

# Gracious Words from Gracious People

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] If you have your Bibles, turn to Ephesians chapter number four. Ephesians chapter number four. And while you turn there, I want to tell you a quick story about a man. His name was Samuel Clemens. You may know him better as Mark Twain.
- One day, he was courting a woman, the woman he'd eventually marry. And he didn't go to church, but he decided he was going to go to church because if the woman you wanted to marry went to church, you went to church back then. That's just how it worked. And that's what he did.
- He went to church, and he attended a Sunday morning service. He heard the message preached. He heard the sermon. And he meets the pastor at the door afterwards, and he tells him, he says, I have a book at home that says everything that you just said.
- Well, the pastor, being rather offended, said, sir, I'd let you know I did not plagiarize this sermon. I did not copy this. He's like, this was all original. You know, I've made this myself. Mr. Clemens says, wait till tomorrow.
- He leaves. The next day, the preacher gets a package shipped to him. He opens it up, and inside is a dictionary. He opens up the dictionary, and Mark Twain writes words, just words. That's all we have is words, just words.
- [ 0 : 5 5 ] He was doing that to kind of make fun of the preacher, saying everything he said was just empty words. But as Christians and believers, never mind you, our words are more than just words. It's pretty neat that one of the biggest distinctors or things that made Jesus unique or distinct at the time was his words.
- You read Luke chapter 4. It says, by the time Jesus shows up, it says, people are marveling at the gracious words that proceed out of his mouth. Never spake a man like this. You know, they were fascinated at the words of Jesus, and as Christians and believers and people who'd say we follow Jesus, follow his example, God's grace should flavor our words.
- It should affect us here. Ephesians 3 is really cool. Ephesians as a whole is a really neat book. It's written to the churches in Ephesus. If you know anything about this city, Ephesus is the third largest city in the Roman Empire.
- So think of it like our Chicago, third largest city. It's pretty big. It's metropolitan. It has a lot of people coming in and out of it. If you read Acts 19, it's chock full of idolatry. But despite all the terrible, rotten things there, God leaves the church.
- And what's really cool is in the midst of this rotten culture in this idolatrous city, that super metropolitan, God leaves the church. And what does Paul instruct this church in regards to?
- [ 2 : 0 9 ] Their words. Words matter. We're going to find that out this morning or this afternoon. Words matter. Jesus' speech was distinctly gracious and truthful. As people have been saved by his grace, our words should be gracious too.
- Something that's really cool is I like talking to Wesley Mize. He's like, I know he's like a 45-year-old man in a little kid's body. He's awesome. And I was talking to Wesley Mize. And I said, Wesley, Wesley was making coffee. Wesley said, I like to make coffee.

And I said, well, Wesley, what's your favorite way to make coffee? He says, I just love a French press that sits for about five minutes. And I was like, what? You know what I mean? And it took me a second. I realized something. That was Ben Mize.

Wesley talked like that because he spent time with his father. And as we Christians, believers have spent time with Jesus, our words ought to sound a whole lot like it. Grace is transformational. I think Bo preached on it this morning from Ephesians chapter 2.

But Ephesians 2.10 is going to tell us that we are created under good works in Christ Jesus. The gospel changes things. Put shortly, new creatures chirp differently. We're made different. Ephesians 1.3.

[ 3 : 09 ] 1 through 3 tell us that Jesus has done so many great things. So the book starts out. And Brother John, I thought you'd like this quote. A text without context is just pretext. And if we don't get the full context of Ephesians 1 through 3, we won't really understand the richness of chapter number 4.

So Ephesians, Paul has spent this time writing to the church, telling them all the great things that God sees about them. How they've been forgiven. How they've been quick. And how they've been redeemed and restored.

And how God has saved them. What the blood of Jesus unlocks. The unity in the spirit. And it's sort of all of these heavenly, somewhat intangible descriptors. They're all things that are true.

Things that are right. Things that are not. That are very true for the life of the Christian. But they're things that aren't necessarily physical. But suddenly Paul shifts gears in chapters 4 through 6. He takes it from the clouds to the concrete.

It comes down to the here and now. How does this truth impact our life? And then he starts talking about the things we should do. So when you go from chapter 3 to chapter 4, you hear a lot of put on, put off.

[ 4 : 10 ] Do this. Do that. It becomes very imperative. It's chock full of do this. Do this. Do this. Don't do this. Stop this. Become this. You are this. It's full of things that we can do right here, right now. And it's in the midst of this that it's awesome that God decided to fill this up with things about our speech.

Let's read Ephesians chapter 4. We'll start in verse number 17. Verse number, my apologies. We'll start in verse number 27. Neither give place of the devil. Let him that's still no more.

