

A Strategy for Godly Speech

Ephesians 4

THRIVE! Growing and Changing in the Christian Life

Prepared by: Matthew S. Black

Sunday, March 6, 2016, 10:30am at Living Hope Church of Roselle, Illinois

livinghopechurch.net

“The true test of a man’s maturity in Christ is not his ability to speak, as we are apt to think, but rather his ability to bridle his tongue.”

– Kent Hughes

If you don’t have a Bible, there should be one in the seat in front of you. Open your Bible to **Ephesians 4** The title of our message this morning is “A Strategy for Godly Speech.”

The Virus that Almost Killed Us

When I was a toddler, my older brothers caught a virus that literally knocked them out. They were fainting. It was serious and deadly. Someone in our town had died of this virus. It was especially harmful to the elderly and to little ones.

When my sister and I started fainting they rushed us to the hospital and saved our lives. You see little unseen microbes can kill you. “Life is a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away” says James.

One little microbe can kill you.

Before Antibiotics

Nowadays viruses often require a simple trip to the clinic and a course of antibiotics. In the past they were often incurable and deadly. Before killing you they could cause dreadful disfigurement.

For example, standard treatment for tuberculosis before antibiotics used to be - fresh air. It's a bacterial infection spread by people coughing and sneezing and it used to be rife in the US. It attacks the lungs mainly but can damage any part of the body, including the glands, bones, and nervous system. In the past a paper-cut could kill.

Anything which could lead to an infection. That includes surgery of any kind. It's rare here nowadays - but that's thanks to antibiotics.

It wasn’t long ago that doctors did not think handwashing was very important. They would use and reuse their tools from surgery to surgery without washing.

Bubonic Plague

And little tiny microbes would kill people. For example, in the first outbreak of the Bubonic Plague, by the year 542AD, had killed 50 million throughout Italy, Greece, and stretching all the way to Constantinople, in what is now modern day Turkey.

Sadly, it came back.

“One man, who landed in England in 1348, was responsible for spreading the Black Death, "Bubonic Plague," the greatest killer Great Britain has ever known. It does not take many bullets

from a rifle to kill a man. One bullet can kill. It does not take many deadly diseases to bring death to the human body. One deadly disease can bring death. It does not take the breakage of many bones to cripple the hand. One broken bone can cripple.”

One Sentence of Angry Words

So it is with our words. One sentence of angry words can scar a person for life. One angry barrage can paralyze a person’s heart and soul for life. Proverbs describes them as “sword thrusts” that keep reinjuring our hearts.

Think of the most painful things that have been said to you. They don’t go away do they? So how can we form a strategy to eradicate evil communication and utilize godly speech? St. Paul in Ephesians 4 has already done that for us.

Outline

Five strategies for godly speech...

- Be Regenerated, Eph. 4:24, Mt. 7:15-16.
- Be Repentant, Eph. 4:30.
- Be Renewed, Eph. 4:22-25, Gal. 5:16.
- Be Real, Eph. 4:29.
- Be Ready, 1 Cor. 16:13.

I. **Be Regenerated**, Eph. 4:24.

Holy Scripture

Ephesians 4:17-26, “Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. 20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!— 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, 22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, **created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.** 25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.”

Eph. 4:29-32, “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. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

Thomas Watson Quote

There is no doubt that the new birth has a major effect on our communication. Puritan Thomas Watson said it well: “God has given us two ears, but one tongue, to show that we should be swift to hear, but slow to speak. God has set a double fence before the tongue, the teeth and the lips, to teach us to be wary that we offend not with our tongue.”

St. Augustine: Only God Can Tame the Tongue

James states in **James 3:8**, “No human being can tame the tongue.” St. Augustine said, “...James does not say that no one can tame the tongue, but no one of men; so that when it is tamed we confess that this is brought about by the pity, the help, the grace of God.”¹ Dear men and women of the King, only Almighty God in heaven can tame your tongue.

So the question is how? How do we tame the tongue? Both James and Jesus give us the answer. Look at James 1:18, “Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” Or as he says in **Jms. 1:21**, we need to “receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to...” bring regeneration and save our souls.

We Need a Nature Change

Consider **Mt. 7:15-16**: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits.”

The Ordo Salutis

Theologians often talk about the “ordo salutis” or the order of salvation. What you need to understand is that everything in salvation is connected. You cannot have justification without sanctification as well as regeneration and glorification. It’s all different aspects of our salvation.

For example, in Ephesians, election and sanctification are linked together: “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph. 1:4).

The favor for change is based on the work of Christ (justification). You are counted righteous in Christ, based on nothing you did and everything He did. Wow! But it goes further.

