

“THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCURATE TRANSLATION”

COMMUNICATING IN TWO DIFFERENT “LANGUAGES”

How many times have you shared something with someone and later find out that the information you attempted to convey was received very differently than what you intended? Was the problem with your message or was it with the receiver—or possibly a combination of both? Do you sometimes wish that you could have a built-in “interpreter” who could be activated in some of these more difficult times to bring immediate clarity to the communication process? In just a week or so we will be going to Peru on a mission trip, and we have had some challenges in obtaining clarification on some issues pertaining to the teaching we will be doing there. The majority of these challenges have been due to difficulties encountered in trying to communicate in two different languages. Sometimes things have been “lost or misunderstood in translation.” As we were reflecting on this, we started to think about how much of our work as counselors involves “translating or interpreting” words or experiences. We would like to share some thoughts on this subject, as this is not limited only to counselors but to all involved in Godly relationship with others.

TRANSLATING VERSUS INTERPRETING

Although we refer to “translation” in the title of this writing, it might be more appropriate to use the term “interpretation” instead. Technically, a translator is one who takes written text in one language and expresses or conveys the same information in another language. In contrast, an interpreter is one who takes an oral message in one language and converts or transforms it to another language—maintaining the same content. Interestingly, an effective interpreter must convey not only all the elements of meaning of the spoken words, but also the intentions and feelings of the original speaker. The end result should allow the listener to hear, perceive, and experience the message in a way that is as close as possible to the experience of those who understand the original, source language. We will soon experience this first-hand during our teaching times in Peru.

THE EFFECTS OF INTERPRETING WITH “FILTERS”

Imagine what might happen if a language interpreter in another country had some serious issues with the person they were assigned to interpret—and they allowed these issues to “filter” the message that was being conveyed. It undoubtedly would cause a great deal of problems for the presenter as well as for those attempting to understand the true meaning of the message. Fortunately, most interpreters do not have a depth of relationship with those they are interpreting, and thus this type of problem should be rare. However, what we just described occurs frequently in close relationships—particularly (but not exclusively) in marriages—when we are speaking in the same language (or so it seems)! Our wounds from the past and present often cause us to take words that were truly not intended to be hurtful or offensive and interpret them in a very different manner. These past and recent hurts “filter” communication and can cause the sender of the message to feel like he or she “is speaking in another language.”

SERVING AS INTERPRETERS AND CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER

As counselors and as intimate caring friends, we are often called upon to help in relational conflicts and at times, to serve as “interpreters” in those situations. Just as in true verbal language interpretation, we try to help the listener to hear, perceive, and experience the message in a way that is as close as possible to that which was intended when the message was delivered. At times, that involves a focus not only on the problems with receiving the message, but on the manner in which the message was delivered. The more effective we are in assisting individuals in sending and receiving messages clearly—and in facilitating healing from wounds that result in “faulty internal interpreters”—the greater the depth of intimacy that is possible in subsequent relationships. Interestingly, this breakdown in relationship from a “faulty internal interpreter” does not manifest only in human relationships, but it can be a significant barrier in our relationship with God. Many times we have seen individuals interpret experiences or words from others that have caused them to view God from a very distorted perspective and thus have lived a life of pain as a result. As counselors and friends, we need to help one another (when the invitation has been extended) to sort out or to help “interpret” the true and accurate message rather than the one that has been internalized. Since we all exist in a sinful world, no one is immune from childhood and present-day wounds. As a result, we are all susceptible to having some degree of impairment of our “internal interpreters.” We need to be open to allow others who have proven to be trustworthy to help us see “blind spots” and new perspectives so we can then interpret “rightly.”

PRAYER

Please join me in prayer . . . Father, I want to see, hear and experience You clearly and in the way that is consistent with Your true nature. Lord, I also want to clearly and truthfully receive messages conveyed from others—without distortion on my part. I invite You to reveal any “faulty interpreters” that exist in me that cause me to see and hear You and others in a manner that is not accurate. Lord, reveal and heal the deeper wounds in my soul that affect my “hearing,” and give me the grace to open myself up to others to whom You reveal I can trust. I need and I desire Your help and the help of others so that I can walk in the light and function from a place of truth as to how I see You, myself and others. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

From the Father's Heart,

Jerry and Denise Basel