But rather let him labor, working with his hands the things which is good that he may have to give him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to use to the edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor, evil speaking, be put away from you with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even for Christ's sake hath God forgiven you.

What's really neat about this is we get the privilege to live in the metro Atlanta area. And in the metro Atlanta area, you get a lot of people who are very different. It's a very transitive area.

[ 5 : 18 ] And I think it's neat because we live in a place in which there's a lot of different ideas and thoughts, some wrong, some right. And as people come in and out of our lives, and as we see our culture and our country change and different issues and things pop up, how do we address them?

What is our methodology or what's the way we should address people? I think about working with FCA. I hear some kids talk about certain things, and I'm like, I've never even thought of that before.

I didn't know that was an issue. I couldn't even have dreamt this up that you have to deal with this. What's the response we should have to this? It's a gracious response. And as we engage and deal with people who come into our lives who have questions and issues and battles and different things they're going through and struggle with, we need gracious words.

What does that look like? Let's break this down here. Verse number 25. Wherefore, put away lying, speaking every man truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

The first thing is gracious communication, communication that is informed by Jesus, communication from Christians, communication from believers should be honest communication. It should be communication that is truth-filled and truthful.

[ 6 : 24 ] We are to lay aside falsehood. It's pretty neat. He says it outright here for us. Wherefore, put away lying. Put away things that are not true. Put away things that, whether they be things you've thought up, whether they be things that you've heard, if it's not true, put them away.

And this put away quite literally means take it off. Get rid of it. Don't keep it anymore. But rather, in verse 25, Paul lets us know that we should replace lying, falsehood, we should replace it with truth.

We should substitute lying and falsehood with truth. Believers belong to the truth. That's so incredible. That's such a wonderful reminder that as he starts off this list of things with, as a Christian and believer, lies don't have any place in our communication.

Better to say this. False speech isn't gracious speech. It may not even be a lie that's malign. It may be a lie, which, on a funny example, hey, do I have anything in my teeth? You see something in the teeth, you're like, no, man, you don't have anything in your teeth.

Right? It's easier not to say the truth. That is not gracious communication. We should lay aside falsehood. We belong to the truth. As John 8, 44 is going to tell us, the truth ultimately sets us free.

[ 7 : 23 ] Truth is a great thing. And where do we go to for truth? That's God's word. If our speech doesn't sound like the word of God, maybe we should examine how truthful it is. God's word is true, and our speech should sound a whole lot like his word.

We should replace falsehood with truth. But also, we are to communicate honestly with everyone. Notice it says, put away lying, speaking every man truth with his neighbor. As we find out in Luke 17 and 18, our neighbor is just those around us.

We should be people who proclaim the truth to those near us. Whether that be co-worker, colleagues, friends, family members, whatever it is, we should be people who share the truth and not be afraid to do it with our neighbors. And just a side note, it's really easy because of the society we live in, or maybe the time, or maybe just election season, whatever it is, it's really easy to want to use the truth or the fact we know what's right as a weapon, right?

Like, weaponize it. But what's really neat about truth or God's word is, the same word that's called a sword and a hammer, we're also told to comfort one another with. You know, the truth isn't a weapon. I mean, it is a weapon, but it's more than a weapon.

It's a weapon that comforts. It's a weapon that brings people to the Lord. It's a weapon that's told we're supposed to unify with it. It's more than divisive. We shouldn't use truth divisively. Some Christians seem we can focus on sharing the truth more than sharing love.

[ 8 : 37 ] Paul tells us in Ephesians 4, 15, he's going to tell us we should speak the truth in love. Let us grow in every way to him which is the head of Christ. When our speech contains both truth and love, we're living as a mature believer.

Basically, before we speak, we should have two posted up in our life, one that's truth and one that's love, and everything that's between the two is in game. If we're speaking and we're speaking the truth out of malice, that is not loving, and if we're just being loving, not sharing the truth, that is not truthful and it sits on us.

There is a balance we should maintain, and that should be truth and love. Maybe we communicate truthfully and lovingly. That means this. Sometimes you can have something to say that's true, but you don't have it in a loving manner to say.

Maybe we should wait to say it. Sometimes we have the truth, and we know what's right, and we know that this person's wrong, but if we don't say it in the right way, it is not obedient. And as we're going to find out later in this chapter, that grieves the Spirit of God.

He does not like that. Using the truth, it should be mixed and mingled with love. Jesus was a perfect example of it. He was able to look at that woman caught in adultery and say, go and sin no more, while also being as loving as possible.

[ 9 : 34 ] It's amazing. We should be people who speak the truth in love with those around us. But also, God's grace also creates some wholesome communication. It creates honest communication. It creates wholesome communication.

We are to avoid talk that the Bible will call rotten, bad, not good. Let's look at what the Bible says here. Verse number 29. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.