The fuel for change is the new heart (regeneration). Christ sent His Holy Spirit in you and took out the heart of stone, and gave you a heart of flesh that loves righteousness. Now you can no longer live comfortably in sin and you are only comfortable making progress as you grow and change in Christ.

You can try to fake change, but it won’t last. If you are not having any victory in the area of communication, then you need to ask, “Am I really born again?” Now you may be saved, but you are grieving and even quenching the work of the Holy Spirit for a time. He will bring fierce correction and trial into your life because of His fierce love for you.

So we all want to change in the area of communication. How do we do it? That bring us to our second point.

II. **Be Repentant**, Ephesians 4:30.

John Bunyan said, “Sin is the dare of God's justice, the rape of His mercy, the jeer of His patience, the slight of His power, and the contempt of His love.” We need to hate sin and be killing sin, or sin will be killing us!

Don’t Grieve the Holy Spirit of God

Evil speech grieves the Holy Spirit that lives inside of you. Eph. 4:30, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness

¹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters of James* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 127.

and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

Given the biblical doctrine of the Trinity, we know that each person of the triune Godhead delights in that which the other persons are doing. There is a mutual indwelling (perichoresis) among the persons of the Godhead — the Father in the Son and the Spirit; so truly the Trinity is grieved when we sin with our mouths.

We can only grieve a person, and, inasmuch as the Holy Spirit may be grieved, we see that he is a distinct and glorious person in the holy Trinity. Do not rob him of the glory which is due to him, but always be mindful that God is personally with you through the Holy Spirit when you sin. And when we sin, we grieve the Spirit and quench His work of joy in us.

The loving, tender Spirit, of his own will, took residence in you and quickened you from your death in sin is grieved when you disregard Him and sin with your tongue. We sin in many ways, but we are most guilty with our tongues.

The Spirit of God ought not to be grieved. He is our Educator in the new life which he has implanted within us by the Word. He is our divine Instructor, Illuminator, and Comforter. Dear one, do not grieve the Holy Spirit with your tongue.

Repent for Evil Communication

Let us repent for grieving the Spirit with our communication. Let us repent today of unwholesome and evil talk and tones of voice and gestures that are rooted in selfishness. Let us repent today of all the ugly and unedifying words we have said that pile up to heaven.

III. Be Renewed, Ephesians 4:22-25.

Put On, Put Off Principle

We put off BY putting on. **Ephesians 4:23-24**, “and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” Then St. Paul gives us several examples and they have to do with how this radical renewal affects our speech.

- Verse 25, “Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.”
- Verse 29, “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.”

Walk in the Spirit

The only way to communicate is to walk in the Spirit. This is an all or nothing commitment. **Galatians 5:16**, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”

Gal. 5:24-25, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”

IV. **Be Real**, Ephesians 4:29.

Wesley: Your Tongue is Too Long!

Once while John Wesley was preaching, he noticed a lady in the audience who was known for her critical attitude. All through the service she sat and stared at his new tie. When the meeting ended, she came up to him and said very sharply, “Mr. Wesley, the strings on your tie are much too long. It’s an offense to me!” He asked if any of the ladies present happened to have a pair of scissors in their purse. When the scissors were handed to him, he gave them to his critic and asked her to trim the streamers to her liking. After she clipped them off near the collar, he said, “Are you sure they’re all right now?” “Yes, that’s much better.” “Then let me have those shears a moment,” said Wesley. “I’m sure you wouldn’t mind if I also gave you a bit of correction. I must tell you, madam, that your tongue is an offense to me — it’s too long! Please stick it out ... I’d like to take some off.”

I mentioned last week the words of Old Testament Theologian Bruce Waltke: “A fool’s tongue is long enough to cut his own throat.”²

So how can we trim

20 Ways to Trim the Tongue

1. Put off Lying ► Put on Truth telling

Lies can travel, and once a lie is told, it is hard to stop it. Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44), and God said that he “hates a lying tongue” (Pro. 6:17).

No person who can continue lying is a true child of God. The Bible clearly says in Rev. 21:8, “All liars will have their part in the lake of fire.”

How do we stop lying? **Ephesians 4:21**, “Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.”

We have to go to the one we lied to tell the truth. Lies spread like wildfire, and so if you do lie, you must go to every person the lie effected and make it right. You can stop lying by telling the truth.

The Bake Sale

Example. For example, if I was in hot water, and I lied, I need to go back to you or anyone this lie spread to, and tell the exact truth. When I was in high school, my step mom asked me if her cake had sold at the bake sale. I told her yep! But it had not sold yet. It eventually sold, but I had quenched the Holy Spirit by my lie. Every time I would go to pray each morning, the Holy Spirit would remind me to “leave my gift at the altar” and go and reconcile with my step mom. It took me a couple weeks to gain the courage to tell her, but when I did the fullness of the Spirit of God returned. Stop lying by telling the truth!

² Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1–15, NICOT* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 102.

All Liars to the Lake of Fire

John says in Rev. 21:8, “All liars will be cast into the Lake of Fire.” Paul says on numerous occasions: “No liar will enter the kingdom of heaven.” Solomon says: “The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful” (**Pro. 12:22**).

Peter warns us, “Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech” (1 Pet. 3:10). Why do some people practice deception? Many do it for financial gain, for social advantage, to hide immoral acts, or to obtain other “benefits.” Jacob, whose name meant “trickster,” conspired with his mother and deceived his father into giving him the birthright blessing that belonged to his brother Esau (Gen. 27).

Number 32:23, “Be sure your sin will find you out.” Your sin will always catch up with you.

You might say, “It’s just a half truth.” Well a half truth is a whole lie! You might say “it’s just a bit of exaggeration.” Even the world takes that seriously. Brian Williams, former anchor of NBC news knows that now.

Proverbs 8:7-8, “or my mouth will utter truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
⁸All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.”

Dishonesty is Not Pleasing to God

Here are a few examples of dishonesty:

- *Outright deceit* (includes exaggeration, embellish truth). Sometimes this is done deliberately, sometimes it is the result of the passage of time. It’s quite easy to do when you are the one ‘hurting’ or ‘offended’.
- *Contradiction* between body language and tones and the content of what we say. Consider this example. Question: What’s wrong? Answer: Nothing! (with a sharp tone, or rolling the eyes).
- *Exaggeration*: adding to the truth, usually to make us look better than we really are – 100% words such as “always,” “never,” “everyone” can often mean that we are exaggerating. For example: “You never help me with the dishes.” “You always leave your socks in the middle of the room.” “Everyone agrees with me.” One form of exaggeration are – 100% words such as “always,” “never,” “everyone” can often mean that we are exaggerating. For example: “You never help me with the dishes.” “You always leave your socks in the middle of the room.” “Everyone agrees with me.”
- *Evasion*: not telling the truth by avoiding, by changing the subject, by “blowing up” or bursting into tears to avoid having to deal with the real issue
- *Camouflage*: disguising the real message or using innuendo – not being “up front” or “direct.”
- *Half Truth*: only telling half or part of what really is true

Stop lying by telling the truth!

2. Put off Blasphemy ► Put on Respect for God's Name

I was a new believer and a Junior in high school, minding my own business, when I heard the gentle rebuke of Sarah Aulgur, the daughter of a local Baptist pastor, “You just took the Lord’s name in vain.” Her face was one of sadness and concern, but I could not understand what she was talking about. “What do you mean Sarah? All I said was ‘Gee, I just want to get to my next class.’” She told me to look up “Gee” in the dictionary, so here it is:

Main Entry: **gee**

Function: interjection

Etymology: euphemism for Jesus

– used as an introductory expletive or to express surprise or enthusiasm

I was shocked to find this out. I had heard such great legends of morality and family wholesomeness as Beaver Cleaver and Andy Griffith use such language. I always thought that if a word was used in Mayberry, it must be suitable for use anywhere. I was wrong. In fact, what I have found in the years since that early time of my Christian life is that Christian people swear and curse almost as much as lost people. You may think that I am exaggerating, but I do not believe I am.

As I read the Third Commandment of God’s moral Law, I shudder. It says: “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7, KJV).

“I Didn’t Know”

The problem we face in our churches is that most people do not consider euphemisms of God’s **name**, **person**, or **work** as a direct act of blasphemy. They are ignorant that it is a sin. Tonight, we are going to find that God’s Name is precious, and any form of using God’s Name lightly is a form of blasphemy whether there is knowledge of it or not. Not knowing something does not clear the crime from our account. It is legal in the Netherlands to use narcotics in public, but if a Netherlander comes to the USA and begins to do this, he will go straight to jail whether he was aware of the laws here or not! “I didn’t know” is not a valid excuse for breaking any law, especially God’s Law.

A Test

Let’s take a test. Think back to the last time you were surprised or in sudden pain. Perhaps you dropped a hammer on your index finger or someone snuck up behind you to surprise you. Perhaps you heard a tidbit of information that was just unbelievable to you. What did you say? Did you take God’s name in vain? Whether you are aware of your own blasphemy, you are still accountable!

Examples - Interjections of God’s Name

The interjection “Oh my _____” is quite universal. In the blank people will fill in either one of the names of the Almighty (Jesus, God, Lord, Christ), or since some are shocked by this, the Name is changed to a euphemism (Gee or Jeepers—for Jesus, Gosh or Golly—for God, etc.).

