

FOUNDATIONS

Spotlight on Communication

Foundations does not examine every aspect of the curriculum in detail. The cover book does, however, devote several chapters to those subject areas that focus on communication skills and attitudes.



Relationships cannot thrive without healthy communication.

We communicate with one another through the literature we read, and in the things we share through our own written and spoken words. In a curriculum crammed with many other exciting and interesting things to learn, Christian Education has strong reasons for highlighting those subjects that help students become good communicators. An illustration from recent history may help explain why the developers of *Foundations* chose this path.

In the early 1990s people were talking about an emerging new digital innovation that could be used as a medium to deliver data quickly and inexpensively. The technical name was the *WorldWideWeb* (*www.* for short). Buzz words like *the internet*, *online*, and *cyberspace* made us feel current and a little *hip*. Most of us quickly learned how to email our friends or surf the web. Folks involved in commerce were especially excited. Many were predicting unheard-of returns on the marketing dollars being invested in slick online websites. But the mid-90s came and went with online sales remaining spotty and sluggish. Those who once saw a bright future in internet sales began to back away from the web, returning to the tried-and-true mass-marketing ploys of the past.

Then, in 1999, four marketing geniuses joined forces in a collaborative study to find out why a media as powerful as the internet was such a marketing bust. The results of their study were published in an obscure book with the unlikely title, "The Cluetrain Manifesto." Chapter four of the book compared *en masse* marketing strategies designed for radio and television (both mass markets) with the marketplaces of ancient Greece, Egypt, or Rome. Radio and television appealed to a universal marketplace. In this medium, the return on investment can only pay off if the product can be sold in volume. Advertising on TV or radio amounts to a one-dimensional pitch; there is no dialog. You can't talk back to a television or a radio. Anyone who lived during the second half of the last century has been immersed in mass-media advertising visa-vie radio and television. We assumed the internet was just another (more advanced) technological development in a succession of technological breakthroughs tailor-made for mass-media marketing. But when the four experts looked at how commerce was conducted in ancient marketplaces, they saw something very different. People haggled over prices, or weights and measures. They asked questions. They connected with other consumers to learn more about a certain vendor and his produce. Simply put, the commercial success of the ancient marketplace revolved around personal conversation.

This discovery quickly led our four experts to also realize that the internet has the remarkable capacity to actually facilitate conversation, instead of stifling it. And, in five words, that is exactly what chapter four said: “The marketplace is a conversation.” Four years later Facebook (and a host of similar networking sites) exploded on the internet. *Cluetrain* changed the way we think about communication.

Christian education understands the *Cluetrain* principle. It is impossible to follow an obscure rabbi named Jesus through the ancient streets of Nazareth, Capernaum, Bethsaida, or Jerusalem and fail to notice his marketplace strategy. He was clearly into personal conversation. True, every now and then he went on a speaking excursion to address the masses, but the bread and butter of his ministry was to seek people out to talk.

The creators of *Foundations* were committed to helping parents understand how important healthy personal communication attitudes and skills are. We felt they should know why conversational communication needs to be featured in the educational package of every child. The next generation needs to be able to effectively communicate Jesus with families, friends, and the many people they will connect with during their lifetime. For most students, the ability to participate in ordinary conversation will be their primary vehicle for giving voice to their faith.

[Visit the *Foundations* website](#) to learn more.

[Purchase *Foundations* from NPH.](#)