That term corrupt there quite literally does mean bad, foul. You could translate it as rotten, not good. And the Bible says, let that communication not proceed out of our mouth. We shouldn't speak words that are like that.

We are to avoid talk that is bad, rotten, harmful. Let me say this. We are to avoid talk that is not good for those that hear it. We are to avoid talk that is bad for those that hear it. We are to avoid talk that is bad for the people we are talking about.

We should avoid it. It shouldn't be in our mouth. If we are people who have a real meeting, fellowship, relationship with Jesus Christ, and our life is informed by grace, this talk and communication shouldn't even come out of our mouth.

[ 10 : 33 ] And what's really neat about that is the Bible is going to let us know that there is a direct highway between our mouth and our hearts. We want to fix our mouth. We want to fix the things we say. We want to speak words that are gracious, words that edify, words that do good, words that we could say make Jesus happy.

We should have a heart full of truth, a heart full of what God would have us to have a heart full of, because what comes out of our mouth ultimately is the meditations of our heart.

The Bible says it in Luke 6, verse 44, if we could read that together. Luke 6, 44, this is what the Bible is going to tell us. It's going to read, for every tree is known by, Luke 6, 44, every tree is known by its own fruit, for the thorns men do, it's the wrong verse.

Well, out of the heart, that's what we speak. What's meditative, what's going on in our heart, we speak. Psalm 144, the first three chapters mention that. I can use another cross reference there. But out of the heart, that's what we're going to speak ultimately.

But also, we're to avoid talk that is dishonest, we're to avoid talk, we're to create talk that is wholesome, avoid rotten and bad talk. But also, notice that it's going to say in the next couple of verses here, we're to avoid corrupt communication, we're to have communication that edifies and ministers.

[ 11 : 42 ] But also notice in verse 31, this is another kind of speak it tells us to avoid here. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you all with malice.

Evil speaking here, yes, I mean, that seems like a very easy definition, but evil speaking, it's a much richer term than that. That can mean gossip, that can mean words that are spoken poorly about people, that can mean words that are not holy, and we are told to put that away, notice with all malice, with anger, with like the fervent rejection, we're to put that away.

We rather were to avoid it, get rid of it, and replace harmful words with good words. He tells us, let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but in the same verse, we find out that we'll let good, that which is good come out of our mouth, the things that edify, the things that build up, the things that help.

It's so easy, especially in the Christian world, the Christian life, to say, pray for sister so-and-so because she's going through this, this, and this, and this, and it's not a real prayer request. We're to put that away. It's so easy to say something that we don't know is true.

We're to put that away. We're to rather replace it with things that are good, things that are gentle, and it's the Bible that's going to tell us in a few verses, things that edify, build up, and help. Corruption from the lips only means that there's corruption in our heart.

[ 12 : 56 ] If we want to change the way we speak, we want God to change the way we speak. We want to transform the way we speak. One, it takes a real encounter with Jesus Christ. Being a believer is a great start. But number two, it takes time in God's word, filling our hearts with this truth, filling our minds with this truth, and then letting God transform us from the inside out.

We need to learn that God's grace creates wholesome communication, communication that's helpful, communication that's good, communication that's right, that's holy, that sounds biblical. That's how we're to speak. But also, God's grace also creates helpful communication to the edifying.

It says, the things we speak should be to the edifying of the believer. Has anybody lived in Atlanta from like, I don't know, maybe 1990 to 2014, by a show of hands? Anybody lived in Atlanta?

I see Andrew's hand is up. He was proud. Okay, Metro Atlanta area. I'm from the state of Georgia, so Atlanta means anything 45 minutes around the city. Was anybody here for that time? Okay, thank you. More hands. Andrew, what was the place the Falcons played at a few years ago?

I know nobody will hear you. Talking about the Georgia Dome. And I don't know if you guys remember this. The Georgia Dome was replaced by something called Mercedes-Benz Stadium, which is, it's pretty, it's pretty nice. But the Georgia Dome, if you remember, they pulled, like, we watched this in high school.

[ 14 : 08 ] It was that big of a deal. They blew that thing up. They got rid of the Georgia Dome. And it was so neat that, like, thousands of people flocked to Atlanta, Georgia. We stopped my history class to watch this thing happen.

Remember the guy with the mortar bus parked in front of the camera. But we stopped to watch this happen. And we watched the building blow up. That building was demolished. And it's so easy sometimes to want to get into the demolition business, right?

We want to get into the business of taking things down because it was awesome watching that building go down. Well, as Christians, God challenges us to be different. We're in the edifying business. We're in the business of building things up, building people up, speaking words that edify.

Can I tell you that we can minister with our words? It's so neat that the method in which God left us to communicate the gospel was verbal, with our words, with our communication. Yes, that also means in your text messages, in your emails, in your non-spoken communication.

