

*a* RHETORIC *of*

LOVE

MICHAEL A. COLLENDER VOLUME TWO

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EDITOR MICHAEL G. EATMON

VOLUME TWO



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## CHAPTER 1

# LOVE IS ANTIFRAGILE

### THE IMAGE OF GOD

“George,” his mother charged him when he was a boy, “be King.”<sup>1</sup> George took up the challenge. He applied himself to the study of the new sciences. He became the first English monarch to master them. He enjoyed learning about nature, and he enjoyed tending his garden, too. George met the woman he was to marry for the first time on their wedding day. He remained faithful to her all his days, and together they had 15 children. He loved God and spent hours in prayer. George III appeared destined to be one of the United Kingdom’s greatest kings.

“George did his best to obey” his mother’s charge, but “he failed in the central problems of his reign.”<sup>2</sup> He lost control of Parliament, the American colonies, and, finally, his mind. His first season of madness came in the summer of 1788. The episode lasted several months, but he recovered. All seemed well until 1810, when the madness returned. It afflicted him till his death in 1820.



As George began to lose his mind, he may have thought his life and reign a failure. They were far from it, though. George's faithfulness as husband, father, and king were laudable. And his *family's* faithfulness in caring for him in his illness would transform the world.

## GEORGE AND THE MENTALLY ILL

Europe's asylums abused the mentally ill for centuries. Mental illness was misunderstood so it's no wonder they did. Some doctors thought it a product of moral failure. Others believed its causes were "bad humors."<sup>3</sup> Some doctors forced inmates to take medications that would purge the corrupting humors. Others would bleed the mentally ill to re-balance them. Doctors would beat their charges, too, to drive out the desire to sin. Some doctors manacled their patients for years without reprieve. Once committed to an asylum, the mentally ill lost both human rights and human dignity.

London's Bethlem Royal Hospital gives us a window into the day's "lunatic trade" (as it was called).<sup>4</sup> The hospital came to be known as "Bedlam," a nickname the institution earned. The original Bethlem was built over a sewer, which would often back up into the lobby of the hospital.

When the hospital was rebuilt at a new location, its patient rooms sat to one side of a long, wide hallway. This allowed the hospital to entertain the public with a view of the suffering insane. For the price of admission, that is. Physicians and the public alike saw mental illness as gross and shameful. The mentally ill were both a mockery and a cautionary tale.

George endured some of the treatments for mental illness common in his day. He didn't become a spectacle in an asylum, though. Instead, his family provided him quiet, care, and dignity. They showed him an extraordinary love.

That loving care transformed how English society saw mental illness. Common Englishmen began to follow the example of the king's family. They began to care for their own mentally ill relatives. They also developed a sympathy for the plight of the mentally ill. We see a reflection of this in some of Jane Austen's correspondence. She discusses madness, but with respect and affection. In time, the change in English attitudes would make its way to the Continent and the Americas.



George III was afflicted by mental illness.

## A RHETORIC OF LOVE IS ANTIFRAGILE

How did the love of George's family shift English attitudes toward the mentally ill? To answer this question, we need to revisit a theme we discussed in the first volume of this series. Recall that we discovered two primary approaches to rhetoric.

One we called a rhetoric of domination; the other, a rhetoric of love. A rhetoric of domination aims to exert power over an audience through manipulation. This manipulation can come in the form of seduction or threat.

A rhetoric of love, in contrast, aims to liberate an audience to pursue the good. A rhetoric of love respects the God-given faculties of an audience. It works to present appeals that persuade over the long term. It honors the image of God in the listener.

Different situations and different audiences call for different approaches. Classical rhetoric provides some excellent tools to help communicators share their messages. Teachers of classical rhetoric often burden the memory, though. They weigh it down with lists of rules and figures of speech. Wise, well-chosen principles are helpful, of course, and we shouldn't despise them. Too often, teachers of classical rhetoric equate learned theory with practiced eloquence.

In reality, laboring over rules and theories achieves the opposite of eloquence. It makes students fragile. A budding public speaker gets up to present, but somehow the situation isn't right. Or the topic is beyond the presenter's experience. Or he can't connect with the audience. Or the room is too cold. And then it happens.

Fragility sets in. It looks different in different situations. It looks different in different presenters. Some become nervous, the kind of nervous that the audience feels in *its* throat. Some are startled by something, forget their message, and can't recover. Some stumble over their words and roast the person they intended to toast. Some presenters do well in front of an audience, but they shy away from face-to-face exchanges. When a speaker becomes fragile, she risks losing opportunities to persuade. Rhetorical fragility isn't good, but what's the alternative?

We imagine that the opposite of *fragile* is *tough* or *hard*. It's not. It's antifragile.<sup>5</sup> This isn't a common term, so let's look at an illustration to see what it means.

Let's consider how these terms could apply to three packages we might send. On one box, we write, "FRAGILE." What's inside could break if not handled with care. Think a Ming vase or a delicate teacup. The contents of another package are hard, tough, robust; they can take a pounding. Think bowling ball or baseball bat. (Of course, we don't usually put "TOUGH" labels on boxes whose contents are sturdy.)

Now, what if we label the third package as "ANTIFRAGILE"? Few would know what that means, so we might add, "Manhandle me!" Think Hydra from Greek mythology: When one head gets chopped off, two regrow in its place.<sup>6</sup> An antifragile package gets *better*

when roughed up, crushed, or put under pressure.

We can imagine an anti-fragile package, but what's an anti-fragile rhetoric? What's it like, and how do we get it? How's it different from a "tough" rhetoric? Let's set the stage for the answer.

Ever had the experience of the fragile rhetoric students above? You overprepare for some event or social situation because you figure it won't go well if you don't. You later learn that how you prepared made you fragile. What you thought would stand you in good stead undermined your efforts.

How could you have prepared yourself differently—to be anti-fragile? Here's one strategy that'll point you in the right direction. Rely less on your (short-term) memory and more on being authentically present.

Some students cram their heads full of theories, rules, and checklists. They stuff so much in, it's a wonder their minds don't explode. They seem to think that all that's needed to persuade an audience is to unload on them. The dazzling display will overwhelm them and stir them to hand over their hearts and minds. Those who approach an audience this way aren't much interested in making allies, though. They're more interested in befuddling opponents and dismantling opposition. They believe that fast facts and clever techniques will ensure a strong presentation.

Approaching rhetoric this way isn't strong; it's fragile. It doesn't guarantee an audience's persuasion. It doesn't guarantee the presenter will make her best case, either. It can't because this approach has two big problems.

One is that we often overestimate our memory. We suppose it'll hold on to whatever we pack into it, at least until our presentation's finished. We also suppose we'll have

The Hydra is anti-fragile because, for each head chopped off, two grow back.



perfect recall when we need it. Reality rarely works out this way. Add some stress or surprise to the situation, and many a presenter's memory turns mushy.

