

Watching Our Words

Encouraging Words

by Carolyn Mahaney

My husband C.J. gave the message yesterday and it forms the basis for a little series we are doing this week (among other fun things). His message was entitled "Encourage" from Ephesians 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."

It was about speech, communication, conversation—something at which we women are prolific! It was certainly convicting to me, and this is probably the third time I have heard this message. Some of us were talking after the meeting about how we needed to go home and apologize to our kids for unkind words that very morning!

C.J. pointed out that speech is significant. In other words, *our words matter*. It's just that there are so many of them—an estimated 25,000 per day—that we don't often take them seriously. But, as Paul Tripp wrote in his book *War of Words*: "When we speak, it must be with the realization that God has given our words significance. He has ordained for them to be important...God has given words value. So we must do all we can to assign words the importance Scripture gives them."

This week we will examine our 25,000 words per day in light of Ephesians 4:29 and assign those words "the importance Scripture gives them." We'll also discover the *kind* of words that bring glory to Him: edifying, appropriate, and purposeful words. And we will look at how this verse applies to our speech as women.

Corrupting Talk

by Nicole Whitacre

Before I left for vacation, I cleaned out my refrigerator. Generally, I try to toss leftovers before they turn rainbow colors and sprout biological plant life. But it's not unusual for me to find four half-used containers of sour cream coated in blue-green fuzzies.

This fridge-cleaning illustration does in fact relate to our ongoing series on speech (see yesterday's post). For any experience with rotten food will help us to better understand Ephesians 4:29. In this verse we are commanded to, "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths..." In this instance, "corrupt" is a word used to describe spoiled or rotten food. It not only stinks, but it also spreads. Not a pleasant thought.

What sorts of words are corrupt and rotten? Obviously lying, profanity, and vulgarity make the list. But Ephesians 4:31 widens the description a bit. Here we read: "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice."

Dad said in his sermon that corrupt talk includes all words or communication that deters growth in godliness and hinders the cultivation of godly relationships. It defiles others. It has a decaying, rotting effect on a person's soul. This end result is certainly worth further reflection.

So the question is, how many of our 25,000 words per day are like rotten, moldy sour cream--repulsive to God, and injurious to others?

The Bible says we should eradicate these corrupt words from our speech. Instead, our words should be *edifying*: "only such as is good for building up" (Eph. 4:29). And we'll examine these edifying words more closely tomorrow.

But if you are all too aware of the corrupt nature of your speech, let me remind you of the good news of the gospel again. Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God, came to earth and lived a perfect life on our behalf. He never once spoke a corrupt, bitter, malicious, or angry word. Not once. And if we have repented from our corrupt speech and put our trust in His perfect righteousness, His blood covers every filthy, rotten word we've ever spoken.

So let's revel in the Savior's perfect righteousness today, and purpose to put away all corrupt words and so bring glory to Him.

Edifying Words

by Carolyn Mahaney

Yesterday Nicole talked about the words that *shouldn't* come out of our mouths (corrupting talk). Today we want to consider the words that we *should* be speaking.

In our Ephesians 4:29 verse we are commanded to communicate edifying words: "only such as is good for building up." Edifying words are words that identify how God is at work in someone's life. Philippians 2:13 tell us that "it is God who works in [the Christian] both to will and to work for his good pleasure."

C.J. said in his message entitled "Encourage" that, "We have the privilege of discerning where God is at work and drawing attention to how He is at work in their lives. *And God is at work, all the time.*" These ways that God is at work my husband likes to call "evidences of grace."

One way to identify evidences of grace: Begin by reading the lists of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) and the gifts of the Spirit (Rom. 12:3-8, 1 Cor. 12:1-11). Then look for one of these specific signs of God's activity in the life of someone you know (start with those you live with!) and tell them about it. No doubt, by the end of this day, you'll be more aware of God's constant activity in the lives of His people. And you will have obeyed this Scriptural command to build others up.

Appropriate Words

by Nicole Whitacre

We've been studying *words* this week from a message my dad gave on Ephesians 4:29 entitled "Encourage." We've learned that we are to put away all corrupting talk and instead speak edifying words. But not only should our words be edifying, they should also be "appropriate" or as it says in verse 29: "as fits the occasion."

As women, we generally give due attention to our dress. When invited to a party, dinner, or event, we take great pains to ensure we are wearing proper attire. We would never attend a formal event in sweats, or waltz into a pool party in high heels.

However, I am not always nearly so careful with my words. I don't stop to consider whether or not they "fit the occasion." And yet, unlike my dress, words are of the greatest significance. For "death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Prov. 18:21)

That's why Ephesians 4:29 is a much needed reminder to stop and listen before I speak. Proverbs 18:13 says: "If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame." And all too often I play the fool. Instead, I must consider the person to whom I am speaking. And I must choose the precise words that would serve them in that particular conversation.

First Thessalonians 5:14 is the "dress code" for our words. It tells us what words are appropriate for what occasion. "And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all."

So let's ask ourselves: does our child need to be admonished or forgiven? Does our friend need to be warned or comforted? Does our husband need to be counseled or encouraged?

We take great pains to dress appropriately for our own reputation, and yet when we speak appropriately, we bring honor and glory to God and bless those who hear.

"To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is!" (Prov. 15:23).

Purposeful Words

by Carolyn Mahaney

Today is the final post in our little series on speech. We've learned of the dangers of corrupting talk and discovered that Ephesians 4:29 instead directs us to use edifying words and appropriate words. Finally, this verse also tells us that our words should be purposeful, "so that [they] may give grace to those who hear."

What amazing power and potential there is in our speech! When we are purposeful and intentional to use edifying and appropriate words, this is the result: God promises that our words will impart grace to those who hear. Every conversation we have with another person carries this marvelous potential of passing on the grace of God. And we are a people in need of God's grace, are we not?

So if a friend is condemned or legalistic, I want to give her justifying grace through my words. And if my husband is struggling with a particular sin, I want to give him sanctifying grace through my words. For a fellow church member who is suffering I want to give them comforting grace through my words. If a child is disobedient, I want to give him or her convicting grace through my words. And if a friend is weary, I want to give her sustaining grace through my words.

There is no doubt that we will be talking today. No doubt. So in light of this verse, let's purpose that each of our 25,000 words be edifying and appropriate, that we "may give grace to those who hear."*

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