

Who You Are Determines How You Speak

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[0 : 00] Would you open up your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 4, Ephesians chapter 4, as you're turning there. This morning we've got to take stock, we've got to take stock of our talk.

So if you would open up to Ephesians chapter 4, we're going to look at verses 29 and 30, and let me read that for us all. This is God's Word.

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Oh God, make this stick in our hearts, and change your speech.

Amen. Taking stock. If you've been in retail, you know what it means to take stock, to do some inventory.

[1 : 21] There's usually a time during the year, maybe set times, when a business will check to make sure that its inventory on the shelves actually reflects the inventory that's showing up in their computer program, just to make sure that there is like real stuff on the shelves.

Checking the stock. Taking stock of your inventory. And this morning we're going to take stock of our talk. Take stock of what we say.

Take inventory of what we're taking off the shelves of our heart and sending out the front door of our mouths. We've got to take stock of what we say.

Words matter. They really do. Now, as soon as I start talking this way, I'm guessing some of you may have a little nagging feeling going on in your heart, because you already know what we're going to find when we do some inventory of our talk.

It goes something like this. We know that out of our one mouth, we bless and we curse. James 3.

[2 : 43] We know that with the same lips, we build up people and we tear down people. Out of the same lips. We know that with the same tongue, we do good for people and we do harm to people.

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me. It's not true. Words matter. And they do hurt.

I mean, we've all watched the impact as hurtful words leave our lips and they make contact with someone we love.

We see the effect, don't we? Words matter. What we say really does matter to God. Our speech must reflect who God has now made us to be in Christ.

We're new people with new speech. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, God's radically changed who we are. We are no longer dead to God.

[3 : 54] We are no longer dead to God. But because of what Christ has done on our behalf, we are alive to God. And we can speak now in new ways. When Jesus claimed us as his own, when he paid for us with his own blood, something radical happened.

He made a claim on every aspect of our lives. Ephesians 1 talks about us being sealed in the spirit.

The Holy Spirit is like a stamp God places on us. And God says, you are now mine, my property.

And I've purposed you for holiness. And I've positioned you to do good to your brothers and sisters in Christ.

God has done a work in us. And now he claims every word that comes out of our mouth.

He wants it for himself. For his purposes. For the good of his people. It's a big claim.

[5 : 02] God made us alive in Christ so that we could speak to one another in a way that's marked by true righteousness and holiness to the building up of the body of Christ. God's got purpose for our speech.

Who you are determines how you live. And who you are determines every word that comes out of your mouth. Our new life in Christ results in a new way of speaking.

So in verses 29 and 30 here, we are commanded by God. We're commanded by God to put something old off.

And then to put something new on. And then he actually tells us why. So this morning, three points to the sermon. We must say no to old corrupt talk.

The second point is we must say yes to new gracious, building up, edifying speech. And then the third thing I want you to see is the reason why.

[6 : 10] And it is profound. I can't believe it's in my Bible. So let's look at number one. We must say no to corrupt talk.

We've got to stop talking a certain way. See that in verse 29? Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths.

You can't let it out. So we've got to understand what's meant by corrupting, don't we? What does the Apostle Paul mean by that? Well, the word corrupting is actually used in the New Testament in different places.

And the other place it shows up is in Matthew chapter 12, when Jesus is speaking. And instead of using the word corrupting, he uses the word bad. He says it's like this.

A bad tree produces bad fruit. And he goes on to say, but a good tree produces good fruit. And then he goes on to say in verse 34, out of the abundance of one's heart, the mouth speaks.

[7 : 12] And so what Jesus is brilliantly doing in Matthew 12 is making the relationship, making the connection between your heart and your mouth.

Out of your heart you speak. And what Jesus is saying in 12:33 is, a decaying tree produces rotten fruit. A healthy tree produces nourishing fruit.

And so this word corrupting has a negative connotation to it. In antiquity, the word was used of rotting fish.

My kids and I came across a rotting salmon on the Pike River a couple years ago. It was disgusting. Virtually useless. Couldn't do anything about it.

Just walk around it. Don't smell. Corrupting. The overriding sense of this word is that it's unhealthy. It's unwholesome.

[8 : 22] Even harmful. Even destructive. And what God is saying here is very, very clear.

We are not to let any of that kind of speech come out of our mouths. We are not to speak in ways that injure others.