Another problem with fragile approaches to rhetoric is that they forget the goal. Rhetoric aims to shift an audience's attitudes. For that to happen, the audience must be willing to be persuaded. They need to believe we know our topic, and they need to believe we have their best interest in mind. Many audiences sense when a speaker doesn't know what he's talking about. Most audiences sense when a speaker is more concerned with himself than with them.

An antifragile rhetoric doesn't depend on a flawless memory. It relies, instead, on our having internalized our message. We know what we want to say because we've thought about it a lot. We've looked at it from many perspectives. We've tried to support it, and we've tried to knock it down.

We own the message. We've allowed it to steep within us, to transform our own attitudes. When we've internalized the ideas we're sharing, they become part of who we are.

An antifragile rhetoric doesn't lean on sure-fire delivery techniques, either. Some presenters put a great deal of weight on their language and logic. They pay a great deal of attention to their postures and gestures, too. They want to come across as precise, orderly, and polished.

We want to think, speak, and write well, of course. We want to carry ourselves and communicate our ideas with dignity, as well. More than these, though, we want to connect with our audience. We want to look for ways to minimize the gap between us and them, not accentuate it. We want to be fully present with our audiences and fully engaged with them. A rhetoric of love aims to win them over, not declare victory in their ideas' defeat.

A rhetoric of domination looks strong, but it doesn't make for antifragile presenters. It appears powerful, and it achieves some success. It trades long-term persuasion for short-term gain, though. It sacrifices tomorrow to win today. In time, people will realize they've been manipulated. They'll figure out what the cunning rhetorician has done. Before they do, the dominator hopes to amass enough power to quell opposition. This is why a rhetoric of domination is fragile. If things don't go just so, its control crumbles.

Contrary to what we might think, we see this fragility in Roman rhetoric. Roman orators pled their cases before powerful judges and rulers. Their success depended on a single presentation and a corresponding single decision. With so much at stake in a single, defining instance, they had to master long lists of rules and principles.

Orators wanted every advantage in court, but a cumbersome rhetoric made them fragile. What would've happened had they taken their rhetoric to the streets? How successful would they have been outside the courtroom and senate? Would a Roman lawyer have given a good TED talk?





**SIDEBAR 1.1 THE FIRST TWO BOOKS OF QUINTILIAN'S *ORATOR'S EDUCATION* INTRODUCED RHETORIC IN LIVELY AND FUN WAYS. BOOK 3 BEGINS THE LONG JOURNEY THROUGH HIS RULES FOR GOOD RHETORIC. QUINTILIAN APOLOGIZES FOR HIS CHANGE IN STYLE AND THE TEDIUM TO FOLLOW.**

I am fully aware that students of rhetoric have particularly wanted me to provide that part of the subject which this book now commences. It is both by far the most difficult part, because of the need to investigate a very great diversity of opinions, and also, I suspect, likely to be the least pleasurable to the reader, because it demands little else than a bare exposition of rules.



Quintilian. *The Orator's Education, Volume II: Books 3–5*. Edited and translated by Donald A. Russell. Loeb Classical Library 125. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002, p. 9.

A rhetoric of love is antifragile. It works over the long term, even in less predictable situations. It works in classrooms, marketplaces, and social-media feeds. Love equips our rhetoric to adapt to new circumstances because love understands people. It cares about them and their needs. This is why a rhetoric of love can speak with effectiveness, even without words.

Remember how George's family cared for him. Their loving acts got *better* when roughed up, crushed, and put under the pressure of his illness. George's family didn't set out to revolutionize the care of the mentally ill. Nonetheless, their deeds of love won the attention of both Parliament and media. The more people thought about George's care, the more persuaded they were to right an injustice.

## DESIGN AND DELIVERY

Polished speakers can deliver amazing-sounding messages. Sometimes, though, the audience can't remember afterward what they said. Rhetoric is "the art of using the best signs to convey a message to shift people's attitudes."<sup>7</sup> Rhetoric is bound to include at least one other feature: staying power. A message that's amazing today but forgotten tomorrow isn't helpful.

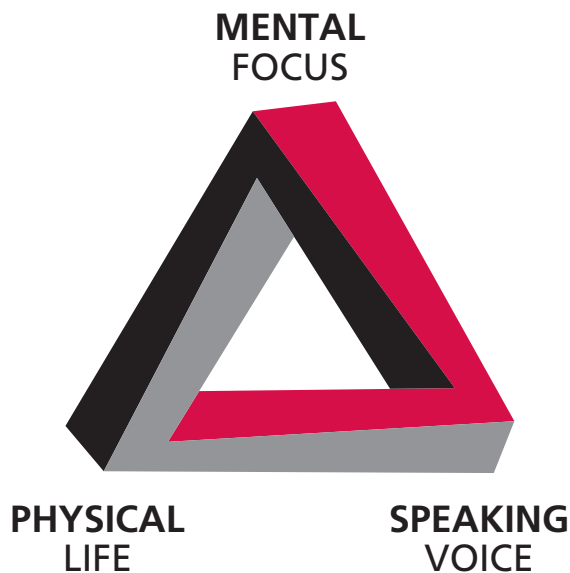
Two true tests of a great message are its memorability and its contagiousness. When we finish speaking, does the audience remember the core ideas we conveyed? Does our big idea move them to want to share our message with others?

History has seen some extraordinary communicators. Most presenters, though, won't make it into the history books. Still, we can aspire to "powerfully land a small number of big ideas."<sup>8</sup> George's family gave us an example. Its big idea was that those who suffer from madness deserve our compassion and kindness. This big idea was not only memorable. It was shared, and it changed a country. In this book, we'll learn how to land a small number of big ideas with our audience.

To do this, we'll need to know how to design and deliver powerful messages. The first volume in this series gave us tools for designing them. The current volume will focus on how to deliver them.

Delivery is the sum total of *how* we present a message to a particular audience. It's part science, part art. It includes how to breathe, speak, move, and gesture. It includes considerations of setting, too. Some messages should be delivered from a podium. Some should be shared in a confidential conversation. Some should be broadcast in an online video. And some messages should simply be quietly lived.

The previous volume looked at rhetoric through the lens of the perspective triangle. This volume will examine delivery through a different set of lenses. We'll use what performance teacher Melanie Long calls the performance triangle.<sup>9</sup>



Every performance—speaking, acting, singing, dancing—touches the three points of this triangle. We'll develop practical skills in each area so we can powerfully land some big ideas.