Examples - Interjections of God's Attributes

To try to soften this blasphemy even further, God's attributes and works are taken in vain. It is important to note that God cannot be separated from His attributes, neither can He be separated from His works: both reveal Who He is. If one defames God's attributes or works, he defames God. In the same blank many, including Christians will fill in an attribute or work of God. Some examples are:

Oh my...

- "heavens" (the place of God's throne),
- "word" (the revelation of God, also the Logos),
- stars (God's creation),
- Mercy me! Or Have mercy! (an attribute of God)
- darn (for damnation), and heck (for the place of eternal punishment).
- One of the most used attributes of God in cursing is His holiness. Often heard is "holy ____." In the blank might be: cow, mackerel, smoke, and a number of other objects.

These expressions are blasphemous to God, and the unbeliever or Christian who uses these expressions is "forgetting God" ("The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" Psalm 9:17).

Respect for God's Name

When we hear or use the name of Jesus, we must reverence that glorious name! It is the Name above all names! Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that that is the most glorious Name, above all names!

Respect God's name. Lovingly correct your children or your brothers and sisters in Christ if they blaspheme, like my friend Sarah.

3. Put off Defensive Words ► Put on a Silent Trust in God

1 Peter 2:23, "When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly."

Do you have an oversensitive spirit? That is a form of pride. Trust in God who will defend you. You do not have to defend yourself for every evil.

Instead, have a silent trust in God and cover with love. 1 Peter 4:8, "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins." Think the best of people. Know that people often say things under duress because they are hurting. They sincerely feel you are the cause of the hurt. They are often mistaken.

Don't get mad – instead stay compassionate. Remember the times when you've been hurt or overwhelmed. Have a tender spirit toward the person who is insulting you.

4. Put off Self-Depreciation/Self-Pity ► Put on Self-Forgetfulness

Moses said to the LORD, “O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue” (Exodus 4:10).

You engage in self-deprecation when you think or speak of yourself as being of little or no worth and thereby minimize the value of what you “bring to the table” or have to offer.

Self-deprecation is often disguised as humility; but in reality, it is a rejection of the Word of God, which assures us we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (PHILIPPIANS 4:13).

Self-deprecation displeases God. When Moses complained that he was inadequate to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage because of his speech impediment, God became upset. The LORD said to him, “Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say” (Exodus 4:11-12).

Instead, have the attitude of Paul: **2 Cor. 12:9**, “But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

5. Put off Filibustering ► Put on Listening

Filibustering is “speaking at inordinate length in order to obstruct the other person from talking.” When you dominate a conversation and don’t listen and just want to talk and talk and talk, that’s filibustering. It’s evil. It’s a lack of restraint. It’s from the flesh. It needs to be repented of.

Proverbs 10:19, “When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.”

James 1:19, “let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”

It’s not right to dominate the conversation so that the other person cannot talk. Instead, instead of accusing, listen, gather information, gather understanding.

6. Put off Flattery/Kissing Up ► Put on Honesty & Sincerity

Flattery is a form of manipulating someone by softening them up to get what you want. It is deceptive and should not be part of a Christian’s vocabulary.

1 Thess. 2:5, “For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed.”

The Scriptures warn us repeatedly against flatterers, for they are destructive people who carry a legion of unwholesome motives: “Whoever flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his feet” (Proverbs 29:5). “A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin”

(Proverbs 26:28). “May the Lord cut off all flattering lips and every boastful tongue...” (Psalm 12:3, 4).

Politicians and Flattery

Imagine the improvements which could be made in our nation if voters elected leaders on the basis of the RECORD rather than on the basis of the flattering speeches! Flattery is just a form of lying, and it has no place in the life of a Christian.

People Pleasers

People who flatter are people pleasers. Gal. The motive is to use the person and gain favor by lying to their face. We kiss up to them. Sometimes we kiss up to people because we don't want to lose their friendship, or we want them to like us. But that is selfish.

Paul said in Gal. 1:10, “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

People kiss up to other people because they want to use that person. Let that never be said of one of God's redeemed children.

Instead Be Honest and Sincere

We have to be honest. If someone has a character flaw, it's one thing to cover with love, but if that character flaw is detrimental to their forward movement in Christ, then you must not flatter or kiss up to the person. Be humble, sincere, innocent and honest.

Flattery means saying to a person's face what you would never say behind his or her back because you want to use them or gain favor.

7. Put off Self-Righteous Criticism ► Put on Thinking/Speaking the Best

Isn't it true that sometimes through a fault-finding tongue, we make ourselves the standard of spirituality? It seems that everybody but our family and our church and way is doing it wrong.

Fault-finding seems endemic to the Christian Church. Our sincere gratitude for God's cleansing us can all too easily be twisted into a self-righteousness, where we think ourselves to be the standard. This reminds me of a critical lady in John Wesley's church.