That have ill effects on others. Second thing I'd like you to notice is the scope of the command. The emphasis here is total incomplete.

God is saying to us, let none of it come out of your mouth. None of it. You've got to stop speaking this way. It is a clear prohibition by God to us, His people.

Now, I'm guessing you're starting to wonder, well, what kind of talk are we talking about? What is, what are we actually, what kind of talk? Well, let me try to help.

[9 : 23] This is by no means exhaustive. What is corrupting talk? Well, lying is corrupt talk. And the Apostle Paul has already talked about that in chapter 4, verse 25.

Don't let any falsehood. Don't spin the truth. Speak truthfully to one another. And so, lying is destructive. But there's other kinds of corrupt talk as well.

There's threatening speech. Intimidating speech. You use your words to strike fear into people.

Now, parents, it is possible for you to motivate your children with threatening speech.

You threaten harm. Now, there's a difference between helping your children think in terms of reaping and sowing. There's a difference in helping your children think in terms of consequences to their behavior.

That if you keep doing this, sweet one, you're going to be disciplined for it, for your good. But there's another way of using your speech to threaten. To strike fear into someone.

[10 : 37] To force behavior with your words. And God says, that's corrupt talk. Don't speak that way to your children. There's other kinds of speech.

There is complaining speech. Grumbling. The people of Israel grumbled when they were in the wilderness. And it made God mad. Philippians 2:14.

We are told to do everything without grumbling and questioning. Without grumbling and complaining. At the heart of a complaining speech is an ungrateful, ungrateful heart.

And then there's gossip. The spreading of rumors. Rumors. Now a rumor is an unconfirmed account of someone else. And what gossips do is they spread rumors about people.

Oftentimes to someone's injury. And we as God's people are not to gossip. We are not to spread rumors. We're to stop rumors.

[11 : 45] We're not to be gossips. We're not to slander. Slander is actually a kind of lying. It's maliciously speaking untruths about someone else to hurt them.

Oftentimes it is a slanderous rumor. I've been slandered against. It's not easy. And then there's being vulgar.

Oftentimes cussing is just vulgar. You get shaken up. You get angry. It's like a can of cuss. You shake up and you just want to crack open.

Oftentimes it's graphic. Oftentimes it kind of makes dirty those people who hear. It's corrupt talk. And God says, no more. Sarcasm. Sarcasm is a kind of critical speech with a smile.

[12 : 53] It is a sting with a laugh. Do you know what etymology is? Etymology is the study of words.

The etymology of the word sarcasm is worth noting. Sarcasm at the root of it has a Greek word, sarx, which means flesh.

And what sarcasm had as its original meaning was to tear the flesh off the bone. To rip apart. It's a kind of language that doesn't build up, but tears apart.

It's a corrupt kind of language. We got to be careful. There's harsh talk when we're rude with other people.

When we are short and abrupt. Oftentimes that comes out of an impatient heart. Not easy to hear, is it?

[13 : 57] You should try writing these sermons. It's very convicting. All week long. Do you know what our words reveal?

Our words reveal our hearts. They also reveal our ongoing need for our Savior. We're in constant need of Jesus.

Isn't it good news that our God, by His Spirit, has sealed us for the day of redemption? He's marked us as His own.

We belong to Him. Even though we may speak some trash from time to time. He loves us no less. Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Not even corrupt talk. Isn't that good news? Sobering, but good news. I hope you understand what God is commanding us this morning.

[15 : 01] We are not to speak a certain way. It's the old way of living. It's the former manner of self. It's not who we are anymore.

Our new life in Christ results in a new way of speaking. So now let's turn there.

We've looked at the old. Let's put it off. Now let's see the kind of speech that God is calling us to.

Ephesians 4.29 says this. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths. But only such is good for building up as fits the occasion.

Brothers and sisters, don't forget who you are. You've been saved by Jesus. You belong to Him. You're a new creation in Christ. And He calls you to a new way of speaking.

[15 : 58] So the question becomes, how do we speak to one another? How do we speak to one another in a way that's marked different in our old way of being?

Well, it boils down to this. We need to be careful how we talk. We need to choose our words very carefully. This is where it's helpful to have James 1 in your back pocket.

James says, be quick to listen and slow to speak. Because as we are quick to listen, we're actually going to be able to speak better.

