.”

When leaders stay silent too long, the church starts writing its own storyline.

That storyline becomes a rival authority.

Instead of Scripture guiding the church, a narrative does:

- “They don’t care.”
- “They’re hiding something.”

- “They always do this.”
- “This is why I don’t trust them.”

Most church turmoil is not caused by doctrine disagreements first.  
It is caused by *relational breakdown* that turns into doctrinal breakdown.

Rumor is spiritual sabotage.

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## **Rumor: The Devil’s Cheap Substitute for Truth**

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A rumor can travel through a church in a day.  
But rebuilding trust can take years.

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## **6) The Church Must Learn the Difference Between “Talking” and “Communicating”**

A church can be “full of talk” and still have no communication.

Some churches talk constantly, but it is:

- surface-level
- emotion-driven
- assumption-based
- selective
- political

Real communication is not noise.  
It is the clear exchange of truth with the goal of unity and holiness.

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## **A) Communication Without Love Becomes a Weapon**

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People often claim, “I’m just being honest.”

But honesty without love is brutality.

***“speaking the truth in love...”***

*(Ephesians 4:15, NASB 1995)*

Truth spoken to hurt is not righteousness.

It is revenge.

Truth spoken to rescue is love.

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## **B) Communication Without Truth Becomes Manipulation**

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On the other side, some claim “love” while refusing truth.

But love without truth is deception.

A church cannot heal what it refuses to name.

A church cannot correct what it refuses to confront.

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### **Two Equal Dangers: Harsh Truth vs. Soft Lies**

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A church has to learn to tell the truth in a way that heals, not wounds.

And elders must lead the church into that kind of maturity.

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## **7) Practical Ways to Build a “Truth-Flow” Church**

A healthy church does not rely on emergency communication.

It has normal rhythms that keep people informed, grounded, and steady.

This is not about turning elders into public announcers.

It is about eliminating the vacuum.

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## **A) Open Doors for Questions (Without Creating Chaos)**

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People need to know:

- “I can ask”
- “I can speak”
- “I will be heard”
- “I will not be punished for concern”

Elders who make saints feel unsafe create underground communication.

Underground communication always becomes poisonous.

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## **B) Regular Spiritual Direction**

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A church drifts when nobody is steering.

Elders must communicate things like:

- what the church needs right now
- where the church is weak
- what dangers are growing
- what areas need growth
- what spiritual priorities must be protected

This does not mean elders are always “negative.”

It means elders are honest.

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## **C) Honest Planning Prevents Unnecessary Friction**

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A church does not handle “surprises” well.

If a major change is needed, wise elders prepare the saints:

- teaching before implementing

- explaining why, not just what
- listening to concerns before pressure builds
- allowing time for hearts to settle

This is shepherd wisdom.

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## **Church Decisions: A Wise Communication Pattern**

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# **8) When Saints Don't Communicate: How Churches Break**

There are patterns that show up in nearly every church conflict.

Not because the church is “unique,” but because human nature is consistent.

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## **A) The Quiet Withdrawal**

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Some saints don't complain openly.

They simply disappear emotionally first, then physically later.

They stop speaking.

Stop serving.

Stop connecting.

Then one day they are gone.

Many times, the root is simple:

“They felt unheard.”

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## **B) The Side-Campaign**

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Some don't want truth.

They want a following.

Instead of speaking to the elders, they speak to:

- their friends
- their family
- their favorite sympathizer
- the weak members

Then they say, "A lot of people feel this way."

That is how church division is manufactured.

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## **C) The Pressure Threat**

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Some attempt to control elders with fear:

"If you don't do what we want, we'll leave."

This is not godly communication.

It is coercion.

And it reveals a heart that does not want shepherding—  
it wants control.

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## **Three Communication Sins That Tear Churches Apart**

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## **9) Elders Must Lead the Church Away From Fear and Toward Trust**

Some churches operate like:

- elders are "untouchable"

- members are “dangerous”
- questions are “rebellion”

That is not the New Testament spirit.

A good eldership is strong enough to hear concerns, weigh them, and decide righteously.

But members must also learn:

Hearing a concern does not mean elders must obey it.

Listening is not surrender.

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## **A) A Wise Eldership Builds Confidence Over Time**

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Sheep follow shepherds they trust.

Trust is built by:

- consistent godly judgment
- steady character
- fairness in decisions
- restraint and self-control
- open demeanor
- humble listening
- courageous leadership

A church that has watched men live righteously will follow them more easily.

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## **B) A Church That Wants Shepherding Must Participate in It**

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Elders cannot shepherd a church that refuses to be shepherded.

A church cannot demand “good leadership” while refusing:

- submission

- patience
- cooperation
- prayer
- encouragement

Shepherding is a relationship.

Not a service transaction.

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## **10) Faith in Action Application**

If we want a church that grows strong, we must build a culture where truth is normal.

### **1) Speak early, not late**

If something is concerning, don't wait until it becomes a crisis.

### **2) Speak directly, not sideways**

Don't poison ten hearts to avoid one hard conversation.

### **3) Speak humbly, not angrily**

A raised voice may feel powerful, but it rarely produces righteousness.

***“for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.”***

*(James 1:20, NASB 1995)*

### **4) Speak biblically, not emotionally**

“Here's what Scripture says” is stronger than “Here's what I feel.”

### **5) Speak to heal, not to win**

The church is not a battlefield for victories.

It is a body that must be protected.

## 11) Class Discussion Questions

### Discussion Table

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## 12) Take-Home Assignment

### Faith in Action — This Week

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### Final Charge

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A church that refuses truth will drift.

A church that refuses humility will fracture.

A church that refuses direct communication will be ruled by whispers.

But a church that loves truth enough to speak it,  
and loves each other enough to speak it rightly,  
will become steady, united, and strong.

Truth is not the enemy of peace.

Truth is the foundation of peace.

**Next Lesson:** *The Problem of Communication — Lesson 15*