On one occasion someone said to Wesley, “My talent is to speak my mind.” Wesley replied, “That's one talent God wouldn't care a bit if you buried!” This is good advice for all Christians.³

Instead of criticism, always think and hope the best of people. That's what true love is. Always give people the benefit of the doubt.

³ Ibid.

8. Put off Cursing/Profanity ► Put on Gentle Words

Profanity is using language that is crude and unbecoming of a Christian. Proverbs 4:24, “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. ²⁴Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you.”

The Speech of Unsaved People

Some people, Christians included, have a nasty habit of using their tongue for cursing. Romans 3:13-14 describes profanity as the speech of unsaved people, “Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.” Profanity is identified as the speech of unsaved people.

This passage deals strictly with unsaved people and their ungodly ways, yet there are a great many professing Christians who curse regularly. Friend, why would you want to identify yourself with someone whom God describes as being DEAD, DECEITFUL, and POISON?

The Wicked Love to Curse

“He [the wicked man] loved to curse; let curses come upon him!
He did not delight in blessing; may it be far from him!
¹⁸He clothed himself with cursing as his coat;
may it soak into his body like water,
like oil into his bones!”(Psalm 109:17-18)

Many people curse because their life is miserable. They are unhappy so they make it known with their degenerate speech. This text says that God keeps them unhappy BECAUSE of their speech! God curses those who curse! Christian, don't expect God's blessings when your mouth is filled with cursing.

Repent: Choose Never to Curse Again

Instead put get accountability. on pure and gentle speech. Proverbs 15:4, “A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.”

9. Put off Nagging/Controlling ► Put on Trusting God/Accountability

Nagging Wife?

Sometimes we think of nagging as stereotypically a female thing. **Proverbs 21:19**, “It is better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman.”

But nagging is also a sin of men. Nagging is more than reminding. Nagging comes out of the idol of control and selfishness. I'm going to bug you bug you bug you until you give me what I want. It is a sin of wanting to control others.

To Do Lists

Nagging is a sin. My wife and I love to do lists. To Do Lists can be a beautiful thing. But a To Do List can become a tool to control someone. Things can get ugly when you become a slave to your To Do List. What's worse is trying to put shackles on your spouse and make the To Do List their master, too.

When I say nagging I mean the stereotypical, habitual, manipulative complaining that we people often try to justify as “reminding.”

People from Perfect Country

Some of us from perfect country know about nagging. We want everything just right! Instead of nagging, rejoice in Jesus and his **perfections**. Accept the flaws and imperfections in your spouse. Their quirks and your quirks make you both special!

Build Up instead of Cutting Down

Nagging often comes in the form of cutting down character. Well, you don't care about me. You are irresponsible if you don't do this to do list. You are not keeping your word. Then open your mouth to give grace instead: “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” (Eph. 4:29).

10. Put off Blame-Shifting ► Put on Taking Responsibility

Blame shifting is the most common and earliest form of corrupt communication. Adam said, “it's the woman” The woman said, “It's the serpent.” They were all guilty. Take responsibility!

Proverbs 28:13, “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.”

We need to take responsibility and own our sins.

11. Put off Boasting ► Put on Humble words

I've Got it Figured Out

“I've got it all figured out.” Love never says that. Love does not brag or boast. The idea is literally to “parade oneself”. Have you ever been in a difficult discussion with your spouse, and when you were in a corner, you began to paint yourself as the most spiritual person on the planet? You say things like: “I would never do that!” That is not love. That is selfishness.

To boast means to be “rash in bragging about one's own excellences or endowments” (Barnes). This attitude of vaunting comes from the attitude of *superiority* over others; It is usually combined with a feeling of contempt or disregard for your wife.

When we are offended we act as if we have never done the same thing. How should we respond when we are offended? To love by closing your mouth and being very careful what you

say. Say with David, “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Psalm 141:3).

Jesus’ Example

Phil. 2:3-8, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”

12. Put off Complaining ► Put on Gratitude

Complaining Forbidden

Philippians 2:14, “Do all things without grumbling or complaining.”

Don’t Confuse Heart Connecting with Complaining

Remember your spouse or your dearest friends are going to need to unburden themselves to you. Don’t confuse “decompressing” for criticism. Listen!

Put on Gratitude

What do we have to complain about? We deserve hell. Anything better than hell is something to rejoice in!

13. Put off Foolish Jesting (Innuendos) ► Put on Thanksgiving

Foolish jesting (inuendos)– Thanksgiving

Ephesians 5:4–8 , “Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. ⁵For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. ⁷Therefore do not become partners with them; ⁸for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light!”