## THE SPECIAL TOPICS

Aristotle gave the world several big and memorable ideas. One was how he organized rhetoric into three main genres. *Forensic* rhetoric attacks or defends someone accused of wrongdoing. It's used primarily in the courtroom. *Ceremonial* rhetoric praises or censures someone's character. We find this type of rhetoric at funerals, weddings, and award ceremonies. *Deliberative* rhetoric aims to persuade an audience to follow, or not, a course of action. It's common in congresses, parliaments, and other governing bodies.

Aristotle liked to put things in tidy categories. What's wrong with organizing one's ideas? Nothing, so long as we don't view these categories as straitjackets, as rhetoric's only genres.

The caveat issued, let's take a closer look at these three genres. Let's zero in on their rhetorical *actions* (attacking/defending and the rest). Let's consider them in light of what we learned in *A Rhetoric of Love: Volume One*. See any problems?

We learned in the previous volume that Aristotle deemed rhetoric a set of neutral tools. He said those tools can be used for good or evil. This is true, and we've all experienced both uses.

If a speaker loves his audience, though, what *should* his words attempt to do? Attack or defend? No, they should aim to serve the audience by focusing on justice. When a writer loves her audience, should her intention be to heap up praise or censure? No, it should be to establish compelling character models for people to follow. When we're engaged in deliberative rhetoric, what should we be hoping to accomplish? The persuasion of the audience? Yes, but in order for prudence to prevail.<sup>10</sup>

This is why the care of King George had such a profound impact on the way the English cared for their mentally ill. Love is sensible, and it acts for others' good. When it does, people take notice, and it persuades them.

God made the world in such a way that one family's care for one man could rescue many vulnerable people. God has established ordered structures in our social worlds: governments, businesses, families. Each is a source of authority and influence that love can transform.

Love doesn't transform people and structures in an instant. Because it's antifragile, though, it endures. The way of domination must dominate or be dominated. The way of love plays a different game, a longer game and by different rules.

Paul explained to the Corinthian church the counterintuitiveness of love's antifragile nature. God uses the foolish and weak things of the world to shame the brainy and mighty. He chooses the base things of the world to bring down those who think they're really something.<sup>11</sup>

The way of love looked weak during the church's first three centuries. It wasn't; it was antifragile. It was ridiculed and persecuted, but it grew stronger under the heat and pressure. In time, it transformed and brought down the dominance and domination of Rome.

## THIS VOLUME'S FOCUS: PRACTICE

In this book, we'll learn to deliver the powerful messages we've designed. We'll develop robust and resilient habits of mind. We'll strengthen our bodies and voices, too.

Love is an antifragile communicator of antifragile truths. We'll learn how to communicate in a variety of settings and situations. We'll approach them with the intention of subverting evil and promoting good. We'll study how rhetoric's three major genres pursue justice, leadership, and prudence. Along the way, we'll discover other things, like how human emotions work and how to move them. To become antifragile speakers and writers, we'll need practice. We'll need practice with different circumstances, different audiences, and different messages.

"The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer," the book of Proverbs tells us (15:28). Pondering how to answer—what to say, when to say it—involves strategy. This shouldn't surprise us. Rhetoric is, after all, strategy applied to communication. How can we best move our and our audience's attitudes toward agreement? How can we do it in a way that honors both our audience and our message?

## COMPREHENSION exercises

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1. How did King George's family transform how the British cared for the mentally ill?
2. What are basic differences between a rhetoric of domination and a rhetoric of love?
3. How can overburdening a rhetoric student with rules make her fragile?
4. What does it mean to be antifragile, and how's that different from being tough?
5. What are the three points of the performance triangle?
6. How does a rhetoric of love repurpose the three genres of classical rhetoric?

## DISCUSSION exercises

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1. "Rhetoric is, after all, strategy applied to communication." What does that mean? Isn't strategy about how to defeat an enemy on the battlefield? What relationship does it have to persuasive—and loving—communication?
2. Here's the scenario. Thousands of illegal immigrants are crossing the US–Mexico border. Your church is a couple of miles from one of the busier entry points. Your youth leader knows you have informed opinions on the issue. He knows your peers respect you, too. He asks you to speak to the youth group about how Christians should respond to the situation.
 

What are your two or three main talking points? That is, which two or three most important ideas do you share with them? Be sure to re-search the issue before settling on an opinion.
3. Let's adjust the scenario above. You're no longer speaking to your youth group. You're speaking to an impromptu gathering of local Hispanics. Some are US-born, and some are naturalized US citizens. Some may be in the country illegally.
 

How does the rhetorical situation change? How does your message change? How does your word choice change? Do *you* need to change in an appreciable way?

## PRESENTATION exercises

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1. Choose one of these historical figures: Joan of Arc, Martin Luther, Blaise Pascal, William Wilberforce, Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, Amy Carmichael, Mohandas ("the Mahatma") Gandhi, Rosa Parks, or Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>12</sup> In no more than two hours, prepare a 5–7 minute speech. Explain the antifragile rhetoric of the person you chose. Your speech needn't be elaborate, but it should have these four elements.
  - a. First, hook your audience with a moving story from the figure's life. Pick a scene where the person is encountering great opposition. Show how he or she responds antifragilely. Highlight how the person's words or actions get better under pressure. (This first part should take two to three minutes.)
  - b. Second, contrast how the person *did* respond to how he or she *could've* responded. What would a fragile rhetoric have looked like? What about a tough rhetoric? (This second part should take about a minute.)

- c. Third, suggest why the figure may've chosen the response he or she did. You can speculate about intentions so long as your speculations are reasonable. History might even give you a clue about the person's intentions. What happened after the scene you described? What happened because of the scene you described? (This third part should take a minute or two.)
- d. And fourth, wrap up with remarks about the effectiveness of antifragile rhetoric. (This part should take about a minute.)
2. Video yourself sharing the talking points described in DE 2. If possible, present before a live audience. (The audience shouldn't appear in the video.) Here's a simple, threefold frame to use for your presentation.
  - a. First, share what you think about the situation. What's the most significant issue, and what should be done about it?
  - b. Second, share your two or three main talking points. Why have you come to the conclusion you have? What were the key steps in your reasoning? If you've two points, try the stronger one second. If you've three points, try this order: stronger, strong, strongest.
  - c. And third, what should your audience do? What one or two specific actions should they take in response to the situation?
3. Repeat the steps for PE 2, but use the adjusted scenario from DE 3.