And so we've got three things I want to point you to that are intended to help us speak well. We need to choose the right words.

We need to be sure of the right motive. And then we have to speak these words at just the right time. So choosing the right words, having the right motive, and speaking at the right time and I can point you to your Bible so you can see it all.

[17 : 12] So speaking the right words. Do you see the word good in verse 29? Let no corrupting talk come out of your words, but only as is good. Good. Speaking of the quality of words with which we speak.

It stands in sharp contrast to the corrupt words that we're no longer to use. These words that God is calling us to choose carefully and to speak at just the right time.

They're good words. They're true words. They're wholesome words. They're nourishing words. Remember Jesus in Matthew 12?

Bad trees produce bad fruit. Decaying trees produce rotten fruit. Good trees produce good fruit. Healthy trees produce nourishing fruit.

And God, by His Spirit, has given you new life in your heart. He's given you a new heart. And here's what God the Spirit is seeking to do through us. This is amazing.

[18 : 16] God the Holy Spirit is seeking to help us pick our words well in order to build the church up. God's about it.

Jesus is seeking to grow His body. The Holy Spirit wants us to pick our words well. So we've got to be asking the question, is this the right word?

Is this true? Is this wholesome? Is it going to build? So we need to pick our words rightly.

And then we've got to make sure we have the right motive. And so look at back in verse 29. We read this. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up. We're to choose words that are to build one another up. That little phrase for building up gets at motive.

[19 : 25] Why we speak. Why we say what we do. And now in Christ, we speak for the benefit of others.

For the building up of others. We no longer take with our speech. We give grace with our speech. That's what Jesus is calling us to. In other words, we love each other with our words.

Our new life in Christ results in a new way of speaking. We choose good words and we purpose them. We speak them in love to build others up.

We don't speak words that are unloving. It's possible to speak true words in an unloving way. It's kind of pulling the pin on the truth grenade and rolling it in and kind of taking cover.

We don't necessarily mean it to build up. We need to be sure our motive is one of love. So the question that we need to be asking ourselves as we're picking our words carefully is, am I going to say this to build this person up?

[20 : 43] Or am I going to say this to tear them down? If it's to tear them down, don't say it. So we've looked at picking the right words.

We've run a motive check. And we'll make sure we're doing this for the right reasons. And the last thing I want you to see is, we've got to speak these things at just the right time.

You see the little phrase, as fits the occasion? Proverbs 25, 11, a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver. Now, I don't really get all that goes into apples of gold and setting of silver. But I do know this. It's got to be good because it's gold and silver. Right? Right. And what the writer of Proverbs is saying is, a word that is spoken at just the right time, at just the right time, is valuable. It's good. It edifies. What we're talking about is choosing our words to fit a need.

[21 : 50] Speaking a well-placed word. I've been on the receiving end of this. And it is just blessing to my soul. We're to speak into each other's lives in order to build each other up.

And we need to know what we're speaking into. We need to be listeners before we speak. We're to love one another with our words.

Do you like jigsaw puzzles? Our family does jigsaw puzzles from time to time. And I love it when I finally find that missing piece.

Do you know what I'm talking about? Maybe you've got this little corner down on the left and you've got this one piece missing. And for like 10 minutes, you've been kind of going through the remainder pieces.

And you're like, this doesn't fit. This doesn't fit. This doesn't fit. And finally, you get one that doesn't fit initially. And then you move it and it's like, click.

[23 : 00] A perfect fit. Complete. Satisfying. It's a good fit. The Holy Spirit is seeking to use us in each other's lives to speak words, good words, to love each other with our words at just the right time.

To click. To fit. To complete. To build. To bless. As fits the occasion.

So we've got to be asking this question. Is this word good? Am I loving with this word? Does it fit? Does it fit? So we have a brother who's grieving.

We want to pick words that are going to comfort that person. We have someone who's discouraged. We want to use words to give courage to that person.

Someone who's overwhelmed or anxious. Oftentimes it's a word that needs to calm that person. Confused. We speak words of clarity. Sin.

[24 : 10] We speak words of correction. A word of correction is oftentimes the most loving thing you can do for somebody. Someone stuck. You speak a word that compels them.

Now, when it comes to words, there is no substitute for God's word. God's word comforts. God's word encourages.