14. Put off Gossip ► Put on Words of peace and praise

Dishing Dirt

A gossip is a person who habitually spreads intimate or private rumors or facts. Notice that i included the term “facts”. Some people claim that it’s not gossip if it’s the truth. They are

deceiving themselves. True or not, it's gossip if it's private or intimate in nature. From God's point of view, if you're not part of the problem or essential to the solution, there is no reason to talk about a private matter.

Proverbs 20:19, The Message (MSG)

“Gossips can't keep secrets, so never confide in blabbermouths.”

That pretty clear, isn't it? or

Proverbs 16:28 The Message

“Troublemakers start fights; gossips break up friendships.”

Solomon wisely observed, “The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down into a man's inmost parts” (Proverbs 18:8). Gossip gives a rush of control. You have something powerful over someone else. You are willing to be entertained and entertain others with the unconfirmed details of others.

Personal Affairs are None of Your Business

Do you sometimes engage in idle and often malicious talk about the personal affairs of another? Gossip can be such a delectable “choice morsel” that many find it impossible to resist. Now, I'm certain everyone hearing this message has been guilty of partaking of this popular pastime—either as a bearer or a hearer at one time or another. Oh, the downside of such behavior!

Gossip often veils itself in acceptable conventions such as

- “Have you heard ... ?” or
- “Did you know ... ?” or
- “They tell me ...” or
- “Keep this to yourself, but....” or
- “I do not believe it is true, but I heard that ...” or
- “I wouldn't tell you, except that I know it will go no further.”
- Of course, the most infamous such rationalization in Christian circles is, “I am telling you this so you can pray.”

This seems so pious, but the heart that feeds on hearing evil reports is a tool of Hell, and it leaves flaming fires in its wake. Oh, the heartache that comes from the tongue.⁴

What's the solution? How do you stop gossiping? Catch yourself before you indulge!

1 – Realize you are the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Why are you willing to use the temple of God as a “trash receptacle” by being a receiver of gossip?

Is this the only way you know how to establish camaraderie with others? Do you need to be the center of attention? Does it make you feel superior to know something negative about somebody that the hearer doesn't know? Are you envious of your subject's accomplishments?

2 – Put a guard on your mouth. Psalm 141:3, “Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!”

3 – Go to the source. If someone has gossip, you tell them to go directly to the source. You are offended by someone. Go directly to that person.

⁴ Hughes, 139.

Matthew 18:15, “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone.”

Matthew 5:23–24, “So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

Go right away. Reconcile quickly. Don't ask advice. Go right to the person. You say, well if I'm not right with someone I can't come to the service. No! You should never neglect a service. That's the point. Go before the service and reconcile.

15. Put off Bitter words ► Put on Tender words

Bitterness/grudges – tenderness/compassion

Ephesians 4:31-32, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

Unforgiveness doesn't hurt the offender – it hurts you. It's like drinking a bottle of poison hoping the other person will die. Carrying around that burden hurts you.

Forgiveness does not excuse a persons behavior or negate the consequences of their sin. But it does set you free from doing what only God should do. “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?”

Puritan **Thomas Watson** wisely said: “We need not climb up into heaven to see whether our sins are forgiven: let us look into our hearts, and see if we can forgive others. If we can, we need not doubt but God as forgiven us.”

16. Put off Idle words ► Put on Bridling your tongue

Jesus said that “every idle word will be brought into account on the day of Judgment.” We are to remember not to speak rash, or careless, idle words. Instead we need to bridle our tongue or if we do speak, to speak the truth in love. That means:

- Be careful *what* you say
- Be careful *how* you say it
- Be careful *how much* you say
- Be careful *when* and *where* you say it
- Be careful *why* you are saying it

17. Put off Sassing/Mocking ► Put on Respectful words

Sassing/Mocking – Respect

Proverbs 26:18-19, “Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, “I am only joking!””

Eph. 4:29, "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."

Sarcasm should only be used on bullies. God uses sarcasm in this way. It can be a good way to demonstrate the danger of someone who is dangerous.

Be careful with sarcasm! Sarcasm can be sinful. You say, but God and the apostles use sarcasm don't they? Yes, but they use it to build up.

Destroy People for a Cheap Laugh

Often we use sarcasm to only tear down. This is especially true of making fun of a person's appearance or mannerisms. Sarcasm and mockery are never appropriate in that instance.

We should never ever destroy anyone for a cheap laugh.

18. Put off Silent treatment/Clamming up ► Put on Speaking truth in love

Clamming up is always wrong. Have you ever asked a close friend or a spouse "What's wrong?" And they say "Nothing!" The silent treatment and grudge holding is dangerous. It's holding your anger in and stewing on it. So often people who clam up very soon blow up.