## NOTES

- 1 Winston S. Churchill, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples: The Age of Revolution* (London: Cassell & Company Ltd., 1957), 135.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 The humors were "four chief fluids of the body (blood, phlegm, yellow bile [cholera], and black bile [melancholy]) that were thought to determine a person's physical and mental qualities by the relative proportions in which they were present" (*New Oxford American Dictionary*, 3d edition).
- 4 The correct spelling is Bethlehem.
- 5 Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder* (New York: Random House, 2014).
- 6 Real-world examples include penetration testing and constructive criticism.
- 7 Douglas M. Jones, *A Rhetoric of Love: Vol. 1*. (Lancaster, Pa.: Veritas Press, 2018).
- 8 Tim Pollard, *The Compelling Communicator: Mastering the Art and Science of Exceptional Presentation Design* (Washington, DC: Conder House Press, 2016), 35. This book applies brain research to designing messages that stick with an audience. It also discusses the difference between design and delivery.
- 9 The performance triangle is discussed in Melanie M. Long's *Mastering Stage Presence: How to Present to Any Audience*, a course published by The Great Courses.
- 10 Some think of *prudence* as a synonym for *wisdom*. That may be true in some contexts. We'll use the term *prudence* to mean something more specific. We'll take it to mean "acting with or showing care and thought for the future" (*New Oxford American Dictionary*, 3d edition).
- 11 See 1 Cor. 1:26–29.
- 12 This isn't a list of all-stars. You can find plenty in their lives to criticize. You can find much to admire, as well.

## CHAPTER 2

# LOVE RESPECTS

### YOUR RIGHTFUL PLACE

You hear a knock at the door. You open to discover the ambassador from a small but wealthy country. He tells you that you're the heir to his country's throne. He begs you to go with him and to take your rightful place in the royal palace. What do you say (after you pinch yourself to check whether you're dreaming)? Most would say yes. After all, this is the stuff of our wildest imagination.

Disney parlayed this fantasy into the successful *Princess Diaries* movie franchise. It tells of the unexpected, meteoric rise of American teen Mia Thermopolis. What made the first movie so compelling was Mia's discovery of who she really was. She'd lived almost 16 years and had no idea of her importance. One revelation began to change what she thought of herself and the world.

Some surprise-identity stories aren't so cheery. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is a prime example. Dr. Frankenstein pieces a monster together from corpse parts. Then, he abandons his creation, leaving him to figure the world out for himself. The creature wanders about, furious at his absent father figure. He learns about human nature from reading Milton, Plutarch, and Goethe.

Still, he feels empty; his life seems meaningless. He rages against his creator and humanity itself, and his rage gives him the boldness to act. Who can blame him for his wild, uncontrollable anger? He doesn't know who he is.



Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* in 1817, and the novel proved prescient. It anticipated the existential crisis of Western culture. Turns out, many intellectuals tell us, we are all Frankenstein's monster. As a civilization, we no longer know who we are.

This may come as little surprise to those who've studied modern thought. Some modernists say we're fatherless organisms hurled into existence. We get no guidance in life except what we make for ourselves. Our lives lack objective purpose and meaning. We get to make that up. No, we *have* to make that up. We bear the burden of defining who we are and why we exist. We bear the burden of creating our *self* in our own image.



Some say we are all Frankenstein's monster.

## CONFIDENCE AND THE SELF

In this chapter we learn how to build our confidence as a speaker. To speak with confidence, we must respect ourselves, our purpose, and our audience. If we don't respect ourselves, we can't expect our audience to. If we don't believe in our purpose, we'll become fragile or dishonest. If we don't value our audience, we'll come across as aloof or condescending.

Addressing these issues of identity, purpose, and audience is crucial. It'll help us create the kind of body-and-soul presence we're aiming for. Where do we start: identity, purpose, or audience? We start at the foundation of the three, the self. Identifying and defining the self can be a challenge, though.

Sociologist George Mead offered an influential theory of the self.<sup>1</sup> We humans construct our *self* based on the views of others in our society. One's society includes a family of origin, a neighborhood, a community, a nation, and more. "I" and "me" are the perceptions we have of ourselves based on what others think of us. Our views on good and bad, right and wrong, and honor and shame come from these societies.

These views sometimes conflict with one another. Our family says some behavior is admirable, for example, but the surrounding culture disagrees. Childhood is the time



when we learn to negotiate conflicting standards. We do this by learning how to make our own decisions. We mature by wrestling through conflicts to create our own sense of “me.”

We create a self shaped by our societies, but not wholly defined by them. For some, the self that emerges is healthy, self-aware, and secure. For others, the self lacks a stable, well-grounded confidence. Regardless of the me that emerges, everyone’s confident in some situations but not in others.

Acting teacher Uta Hagan gives us nine questions to help locate ourselves in a situation.<sup>2</sup> We’ve expanded on them below according to how they work in the practice of rhetoric. Techniques that create a presence on stage often do the same for the lectern and the lobby. How we answer these questions has a direct impact on our confidence.

1. *Who am I?* Who is the *self* doing the talking? What knowledge, skills, and experiences do I possess? How has my story shaped who I am?
2. *What time is it?* What’s the season of the year and the time of day? What about *kairos*, the time of rhetorical opportunity?<sup>3</sup> Is this the right time to speak?
3. *Where am I?* What’s the setting for my communication: work, home, somewhere else? In a city or a rural setting? Inside or outside? Am I in a room? If so, where in the room? Is the room physical or virtual?
4. *What surrounds me?* What do I see, hear, feel, taste, and smell around me? What objects are within my reach or beyond?
5. *What are the circumstances?* What past, present, or (potential) future events affect the moment I’m living right now?
6. *What are my relationships?* Who in my network of relationships affect the situation at hand? Who are affected by it?
7. *What do I want?* What’s my communication’s long-term purpose? What are the intermediate goals I’m pursuing to achieve that purpose? How do these intentions guide my actions along the way?
8. *What is in my way?* What obstacles stand in my way, either in life or at this moment?
9. *What do I do to get what I want?* What physical or verbal action should I take to achieve my goal?

The most important of the nine questions is the first. Its answer, though, finds concrete expression in the answers to the other eight.

When we struggle with confidence, we're wrestling with the answer to one of these questions. What if we can answer 1 through 8 but scratch our heads over question 9? Then we'll lack the confidence to know what to do in a given situation. What if we don't know how to answer question 8? Then we may find our confidence giving way to worry. Do we have what we need to overcome the obstacles we'll encounter? Who knows? We don't know what opposition we'll encounter!

We describe the process that produces lasting change toward maturity as *growth*. Growth is an agricultural metaphor. It assumes that effort over time brings about change, incrementally. We shouldn't be surprised that growth in confidence takes time and work. Still, anyone can develop the skills to create a confident, even charismatic, presence. Commit yourself to do this book's exercises well, and your confidence will grow.