It calms. It clarifies. It corrects. It compels. It compels. I hope you see what the Holy Spirit is seeking to do among us. The Holy Spirit is seeking to help us pick the right words with the right motive and speak them at just the right time for the building up of our body, for the health of our church.

this is a work the spirit of God is doing among us he's in it we get a little taste of that back in Ephesians 4 5 4 15 and 16 rather speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head into Christ from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped when each part is working properly and speaking well makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love so what's at stake here is the ongoing health of our church the goodness of our church the well-being of our church and so we need to choose the right words we need to choose them and speak them with the right motive at the right time to build the body to love one another with our words our new life in Christ results in a new way of speaking that builds up the body of Christ now can I just help you think a little bit here imagine a Sunday morning here at the building pockets of people before the service after the service and you know what they're they're purposing to do to use their words to build one another up to listen well to encourage with their words imagine our Wednesday night Bible studies people small groups of people gathering eager to bless with their lips friends meeting over coffee seeking to bless husbands and wives in marriage using their words to build parents building their children children building their parents and a special word to siblings brothers and sisters in the room did you know that God wants you to use your words to bless your brothers and sisters we're to love one another with our words we're to say yes to a new way of speaking well we've looked at what we need to put off we've looked at what we need to put on now let's look at the reason why and we see that in verse 30 the apostle Paul has already been making a case that we're to speak this new way because of who we are now we're new people and we speak a new way he's also made the case that we're to use our words for the benefit of others to bless others for the building up of others but what you need to see here is what he says in verse 30 he says this and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you've been sealed for the day of redemption do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God the Holy Spirit of course is the third person of the Trinity he is a person and what we've learned from Ephesians already is that the moment that we believe the Holy Spirit came in and dwelt us he sealed us as God's property and he's purposed us to be holy and he's positioned us to be grace to our brothers and sisters we learn from Ephesians 2 22 that the new temple of God is the people of God and God by his spirit dwells among us the spirit of God lives among us he dwells among us God personally dwells in our midst to do us good to build us up as as a people to conform us to the image of Christ to mature us and so when we read that word grieve we've got to realize the weight of it it might surprise you the thought of grieving God that we can grieve God we can we can grieve him just make sure let's make sure what we understand by that word grieve now I'm guessing you hear the word grieve and you think of a loved one dying and the heartache involved with that the kind of grief that we're talking about here is kind of in the same ballpark but it's a little different let me try to illustrate it let's say that you have a relative who you love dearly and you get word that this relative has been making decisions that are foolish and harmful to your loved one how would you receive that?

[29 : 58] how would you respond to that? you'd be grieved you'd be sad and the reason why you'd be sad is this person whom you love is making decisions that are hurtful to themselves they're denying themselves good our grief comes from wanting good for someone else and the grief that we're reading about here in Ephesians 4.30 is a grief that comes from the Holy Spirit wanting good for his people the Holy Spirit wants good for us he's actively at work in our midst seeking to build us up with each other's words so when we use words that are not good but corrupt when we use words that are not loving but selfish when we use words that are not timely but careless the Holy Spirit's grieved the Holy Spirit is grieved because we are denying ourselves a good that he wants for us our corrupt talk is frustrating the work of the Spirit in the midst do you see how that would grieve him?

so instead of grieving the Spirit by speaking hurtful words God is calling us here to please the Spirit to be used by the Spirit by picking the right words making sure we're speaking them in love and then speaking them at just the right time the Spirit dwells in our midst for our good and we're not to grieve him with our words our new life in Christ results in a new way of speaking that is ultimately used by the Spirit of God himself to unite us and to build us up as a church so this morning and maybe for the balance of this week will you take stock of your talk?

will you pay attention to how you speak to others? and I'm guessing your response will be the same as mine that as you become aware of how you speak to others you're going to find yourself crying out to Jesus over and over and over again asking him to purify your speech so that we can speak to one another in a way that builds up let me pray for us and we'll sing God you speak these commands to us for our good and so God would you do us good Father would you by your Spirit refine us refine our speech to make our speech more like Jesus with a Jesus effect to build up your people

God I do pray that if there are there's conviction going on in the room right now God thank you for that thank you for helping us see our sin and what needs to change God would you transform us would you help us to put off the old way of talking and put on the new way of talking for the glory of your name Amen