Ephesians 4:31, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice." Wrath and anger is often followed by clamor (Shouting) and slander (insults).

Stop Clamming Up

When a person doesn't want to talk and solve problems he may cut off communication a number of ways. Examples of clamming up are cutting off communication by . . .

- crying
- threatening an explosion - volcanic eruption
- Bottom lining: "All I have to say is..."
- blame shifting, getting defensive, minimizing, or running away
- A person may also laugh, change the subject, get self righteous, ignore the relationship by giving the cold shoulder or anything else to avoid dealing with the problem.

Speaking Truth in Love

Instead, the Bible says we are to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). "*You speak!*" You can't say, "Well I don't like that command, therefore . . ." or "I don't *feel* like doing that!" One of the problems in conflicts is when someone disobeys this command. We have to speak. God commands it. Therefore, clamming up is not an option for the Christian. We must communicate. Evading, avoiding, manipulating do not solve problems.

Why is it important for us to communicate honestly with others? 1 Corinthians 2:11 gives us the answer: "For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him?" We cannot read each other's minds.

Speak sincerely and lovingly. Speak the truth in love.

19. Put off Shouting/Blowing up ► Put on Soft answer/Accountability

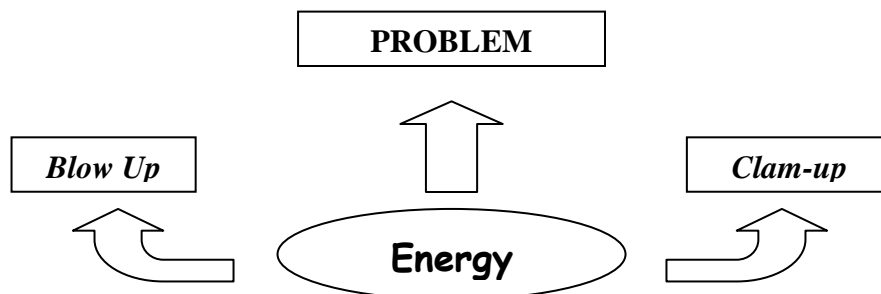
Blowing up is always wrong. Proverbs 15:1, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” 15:18, “A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.”

A mature man or woman comes into a conversation and brings peace. Any two year old can have a tantrum.

Sinful anger is self centered and out of control. Godly anger is God-centered and under the Holy Spirit’s control. In our sanctification, we can look at it in this way: anger is energy to be used to solve problems in a way that pleases God and helps me grow in sacrificial love.

Anger is a God given emotion which produces energy intended to help you solve problems biblically and solve them today. It is a force to motivate you to biblical action to solve problems. Godly anger is not concerned primarily for self but for God's name and His reputation. We might call it “conviction”.

Anger becomes sinful when it is used to attack others or self. You can detect it when deep bitterness begins to set in about the problem. Attacking others is one of the things that usually happens when you don't harness your anger to handle conflicts in a God-honoring manner. You may blow up quickly or the energy of unsolved problems builds and builds. Consider the following illustration.



20. Put off Destructive words/actions ► Put on Edifying words/actions

These kind of words are dangerous, destructive, and painful. James 3 says these words are “set on fire of hell”. We need to get rid of:

- words that **cloud** or **by-pass** the conflict, i.e. “I know but... [introduce new conflict]”
- words that do not solve problems or benefit the relationship, i.e. “divorce”, “I hate you”,
- words that destroy unity, i.e. “I don’t trust you,” “I don’t respect you,” “I don’t love you,” “I wish you were more like so and so.” There may be a time to express a lack

of trust or a lack of respect with a mediator present in order to rebuild the relationship, but never in a vindictive way.

- words that grieve the Holy Spirit because we are not following His Word by edifying those who He indwells like name calling, profanity, shouting.
- nuclear communication: eye rolling, huffing and puffing, heavy footsteps, door slamming,
- self-pity – hitting self, banging head against the wall

Instead, build people up.