## KINGS AND PRIESTS

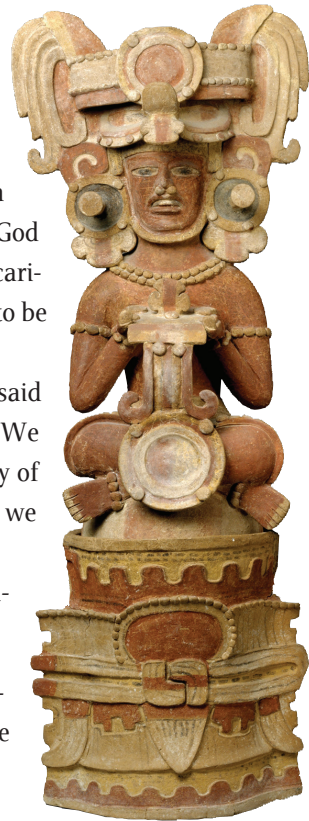
Lions, chimpanzees, and lobsters, they all display dominance hierarchies. In fact, we find these hierarchies throughout the animal kingdom. We even find them among human beings, but humans reflect a higher nature, too—God's. God doesn't lead the universe by being the biggest, baddest, and scariest being of all. Instead, He leads through love. He created us to be like Him in that way.

He also made us to need others. Remember what God said about Adam in the garden. It wasn't good for him to be alone. We need others, and this makes us prone to slip into Mead's way of thinking. We need to be careful not to let others define who we are, though.

Recall the psalmist who rebuilds his confidence by confessing his identity in God:

Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.<sup>4</sup>

God is the help of the psalmist's countenance. He who was downcast can be confident because God is reliable. The psalmist sees himself from the perspective of what God has to say about him. What does God have to say about him, though? Jesus makes the answer clear when He says, "For God so loved the world . . ."<sup>5</sup>

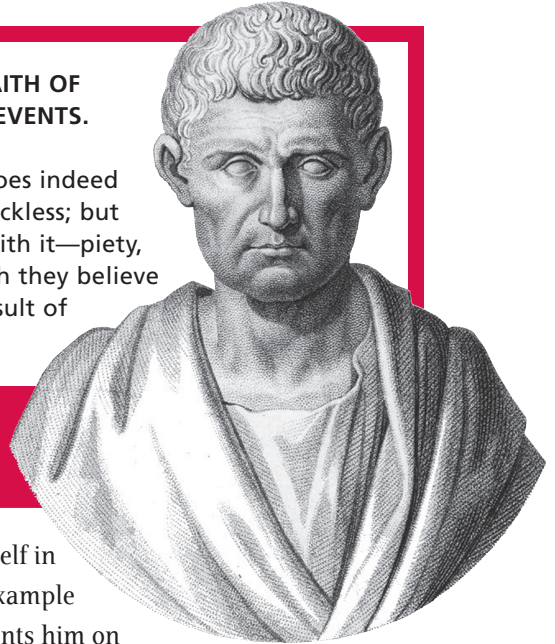


Humans have hierarchies in every culture. This fourth-century incense burner depicts a Mayan king.

**Sidebar 2.1 ARISTOTLE DISMISSES THE FAITH OF THOSE WHO SEE GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN EVENTS.**

It may be added that good fortune . . . does indeed make men more supercilious and more reckless; but there is one excellent quality that goes with it—piety, and respect for the divine power, in which they believe because of events which are really the result of chance.

Aristotle. *Rhetoric*. translated by W. Rhys Roberts. Modern Library, 1984, p 127.



Paul gained social confidence by seeing himself in light of what God says about him. Take as an example his confronting of Peter in Antioch.<sup>6</sup> Paul confronts him on an important matter in front of many important people. Many won't confront someone in private even over a trivial matter. Where did Paul find the confidence to rebuke Peter in public?

We hear the answer from Paul himself. "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:20)." Paul says Christ lives in him, in his "me." Paul rejects his socially constructed self, a Pharisee. He accepts the new self that Christ has given to him. Like the psalmist, Paul finds the core of his confidence not in society, but in his savior.

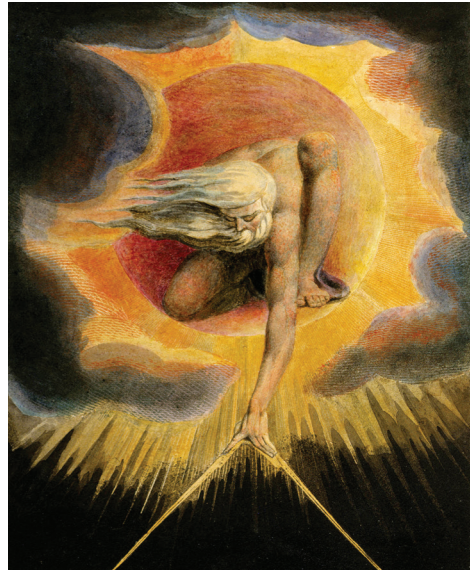
We can be confident before God, but what does this have to do with public speaking? Everything. Scripture says that those who seek to love Him and love others are kings and priests in this world. At their best, kings exercise leadership out of love for their people. Priests reconcile people to God. At their best, they help people love and serve Him. If we are followers of Christ, then God the Father has given us every resource we need to succeed.

## TEN STEPS FOR BUILDING SELF-CONFIDENCE

In Christ, we have every resource we need for any rhetorical situation. Now, how do we build the self-confidence to put those resources to use? Here are ten steps that will take us in the right direction.

1. *Respect human finitude.* Accept that people know less than they think they do. Piers Morgan gives us a good example. He shamed young violinist Lindsey Stirling on *America's Got Talent*. "You're not good enough." His criticism was heard by millions. The judges thought Stirling's combination of dancing and violin playing was unmarketable. Her two platinum albums, thousands of concerts, and billions of YouTube views disagree. Remember her story when you speak before likely naysayers. People don't know as much as they think they do. Don't let a fear of others' criticism intimidate you into silence. People's judgment is more faulty and fragile than their bravado lets on.

2. *Respect the Creator.* Recognize that you're a wonderful creation of God. Your body, your soul, your head, your heart, your talents—all amazing! Even if you're a twin, no one else in the human race is exactly like you. You're unique, and you reflect the image of God in a way no one else can. Recognize, too, that God created all others the same way. Everyone is a priceless original, and a priceless original's value is incalculable. God doesn't make junk, and Jesus didn't die for junk, either.



*The Ancient of Days* by William Blake (1794)

3. *Respect your limits.* Start small. Let's say you want to be a marathon runner someday. Let's say, too, that right now you get winded after jogging 100 yards. Going from a winded jog to a triumphant 26.2-mile run won't happen overnight. Your legs aren't ready for it. Your lungs aren't ready for it. Your mind isn't ready for it. You'll need to train. You'll need to adjust aspects of your sleep and nutrition, as

well. Aspire to great and worthwhile things. Remember, though, that achieving them will require you to stretch your limits. It'll require you to stretch *yourself*, and that will take time and effort.

