

## **Ephesians 4:25-32 Godly Communication in The Home**

A famous Mills Brothers song from many years ago says

You always hurt the one you love  
The one you shouldn't hurt at all ...  
You always break the kindest heart  
With a hasty word you can't recall, so  
If I broke your heart last night  
It's because I love you most of all

The song is rather absurd. It implies that the more you love someone, the more you hurt him/her. "I broke your heart because I love you." That's a form of love that I can do without. We should never hurt the ones we love. Love means that we try not to hurt others.

The song applies that in a romantic situation, but we could also apply it to the family. It's easy to hurt those we live with, the people in our own families, those we love the most. Because we are sinners, the song is often accurate—we do indeed hurt the ones we love.

The song talks about hurting others "with a hasty word you can't recall." Words are very powerful tools for helping others or for hurting them. If we are not careful, we will allow words to come out of our mouths that hurt others deeply. And those verbal wounds can last a lifetime. If you are like me, you remember some of the hurtful and hateful things that others have said to you or about you, even if those words were said years or decades ago.

Christian families must insure that communication in the home is helpful, not hurtful. We don't want to hurt the ones we love by our ungodly words.

Our text this morning is Eph 5:25-32. We can apply the principles from this passage to communication in almost any context, but this morning I want to consider how this text applies to the Christian home.

## I. Communication to avoid

### A. Lying (.25a)

1. What is lying? A lie is a statement intended to deceive. Lying is representing something false as if it were true, or something true as if it were false.

**Quote:** Lying includes exaggeration and adding fabrications to something that is true. Cheating, making foolish promises, betraying a confidence, and making false excuses are all forms of lying, with which Christians should have no part.<sup>1</sup>

2. Paul says “putting away lying.” The word (ἀποτίθημι) means “to put off, to put aside.” So lies should not be within the Christian vocabulary. The Christian home should not be a place where the members lie to one another.
3. Deceit is a basic, root sin. Satan is called the deceiver (Jn 8:44), the father of lies. Deceit is a characteristic of the unsaved, not of the saved.

*Rev 21:8 ... all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

4. At the end of vs. 25, we find a reason not to lie: “we are members one of another.”
  - a) Of course, Paul is speaking particularly of the church here. Deceit within the church harms the body.
  - b) And the principle holds true in the family as well. Family members really are, in a physical sense, members one of another. It’s unreasonable for members of one another to lie to one another. Deceit is self-destructive to the family. We should never tell lies, and especially not at home.

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<sup>1</sup> Unknown source; quoted in Ephesians material; could not find original citation.

B. Unrestrained anger (.26a)

1. The primary idea here is not to sin in our anger.
2. Anger usually arises within us when we experience something displeasing, something contrary to what we want.
3. Is anger *necessarily* sinful? No. The Bible often talks about the wrath of God. Jesus was angry on several occasions (cf. Mk 3:5; Jn 2:13-16). So we know that anger of itself is not sinful.
  - a) We may describe appropriate anger as righteous indignation. In fact, love for God and others may cause us to be angry. I hope you would be angry if someone blasphemes God. I hope you would be angry if someone abuses your children. We might easily have reason for righteous wrath.
  - b) And there may be a time for angry words. Harsh, sharp words are appropriate at times. We find some rather forceful, harsh words in the mouths of the prophets, Jesus, and Paul.
4. But in our anger, we must not sin. Even righteous indignation can easily slip into sinful anger. Our motivations and emotions are tainted by sin, so it's easy to slip into sinful anger even when we think we are righteously angry.
5. James tells us to be "slow to wrath" (1:19). When anger flares up, we must control it. We must not allow anger to cause us to explode.
6. And as it pertains to communication and speech, we should avoid using sinfully angry language. Angry language tends to tear down others. When we are angry, it's easy and natural to sin with our tongues. So we must avoid allowing anger to influence our tongues.