It means all of our communication. We can minister with our words. Let's read what the Bible says here. It's going to tell us here. Wherefore put away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor. So truth the thing that makes you free to those around you.

[ 15 : 11 ] He's going to say in verse number 29, let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. You know what's really cool?

This term minister grace quite literally means you can serve them grace. And can I submit to you today that you are able to show the grace of God to people and how you speak to them.

It may seem small, it may seem insignificant, but our words really carry quite a bit of weight. They really do work and we're able to minister, build up, nurture, serve, help other people with our words.

Believers, maybe we should, let's be in the business of edifying one another. Hey, I prayed for you this week. Hey, you've been on my mind this week. Hey, I think it's wonderful what God's doing in your life. Let us edify one another. But also, we're told that gracious words build up and minister.

Isn't it quite, it's pretty neat how the corrupt communication is harmful and the gracious words are helpful. It's laid out quite simply for us. We need to be people who speak words that edify, words that build up, words that are helpful.

[ 16 : 10 ] There are so many passages of scripture, I mean, you can just pick them all over the New Testament that talk about the good that our words can do. James is going to tell us that there is life and death in the tongue. 1 Thessalonians is going to tell us we should comfort one another with our words.

We are to edify, nurture, admonish, help each other with our words. But also, notice that gracious words are what build up. We minister with our words. Family, church family, believers, as we go out into the world, and we meet people.

You know what? Maybe sometimes people just need some gracious words spoken to them. It's so easy to want to find somebody who is not a believer and you want to leave Strobel's case for Christ and write, here are 15 reasons you can't deny that Jesus rose from the dead and now get saved.

Maybe sometimes we should start with Jesus loves you. Maybe we should start with God wants a relationship with you. Let us speak words that are gracious and true. Gracious words build up, truthful words set free, and may we speak from our transformed life with Jesus.

Notice after Paul gives all these instructions, he's telling us to put on this, put off that, stop this, start this, you are this, Jesus has created you to be this. Look at what he finishes in verse number 32 with.

[ 17 : 17 ] He's going to say this, and be ye kind, one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as Christ, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

It is so neat that our interactions and our words with others should be based and rooted in our relationship with Christ Jesus. We don't have to be gracious to people just because we feel like or just because it's right than new.

We're gracious to people because we have a relationship with the one who is gracious to us. We're like that servant in the story where we've been forgiven so much, at least we can do is forgive somebody else. We can be gracious in our words because Jesus has been gracious in his words to us.

May we be people whose life is seasoned and transformed with grace. You turn to Colossians 3, Colossians 3, verse number 6. It's going to tell us let your words be seasoned with grace.

The things we speak, may they be seasoned with grace. Brother John, I like the barbecue. I don't know, was Will Avery in the room? I learned barbecue. I like smoking pork. And Stephen, I learned how to make a pork rub.

[18:16] And man, when I say that changed my life, I mean it. I really mean it. And when I got my first smoker, I mean, I put anything and everything on it. And what I learned was if I took things that I didn't necessarily like, I could take a head of cabbage and if you give me enough barbecue rub and enough oak, I can make that head of cabbage taste good in my smoker.

You give me anything and if I get the barbecue rub on it, it will come out tasting better. And just as we're told to let our words be seasoned with the salt of God's grace, we should do the same exact thing in our conversations.

Hey, we can say hard things but wrapped up in the tasty candied bacon of God's grace, it comes down a lot better. We are able to communicate gracefully. and also get food together after church.

We can get barbecue tonight if you want. We're to communicate gracefully. The gospel's done so much for us. It's quite often the Bible called the word of truth, it's called the word of grace.

We are able to communicate gracefully. And here's my challenge to you. As we go out into the world, as we meet people we agree with or disagree with, as we encounter one another in the hallways of this church or out wherever God takes us, may it be people whose words are gracious.

[19:24] May it be people whose words sound and taste like Jesus's. May it be people whose words are full of God's truth but may they also be so, so gracious. It is so easy in the world we live in to want to be the one swinging this thing like a hammer.

May we be truthful and gracious as well. All because Jesus Christ has been gracious to us. Let's pray. Father God, I thank you for your goodness and your mercy. I'm thankful that you are the one who has shown us grace, given us something we did not deserve, giving us mercy, Lord.

Lord, I pray that you would help your grace and your mercy inform every area of our lives, from our hearts to our minds to our speech. Lord, I pray that in interactions you would help us be able to minister to people with our words.

I'm thankful that the gospel really works in our lives. Lord, I pray that you'd help us submit our words to you. Lord, I pray that you'd help us submit our speech to you. I pray that you'd give us wisdom in the conversation that we have.

God, I thank you for the gospel and what it's done. Thank you for your church, Lord, in your name I pray, Amen.