4. *Respect opportunities.* Be ready always. The weather apps on our smart phones are good. They can forecast better than many a weatherman. Some tell you it'll stop raining in 17 minutes, and they'll be right. Good as they are, they can't predict everything. They won't know when a gentle breeze will spring up out of nowhere to cool your sunburned face. Forecasting potential rhetorical opportunities is like forecasting the weather. Planning for the future based on good information today is reasonable and helpful. None of us can predict the unpredictable, though. The best plan for the inevitable encountering of the unpredictable is to be ready. As *The Incredibles'* Edna Mode observes, "Luck favors the prepared."<sup>7</sup>
5. *Respect your opponent.* Make sure you bring your A game when moving up a league. Kirk Cameron and Ray Comfort lost a debate with two atheists. They didn't study evolutionary science well enough to respond to some of its claims. As a result, they made the Christian faith look ignorant and indefensible.<sup>8</sup> If we plan to speak or write about a complex or controversial topic, we need to do our homework. Doing so honors the topic, the truth, and the audience. It honors our opponent, too.
6. *Respect yourself.* Practice healthy self-talk, not self-sabotage. Healthy self-talk affirms the truth about who we are. It recognizes both strengths and weaknesses, but it doesn't dwell on the latter. When we face a challenging situation, we shouldn't approach it with fear or negativity. We shouldn't *expect* failure. We should imagine that people will like us and things will go well. If we have concerns about our preparation, we should identify what concerns us and address it.
7. *Respect your relationships.* Surround yourself with people who believe in you, who support you. God made us to live in community and to need others. We should cultivate relationships with people who share our goals and aspirations. All of us will make mistakes and face setbacks. When that happens, healthy friendships can restore our stability and confidence. Friends help friends regain their footing.
8. *Respect your boundaries.* Distance yourself from those who tear you down. Some offer criticism, but it's not constructive. They stand in the way of the good things we aim to achieve. They may reframe our efforts as insignificant or unachievable.

They may try to shame or embarrass us. Whatever the tactic, they want us to connect our goals and ambitions with emotional pain. We may not say it aloud, but we need to call this what it is: an attack. These attacks may be driven by bitterness or envy, and they may feel unrelenting.

It's legitimate to put boundaries between ourselves and those who intend us harm. If possible, spend less time with these people. Find ways to mitigate the harm they can cause you. Creating distance can be a challenge. It's especially difficult if the negative person is a family member. Still, our obligation to love and serve others doesn't imply an obligation to accept their abuse. Pray that God brings others into your life to offset the negative impact of that person. Work to cultivate new friendships. We will talk about how to do this in the next few chapters.

9. *Respect the game.* Don't bet all or nothing; play the odds. Consider the advice of a studied poker player. Most people view poker, he explained, with one of three attitudes. Some fear the game. Some seek mere pleasure. And some make all-or-nothing commitments. Fearful people stay away from the tables. Pleasure seekers never learn the probabilities and strategies of the game. All-or-nothing gamblers bet too much and get wiped out. Instead, he said, you need to play the odds. Learn some game theory and how probability works. You'll win some games, and you'll lose some. If you've learned some game strategy, though, you'll win more than you lose. The laws of probability will start to work in your favor. They'll slant the poker table toward you. Rhetoric isn't so different from poker. We shouldn't shy away from opportunities to communicate our message. We shouldn't turn rhetorical opportunities into soapboxes for grandstanding, either. And we shouldn't bet everything on the persuasive effect of one event. Rather, we need to cultivate a life of good, consistent communication. Sometimes, we'll win our audience. Sometimes, we'll lose them. Overall, we'll be playing a "game" of strategic perseverance.

10. *Respect the rush.* Heed the wisdom of "fake it till you make it." This doesn't mean we should practice deception, of course. It means, instead, that we can step into our desired rhetorical role as an act of the will. We can take on the role of a confident presenter before we've become a confident presenter. What happens, though, if we've followed the first nine steps but still lack self-confidence? What if we feel nervous or have butterflies in our stomach? Anyone who's gotten up to speak knows about butterflies. The nervous flutters in our stomach tempt us to think we can't do it, we can't deliver our message. Truth is, the nervous flutter we

feel is an adrenaline rush. Our brain knows we need an extra burst of energy for speaking in public or meeting people. It helps us out by spritzing a little chemical zing into our bloodstream. This isn't a bug in our body's way of doing things. It's a design feature, so embrace the rush.

If we follow these ten steps, we'll be prepared for any rhetorical situation. We can step into a situation and lead, and our initiative and confidence will put others at ease. People will grant our confidence the benefit of the doubt. They'll be more likely to follow our lead, and they'll be more open to our message.

## CHIMERAS OR KINGS?

*Frankenstein* is a great work of literature. It's a terrible metaphor for the human condition, though. We are not fatherless creatures lost in an alienating world. Instead, the Father created us to be His adopted sons and daughters.

*The Princess Diaries* is fluffy, but its core idea is closer to reality. We were born to be princes and princesses and to reconcile a fallen world through love. The ambassador at the real world's door has extraordinary news. The King of kings invites us to inherit not a mere country, but all good things. What sort of confidence should that instill!

## COMPREHENSION exercises

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1. To speak with confidence, what three things must we respect?
2. According to George Mead, where do we get our sense of self?
3. How does God lead the universe?
4. How does respecting our limits help with self-confidence?
5. How should we react to those who criticize us?
6. Where do the butterflies in our stomach come from? How can they help us?

## DISCUSSION exercises

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1. Imagine a speech given by a nervous young man. He's terrified about standing up in front of his audience. He's worried he'll be ignored, things will go badly, or he'll be laughed at. Are there circumstances in which his lack of confidence could *help* his presentation?

2. Let's say we disagree with someone about a significant issue. The chapter says we should respect our opponent. How can we respect someone we believe is wrong about something important?
3. The chapter says we should respect the wisdom of "fake it until you make it." The maxim suggests that overcoming nervousness builds confidence. How might following this advice affect our presentations? If we follow the advice, will our rhetoric lack sincerity or authenticity?
4. How can the topics of our presentations affect our confidence? What does this tell us about selecting a topic to talk or write about?

## PRESENTATION exercises

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1. Select an athlete or sports team you don't like. (If you're not a sports fan, even better—you have a wider selection to choose from! ) In less than two hours, prepare a 5–7-minute speech praising that person or team. Prepare your speech as if you were presenting to an audience that, like you, doesn't care for this person.
  - a. Use at least four of the self-confidence steps discussed in the chapter. Some will fit your speech better than others.
  - b. It's easy to emphasize someone's strengths. It's easier to emphasize faults and weaknesses. Avoid tipping into overemphasis on either side. Be honest, accurate, and fair.
2. Here's the scenario: you're a medieval missionary to pagan Germanic tribes. You've been brought before a tribal chief who wants to hear from you before chopping off your head. In less than an hour, prepare a 3–5-minute presentation of the gospel.
  - a. As you prepare, use at least three of the self-confidence steps we discussed in the chapter. Try to work in seven or eight.
  - b. Consider how your topic—the gospel—might affect your confidence while presenting.