1. **Esteem others higher.** Leaders esteem others higher than themselves. Have high regards, great respect, and favorable thoughts of the people in your circle of trust and influence.
2. **Be wise in your speech.** Communicate more effectively by thinking before you speak. If there's a word that's more appropriate in a conversation, use it. Start with a praise. Never confront others. Instead, point out on how both of you can make things better. Speak at the same level as your audience; giving them due respect. There's no need to come in with an authoritarian voice to get your message heard.
3. **Be encouraging.** Encouragement is an expression and assurance of one's hope and future in words, presence, and sincerity.
4. **Be quick to forgive.** When others make a mistake, be quick to forgive and forget; releasing them from guilt and shame that may take root in one's heart when not dealt with over time.
5. **Be understanding.** Wisdom and understanding go hand in hand. Understanding starts by being an active listener (not planning a reply as one is speaking), asking intelligent questions to gain further insights, and being accepting of what the speaker is sharing. Then, answer without condemning. Or don't answer at all and decide to just be a listening ear.
6. **Zero gossip.** Keep others' secrets. Never speak stuff that causes unnecessary hurt to others by speaking unclaimed rumors behind their back.
7. **Share knowledge.** Found an article or book that's useful? Share it with your friends. Sharing has been made easier thanks to the accessibility of sharing tools on the web, along with help from social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. Sharing knowledge helps us learn, discover, and understand things that are interesting. They have immediate application for better results in our work and life, edifies our soul, and improves our daily conversations.
8. **Stay humble.** Humility and maturity are synonymous. A dignified person accomplishes much, but brags little. They are secure in their standing without needing to make noise, often treating everyone with tremendous respect, regardless of position.
9. **Be positive!** Positive thinking goes beyond having the drive and motivation for personal success. Positive thinking is explicit, definite, and outspoken. It's contagious. Build up your loved ones with your positiveness, allowing them to be open for better things to come.
10. **Love unconditionally.** *"Love never fails" 1 Cor. 13:8.*

V. **Be Ready**, 1 Cor. 16:13.

1 Cor. 16:13, “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. 14 Let all that you do be done in love.”

Consider these 14 rules of peaceful and edifying communication. (Cf. Pro. 18:21; 25:11; Job 19:2; Jms. 3:8-10; I Pet. 3:10; Eph. 4:25-32).⁵

1. **Listen.** Jms. 3:17, “The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.” Be a ready listener and do not answer until the other person has finished talking (Prov. 18:13; James 1:19). Often we are not listening in a conversation; but instead waiting for the other person to be quiet so we can make our point. Truly listening will build trust build a bond and a connection. We must be determined to listen and not be overtaken by the wrong goals. Sometimes I’m not listening because I want to:
 - Make sure I’m heard
 - Get my way
 - Win the argument
 - Hurt the other person
 - Make myself look good
 - Manipulate
2. **Think.** Be slow to speak. Think first. Don't be hasty in your words. Speak in such a way that the other person can understand and accept what you say (Prov. 15:23, 28; 29:20). James 1:19, “let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”
3. **Aim for Peace. Jms. 3:16-18,** “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. 18 And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” Real mature manhood and womanhood in Christ is to bring peace to the situation. Children are petulant and selfish and bring confusion. Adults who act like children bring “disorder and every vile practice.”
4. **Don’t hold grudges.** Don't go to bed angry! Each day clear the offenses of that day. Speak the truth always, but do it in love. Do not exaggerate (Eph. 4:15, 25; Col. 3:8; Matt. 6:34).
5. **Don’t manipulate.** Do not use silence to frustrate the other person. Explain why you are hesitant to talk at this time (Prov. 15:28; 16:21, 23; 10:19; 18:2; Col. 4:6; Prov. 20:15).
6. **Don’t escalate.** Do not become involved in quarrels. It is possible to disagree without quarreling (Prov. 17:14; 20:3; Rom. 13:13; Eph. 4:31).

⁵ Adapted from Tim Keller’s Communication Guidelines.

7. **Use self-control.** Do not respond in uncontrolled anger. Anger is a sure sign of unbridled pride. Use a soft and kind response and tone of voice with a humble, understanding attitude (Prov. 14:29; 15:1; 25:15; 29:11; Eph. 4:26, 31).
8. **Be humble.** When you are in the wrong, admit it and ask for forgiveness and ask how you can change (James 5:16; Prov. 12:15; 16:2; 21:2, 29; 20:6; Matt. 5:23-25; Luke 17:3).
9. **Forgive.** When someone confesses to you, tell him/her you forgive him/her. Be sure it is forgiven and not brought up to the person, to others, or to yourself! (Prov. 17:9; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13; I Pet. 4:8).
10. **Avoid nagging** (Prov. 10:19; 17:9; 16:21, 23; 18:6, 7; 27:15; 21:19).
11. **Don't blame-shift.** Do not blame or criticize the other person. Instead, take responsibility even if the other person does not admit to wrong. Always encourage, edify (Rom. 14:13; Gal. 6:1; I Thess. 5:11).
12. **No "one-upping"/vengeance.** If someone verbally attacks, criticizes, or blames you, do not respond in the same manner (Rom. 12:17, 21; I Pet. 2:23; 3:9).
13. **Be accepting.** Try to understand the other person's opinion. Make allowances for differences (Prov. 18:2, 13, 15; Phil. 3:15, 16). Being different from you is not a sin.
14. **Have a tender, compassionate heart.** Be concerned about the interests of others (Phil. 2:3; Eph. 4:2; Rom. 12:15).