

SAYING GRACE...

Ephesians 4:25-29

- Our need to communicate better is obvious...
- Eg 'I know you believe you understand what you think I said, but I'm not sure you realise that what you heard is not what I meant.'
- A 1992 survey showed that communication was the second greatest challenge to marriage (after 'pray more')
- This may also apply to the church. There are sound biblical principles of communication

'Tell the truth' (25)

- Be honest with each other
- Because we are members of one body, we need to be open
- What we say affects others
- This is particularly true for married couples who are 'one flesh' (Gen 2:24)

Sometimes we speak falsely without realising it

1. Emotionally loaded language

This means words with overtones that are not necessarily truthful

Examples...

Correct

thrifty
firm
sensitive
passionate
gentle
strong
shy
friendly

Loaded

stingy
stubborn
prickly
perverted
weak
domineering
unsociable
flirtatious

2. Changing the subject

Abel: You left the iron on again last night

Mabel: You left the shed door open again

Or, *Mabel:* We need new curtains

Abel: What about new brakes for the car?

3. Exaggeration and generalisation

Mabel: Are you going to watch TV ALL night!

Abel: You women can never resist a sale.

Mabel: Men! All you ever think about is sex.

Abel: Why do you *always* leave the kitchen in such a mess...

4. Sarcasm

Mabel: Well, here he is, Mr Mel Gibson himself...

Abel: You like chocolate so much why don't you buy the whole factory?

Statements like these can be really hurtful if we are not careful.

'Be angry and do not sin' (26)

There is a place for godly anger. We should be angry about hypocrisy, poverty, injustice, cruelty etc. God's wrath is demonstrated against—

* disobedience (Ex 4:14)

* apostasy (Num 25:3)

* hypocrisy (Matt 21:12f)

'Don't end the day angry' (26)

But in personal relationships, anger must be controlled.

- 'Anger' = extreme anger, provocation.
- Always be reconciled before you sleep

Dealing with anger

- Express it— give vent to it. Not helpful.
- Repress it — pretend it's not there. Not helpful.
- Confess it — admit it and repent. Biblical and helpful.
- Suppress it — deal with it by faith. Biblical and helpful.
- Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city (Proverbs 16:32)
- But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth (Colossians 3:8)
- Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger (James 1:19)

Questions to ask—

Anger is a secondary emotion. We need to ask questions like—

- *What is the real issue?* Eg kids' homework. Am I angry because their education is suffering or because they are preventing me from watching a TV show?
- *Am I acting or reacting?* Am I being positive or negative?
- *Am I in control?* Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. Gal 5:23; Titus 2:2, 5, 6, 12. 'When we lose control of ourselves, we lose control of the situation.'
- *To what extent is it my fault?* It always takes two!
- *Am I acting in love?* John 13:34, 35. Loving like Jesus is the best antidote to anger.

- *Have I prayed it out?* 1 Corinthians 14:14. Praying with the spirit is especially helpful in releasing angry tensions and attitudes.
- *Am I displaying the fruit of the Spirit?* Galatians 5:22, 23

Resolving Conflict

Winning your brother/sister is more important than winning the argument.

- Limit the issue to the here and now
- Eliminate ‘never’ and ‘always’
- Limit discussion to one central issue
- Focus on the issue, not each other
- Be honest about your emotions
- Use ‘I feel’, not ‘you should’
- Never deride each other’s personality
- Never counter-attack
- Don’t try to read each other’s mind
- (Adapted from David Morley, *New Life*)

‘Give no place to the devil’ (27)

Note how this text is tucked in here in the midst of the rest. When we use our speech in an ungodly way we give ground to the devil. Lying, anger etc give the devil a place to stand!

‘No corrupting talk...’ (29)

- ‘Corrupting’ = bad, rotten, worthless, putrid
- Prevalence of swearing today. Sadly, increasing among women/girls
- There is always a better way to express things

‘Good for building up’ (29)

- See Proverbs 12:18; 15:4; 18:21; 25:11
- The film *Bambi*: ‘If you can’t say something good, don’t say anything at all.’
- The aim is to build others up, not to bring them down (Ephesians 4:29)
- Say, ‘I love you’ daily.

‘Grace to those who hear’ (29)

- What is the effect of our speech on others? Does it benefit them?
- Do they receive grace from what they hear?
- Let’s be like Jesus...

And all spoke well of Jesus and marvelled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth (Luke 4:22)

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

1. Verse 25 is very clear. Why do you think some people still speak falsehoods or hold back from telling the truth? How could faith in God help them here?
2. There is a place for godly anger (26). What sort of things make you justly angry? Why?
3. Even with godly anger there is a danger of sinning (26). How? Why?
4. What sort of things can we do to get rid of anger before the day is done? What has worked for you?
5. How do you think falsehood and anger give the devil a place?
6. Paul tells thieves to do three things (28). What are they? If he were writing to a violent person, or a liar, or a grumbler, or a glutton, what would be three corresponding things he might say to each of them?
7. From your life or family experience, give examples of corrupting (ESV) or unwholesome (NIV) talk (29) or speech that has been hurtful or damaging to others.
8. Again, from your experience, give examples of words that have been beneficial and up-building to others and how they have helped.
9. What do you think it means to 'give grace' to your hearers?
10. On a scale of one (terrible) to ten (outstanding) how would you rate your general speech and conversation in the light of this passage?
11. What has been the major message of this passage for you?

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