### NOTES

- 1 For Mead's explanation of the self, see his *Mind, Self and Society*.
- 2 Uta Hagen discusses these in her book *Respect for Acting*. A successful actor, writer, director, and teacher, she also wrote *A Challenge for the Actor*.
- 3 Kairos, you'll recall, is "a definite time, a fulfilled time, an opportune time for persuasion" from Douglas M. Jones, *A Rhetoric of Love* vol. 1 (Lancaster, Pa.: Veritas Press, 2018), 450.
- 4 See Ps. 42:11.
- 5 See John 3:16–17.
- 6 See Gal. 2.
- 7 Brad Bird, Writer and director. *The Incredibles*. Produced by Pixar, 2004.
- 8 Watch this debate at <https://vpress.us/2jzygiy>.



## CHAPTER 3

# LOVE SIGNALS

### STONE-STILL

Milton Erickson was only 17 when he contracted polio. The swift onset of the disease made him lose consciousness. He awoke after several days, his entire body—except for his eyes—paralyzed. He could look around his room, but he couldn't move or speak. His stone-still body trapped him. He could listen to those in his room, but he couldn't communicate with them. His precocious mind couldn't bear the boredom. With nothing else to do, he observed the behavior of his caregivers.

Erickson noticed that their words and their body language communicated different messages. Over time, he began to intuit what his caregivers were thinking. He realized that gestures and behaviors were their own language. Most people don't take the time to learn how to read them. Erickson had turned his bedroom into a laboratory for studying human communication.



Erickson later recovered the use of his body. He became a successful psychiatrist and psychologist. His patients thought he had an almost supernatural ability to read their thoughts.

A woman once went to him about her fear of flying. “I know something about you,” he began. “Does your husband know about your love affair?” Astonished, she replied, “No! How did you . . . ?” Erickson interrupted, “Your body language told me.” She was sitting with her legs pressed tightly together, one foot tucked behind the ankle of the other. In Erickson’s experience, only women who were having affairs closed off their bodies that way.<sup>1</sup>

## WORDS AND SIGNALS

In school, we’re taught to communicate, to express ourselves, through words. Words account for only a portion of what we communicate, though. What’s more, words aren’t always the clearest way to convey our thoughts. Surprised?

Take the word *dog*. What does it mean? An animal that barks and bites, right? Maybe. At Gonzaga or the University of Georgia, it could refer to a basketball player. Go, dogs! Some use it to refer to an ordinary man, an unattractive woman, or a person with reprehensible morals. It can be a slang term for a friend, too. “What up, dog?” *Dog* doesn’t have a single, universal meaning. Instead, the term has *uses*. It takes on a particular meaning once clothed in a sentence.<sup>2</sup>

Some will disagree. They’ll protest that dictionaries tell us what words mean. Want to know what *dog* means? Look it up.

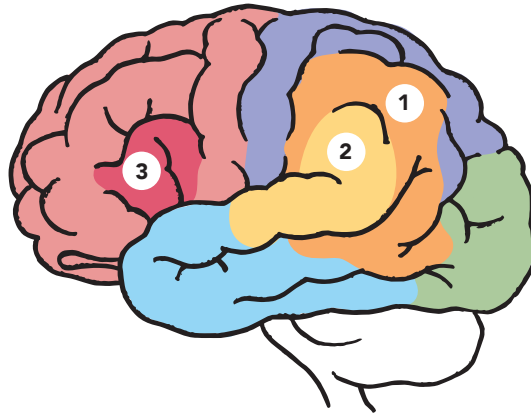
Dictionaries list uses of words, not meanings. A term’s uses are its potential meanings. For one of those meanings to be actualized, it must be put into a sentence.<sup>3</sup> Turning a potential meaning into an actual meaning requires a speech act. It requires someone to show how he’s using his words.

Why does this matter? It matters because only people mean anything. That is, only persons give meaning to words.<sup>4</sup> What words and expressions signify are *in people*—in their thoughts, feelings, bodies. This is one reason we should beware of attempts to separate ideas from their impact on people. There’s no such thing as an abstract idea or a naked emotion. Some person must experience it for it to have meaning.

The Western tradition has a long habit of trying to abstract thoughts and feelings. It tends to separate word uses from their meanings in our bodies and relationships. Plato taught that words have meaning because they point to abstract forms in a realm of ideas. Aristotle taught that words point to mental experience. Brain science shows us how Plato and Aristotle are mistaken.

- Frontal Lobe
- Parietal Lobe
- Temporal Lobe
- Occipital Lobe

1. Wernicke's Area
2. Auditory Area
3. Broca's Area



We now know that Wernicke's Area (see the diagram above) enables us to interpret language. Those who suffer a significant injury to that region of the brain may hear words but not be able to interpret them.

Notice what surrounds Wernicke's Area: the occipital, temporal, and parietal lobes. The occipital processes visual information, and the temporal processes memory and emotion. The parietal region processes sensory information about oneself and the outside world. Wernicke's Area itself surrounds the auditory region. This area processes sound signals from the ear.

What happens if we view the brain map like a blueprint? Something interesting emerges about how we interpret language. It appears our brain is arranged to hear and interpret spoken language by means of what we see, remember, and feel.

Let's switch up the metaphor. Set the blueprint aside. What happens if we view the brain map like a baseball team? Wernicke's Area is the catcher in the brain's process of interpreting language. What's the pitcher? What region governs how we produce language and what we mean by our words?

That position is played by Broca's Area, approximately under our left temple. When we look at something and call it by name, this region lights up on brain scans. Broca's Area enables intentionality with our language. It allows our mind to label things (whether those things are real or imaginary).

When we communicate with people, we exchange a message. We transmit our message in symbols or signals, which others receive and interpret. To send a message, we must first encode it. In everyday conversations, we encode our messages into spoken language

and bodily gestures. What about receiving messages, though? What allows our audience to hear in our symbols and signals the meaning we intended? Our relationship with them does.

Before we delve into the details of that relationship, let's look at first encounters. Before we can have a relationship with anyone, we have to take first steps. We need to learn how to pitch and catch the simplest of messages with them.

The first steps we take to build a relationship are greetings and small talk. This may seem a trivial thing, but small talk is vital. A good conversation must move beyond it, but we need to start somewhere. Greetings and small talk have little to do with sharing information. Instead, saying hello and asking about others' welfare show people respect.

