

**“Communicating for Positive Change”**  
**Ephesians 4:29-32**

*Introduction:*

1. It’s time for a pop quiz about communication!

Yes No Question

- |                          |                          |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I think that I am a good communicator of my ideas and feelings.               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | My spouse thinks that I am a good communicator of my ideas and feelings.      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | My children/parents really enjoy the way I communicate my ideas and feelings. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | The Lord is usually pleased with the way I communicate my ideas and feelings. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | I really dislike taking pop quizzes about the way I communicate!              |

2. Now let’s grade the quiz. You probably checked yes for the first question, unless you are plagued by self-doubt or had a bad week communicating. You probably checked yes for the second question, unless your spouse was looking at your paper and was ready to pinch you if you did check yes. You probably checked yes to the third question, but you know you should probably check no. If you wanted to look spiritual, you might have checked yes to the fourth question, but you might be struggling with some real problems of communication and should have checked no. And you probably checked yes to the fifth question if you’re a male and no if you’re a female. The reasons for that are beyond the scope of this sermon! Guys, if you need an explanation for the answer to the last question, ask your wives or girlfriends later.

3. We may laugh about some of these things, but godly communication is of prime importance in building better relationships. Let us listen carefully to what the Lord says about it.

*Exposition:*

I. We must stop communication that hurts people

A. A general principle about communication that tells us what to avoid. 4:29a

1. Our communication should never be “unwholesome”. It should not resemble rotten fruit or spoiled fish. Ask yourself what you would think of the words you are about to say to someone if they were said to you. Would you think that they were like “spoiled fish”?

2. Our communication involves control of our body—“out of your mouths”. One of the things that you learn as a Christian is the tendency of the body to sin (cf. Rm 6:6). We must control the members of our bodies and present them to God as servants for righteousness (Rm 6:19-23). But the heart or inner man has a definite influence on the body. In order to affect lasting change of what comes out of your mouth, you must have a change of heart. Remember the principle Christ taught. Mt 12:33-35

*Apply:* Think of this scenario. You are about to let loose a real zinger toward someone. Stop and ask yourself, “What is my attitude toward this person? How do I view him or her? (Do I view him or her as made in God’s image, Js 3:9-10? Do I view him or her as a member of Christ’s body, if they are?) Am I about to say this because of some sin that I am struggling with (such as impatience or unkindness)?”

3. This is an all-inclusive principle. “Do not let *any* unwholesome talk...”  
Spiritual maturity is partly expressed through our ability to control the tongue. Js 3:2

B. Specific examples of unwholesome communication. 4:31

1. Bitterness: any word that is unpleasant or disagreeable in a resentful manner. They are words that promote alienation between people.
2. Rage and anger: rage is anger in a sudden outburst of feeling, while wrath is a settled, lasting expression of anger. These are words that word against the good of another.
3. Brawling: shouting, yelling or screaming. At this stage, all meaningful communication has ceased.
4. Slander: words that seek to injure the reputation of another.
5. Every form of malice: this is the attitude that desires to inflict injury or suffering on another. Malice must be put to death immediately. It is a “mother sin” and has absolutely no place in any Christian’s life!

## II. We must start communicating in a manner that helps people

### A. Two general principles about useful or beneficial communication. 4:29b

1. Proper communication builds people up. We must first ask ourselves, “Is what I am about to say apt to have a destructive or constructive effect on my hearer?” But then we must go deeper and ask, “What constructive goal should I be seeking for my hearer?” See Prov 12:18.

2. Proper communication operates with an awareness of the needs of others. If you are going to build someone up, you must know what he or she needs. How do you develop this knowledge? You must fellowship with them. Lack of this contributes to what Bridges calls, “A Crisis of Caring”.

*Apply:* Immediately this confronts us with an immense problem: “our lack of time”, because it requires time to fellowship with others and to share your lives and spiritual gifts with them. Every person in every era of history has the same gift of time: 24 hours a day. How will you invest this gift for the glory of God?

### B. Specific examples of beneficial communication. 4:32

*Comment:* This has been an area of great failure. Most of us, I think, have been trained to have some sort of conscience against the kinds of communication sins discussed in 5:4. However, to stay there is to be left with a negative cast to our Christian way of life. When is a harmful communicator no longer a harmful communicator? When he/she becomes a helpful speaker!

*Illustration:* Suppose you women asked Sharon, “How does Pastor Dave talk to you?” What would you think if she merely said, “Oh, he never swears or yells at me. He never cuts me down. He just never does anything like that. Isn’t that wonderful?” You would walk away wondering, “Uh Sharon, does he ever tell you that he loves you and cares for you? Does he ever encourage you and say those kind words we women love to hear from our husbands? Is his tone consistently compassionate and forgiving? Are you in a marriage relationship with a friend, or just not in one with an enemy?”

1. Kind words — Kindness is the internal attitude that expresses itself in seeking the good of others. Kindness is not diminished by whatever difficult circumstances it encounters. It does not demand worthiness in its object. It is an essential part of true love (1 Cor 13:4).

*Example:* Christ’s treatment of the woman caught in adultery. Christian, are you ready to treat people who are being ruined by sin like he did?

2. Compassionate words — Compassion pities the misery or affliction of another and seeks to alleviate it. In a sin-cursed world, everyone has something that should arouse the pity of others.

*Example:* Our Lord Jesus looked at the crowds with compassion, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Do you see people through his eyes?

3. Forgive words — Forgiveness removes the guilt and penalty from off the offender. To forgive as God in Christ has forgiven us means to forgive “freely, generously, wholeheartedly, spontaneously and eagerly.” [Hendriksen]

*Example:* Christ prayed for those who were crucifying him. We receive hurts far less than that! Yet do we imitate in any way his kind of forgiveness?

III. We must develop communication that helps people from two dynamic principles

A. The principle of living in relationship to the Holy Spirit.

1. We have a positional relationship in the Spirit. We are sealed to the day of redemption.

2. We have a personal relationship with the Spirit. He is a person (not a force, power or influence) and he can be grieved.

*Point:* Whenever we talk, the Holy Spirit is always among the listeners. What does he think and feel about your style of communication?

B. The principle of God’s forgiveness of us in Christ.

1. In the new covenant, everything is traced to Christ and his redemptive work. This is the standard of ethics: what God has done in Christ and the cross. Jn 13:34-35

2. Now Christ is the source, the means and the test of spirituality.

a. “How can I have a forgiving attitude?” I can have it because I have experienced what it means to be forgiven by God.

b. “How can I forgive someone for the hurt that they caused me?” I can forgive someone in the same way God forgave me—freely, fully and unconditionally.

c. “How can I measure my forgiveness?” I can measure it by comparing it with God’s forgiveness of me.

*Apply:* When have you ceased to be a harmful communicator? When you speak like the Lord Jesus Christ!

*Apply:* All our words ought to be seasoned with the “flavor of the cross of Christ”. Is the dynamic of redeeming grace changing the walk you talk to others?