## THE ART OF SMALL TALK

We greet people with our bodies before we say a word. In most instances, we should stand when we greet someone and turn our body toward him or her. We should look the person in the eye but neither stare nor linger. Lingering can seem either aggressive or flirtatious.

Say hello in a form suitable to your relationship and the person's status. Whatever form of greeting you use, be respectful. Don't overdo it, though. "Greetings, O blest and beneficent Mother, who did give me birth!" Overdoing a greeting can turn respect into a caricature of itself. It can come across as insincere, even *disrespectful*.

Greeting our mother is one thing. What if we haven't met our conversation partner? If we haven't, then we need an introduction. Some situations call for someone else to introduce us. This becomes important when meeting someone much higher in social status.<sup>5</sup> In most situations, introducing *ourselves* is what's called for. Take the lead. "Hello, I'm Charlotte, and your name is?"

Once a conversation gets going, don't become its focus. Ask questions that draw the other person out. Ask about the event where you are or the activity you're both doing. Or about the weather. Or what's for lunch. For purposes of small talk, keep the topics light. Don't dive into religious beliefs or political affiliation. If it's culturally appropriate, ask questions



about the person's family and kids. Pay attention to his reactions. We'll learn about facial expressions later in this chapter.

The goal of greetings and small talk is simple. Discover your conversation partner with no other agenda. We want to communicate that we respect and appreciate the other person as a human being.

Be prepared to share about yourself, as well. What makes you tick? What makes you different? What makes you *you*? Remember not to bask in the spotlight, though. Practice sharing the "essence of you" in less than 30 seconds. Listen for ways to connect your story to that of your conversation partner. Connections will arise in the natural back and forth of conversation. Don't force it, and don't play a game of one-upmanship. "It's great how you won the 'Best Memo Writer in the Office' award last week. Reminds me of the time I won the Nobel Prize in Literature."

Whether at a friend's party or in the church lobby, we should be ready to introduce ourselves. We should be ready to introduce others to one another, as well. Those who connect with others live happier, more successful lives than those who don't. Studies in the social sciences bear this out.<sup>6</sup>

When introducing people to one another, we should follow two simple guidelines.<sup>7</sup> One, address the person with higher social status first. Who has the higher social status is often clear. We think of an adult as having a higher social status than a child. A CEO has higher standing than a new employee. Suppose we're introducing our governor to the president of the company we work for. We address the governor first and give her information about our company's president. "Governor Jenkins, I'd like to introduce the president of VitaTek, Dr. Surinder Singh."

The second guideline addresses the introduction of peers. This sort of introduction is more complicated than it seems. We'll summarize with a couple of common situations.

How do we introduce one high school friend to another? That depends on our relationship with the two. Let's say we've known Kate for years, but we met Amir only last month. "Kate, I'd like you to meet Amir. He just moved here from Egypt." This pattern applies to other situations, too, like introducing someone new onto a team or into a club. "Hey, everyone! This is Caleb. He'll be filling in at first base for a while."

What if we're introducing Mr. Smith to Mr. Jones? Both are young dads in our church, and we know them both well. If our family sits closer to the Jones family, we might connect the men this way. "Good morning, Mr. Jones. Have you met Mr. Smith? Seems you both work in the same industry. If you have a few minutes, I'll introduce you." (The two men can exchange their first names as they wish.) We'll have more to say about introductions in a later chapter.

## HOW TO READ EMOTIONS

Now we're in a conversation. How can we better read the nonverbal signals our conversation partner sends us? Many researchers have carried on Erickson's work on reading people's emotions.

Paul Ekman may be foremost among them. For decades, psychologists had assumed that our body language depended on our culture. Ekman's research surprised everyone. He proved that humans' emotional expressions are transcultural because hardwired into the brain. Ekman studied people in indigenous tribes and non-Western cultures. He discovered that they express emotions in similar ways to Westerners.

Because emotional expressions are hardwired, we express them on our faces as we feel them. As we mature, we gain the ability to control our expressions, to mask ourselves and our intentions. Still, there's a split second between our feeling of an emotion and our decision to hide or control it.

In that split second, our bodies *begin* to express that emotion. Ekman calls these emotional leaks *microexpressions*. He's trained law enforcement and government professionals to read them. By reading them, it's possible to discover when people are covering something up. The TV series *Lie to Me* dramatizes how Ekman's work can apply to law enforcement. Tim Roth's character, Cal Lightman, is based on him.

Ekman made another surprising discovery. When people make the face that fits an emotion, they feel that emotion. That is, emotional expressions can work from the outside in, too. We can adjust our bodies to prompt ourselves to feel a certain way.

## SIX BASIC EMOTIONS

Ekman found that the human face expresses six basic emotions. They are surprise, fear, disgust, anger, sadness, and happiness.<sup>8</sup> Let's learn how our faces reveal each of these emotions. Doing so will help us better understand the feelings of others. When we better understand others' feelings, we can communicate with them better.

When someone experiences surprise, her eyelids open wider. Her forehead crinkles upward, lifting the eyebrows. The effect of this is that the field of vision widens. The lips and teeth open but without tensing the area around the mouth. This is often accompanied by a quick inhalation.

Take a look at the figure below. Photo A shows a woman with her face in a neutral expression. Photo B shows surprise.



We should note a difference between slight surprise (A below) and extreme surprise (B below). Study the facial changes in the more extreme expression. Recognizing them will help you detect surprise's smaller facial forms, its microexpressions.



A fearful face can resemble a surprised face. The two expressions can combine sometimes, too. Still, fear and surprise aren't the same emotion, and their expressions are distinct.

*A Rhetoric of Love* explores the art of effective, persuasive, winsome communication. It stands in a tradition that stretches back to Aristotle and other Greek and Roman teachers. It stands in that classical tradition, but it departs from it, too. *A Rhetoric of Love* gives practical guidance for a Christian rhetoric. It shows the virtue and power of love in our communication with others.

The myth is that love is fragile and fleeting. The truth is love is strong and resilient. *A Rhetoric of Love*, vol. 2, is an important book to remind everyone of their inner strength and character. The timing of this book is perfect even though its principles are timeless.

**JOHN LIVESAY**

TEDx speaker; author of *Better Selling Through Storytelling*

I've spent a career teaching others the art and science of world-class communications. Within that terrain, there's always been a problem. Rhetoric is a vital pillar of effective communication, but I've yet to come across a resource that really makes this topic both practical and accessible to the aspiring communicator. Collender's book finally assembles all the pieces of the puzzle. Its extraordinary breadth will encompass virtually any "use case." Whatever your interest in communication, and rhetoric specifically, this book will meet those needs. You will really be able to *do* something with what you learn here.

**TIM POLLARD**

CEO, Oratium; author of *The Compelling Communicator*