C. Foul language (.29a)

1. The term “corrupt” is used elsewhere to describe rotten fish or rotten fruit. In this case, it refers to rotten, worthless, or bad language. We should not use stinky, foul words.
2. Corrupt communication refers to inappropriate speech of any kind, such as swearing or vulgar language, dirty jokes, gossip, or language that offends others.

*Colossians 3:8 ... put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.*

3. Jesus tells us that foul language comes from a foul heart—“Out of the heart, the mouth speaks” (Mt 12:34). One’s words reflect his heart. What’s in the heart comes out in words. Filthy words are evidence of a corrupt, defiled heart.
4. Today’s culture is very coarse and vulgar. I hear people using swear words and cussing very commonly. People use words and talk about things in public that would have been unheard of just a few decades ago. Some of the worst swear words are now published very publicly.
5. I think most of us would agree that swearing and vulgar, coarse language have no place in a Christian home. Beyond that, I would suggest that even fairly mild forms of vulgarity should not be heard in a Christian home.

People who don’t want to use “really” bad words often use substitute bad words. E.g., OMG, darn, heck, jeeze, gosh. The proper name for these kinds of words is *minced oaths*—words that sound something like profane language but are less offensive. I think it’s wise for us even to avoid these fairly minor forms of vulgarity. These words stand for real profane words, and if we would not use actual profanity/vulgarity, we should not use these lesser forms either.

*Eph 5:4 neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.*

Some forms of language are simply “not fitting,” not appropriate for Christians to use in any situation. Parents need to teach that to their children. We don’t talk about certain things in public. We don’t use certain words. If children do use foul language, there should be penalties.

D. Animosity (.31)

Paul lists several forms of communication here that we are to put away from us.<sup>2</sup>

1. “Bitterness” reflects a smoldering resentment, a settled hostility, a hurt you hold on to.
2. “Wrath” has to do with rage, the passion of a moment, the boiling up and outburst of anger.

Wiersbe: “the explosion on the outside of the feelings on the inside.”<sup>3</sup>

3. “Anger” is a more internal, deep hostility, a settled disposition.
4. “Clamor” is brawling, strife out of control.
5. “Evil speaking” is slander, abusive, insulting language.
6. “Malice” is the general term for evil, the root of all vices.

When we speak in these ways, what is the result? It just creates more problems, more strife and discord, more bitterness and anger.

In our anger, we must not sin verbally or in any other way.

Note again vs. 29—let it not (this kind of language) proceed out of your mouth. You might be thinking these words, but don’t let them out. In other words, control your tongue; bite your tongue. Don’t say what you’d like to say if it will be harmful to others. Don’t let these words out.

Some language is intended to be hurtful, or it can be taken that way. When you make fun of others in a spiteful way or use sarcasm in a biting, scornful way, that kind of language is harmful, and we should not use it. I would categorize strong, spiteful sarcasm as a form of language that we should avoid.

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<sup>2</sup> These definitions from *The MacArthur Study Bible* and from Weirsbe.

<sup>3</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 42.

As the great theologian, Thumper, tells us in the classic film, Bambi, “If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all.” That’s close to biblical advice.

I think we all understand that we use language at times in a joking way. We are not being serious; we are just poking fun.

We should be able to take a joke or even an insult without dissolving into a pool of tears. We should develop a bit of a thick skin so that we don’t become angry when others say unpleasant things to us. We should not be overly sensitive about the words we hear.

**Trans:** So deceitful, angry words, and foul language should not be part of the Christian vocabulary. They especially should not be heard in the Christian home.

## II. Communication to advance

### A. Truth (.25b)

1. The opposite of lying is telling the truth, being honest. Parents must tell the truth, and they must insist that their kids tell the truth.
2. You might think that your child would never lie to your face. Children are natural liars. They are *not* naturally honest. A child, especially young ones, will tell one bald-faced lie after another. Don’t be surprised if a child lies to you.
3. Teaching your children to be honest is a process. Kids need to learn that parents expect them to tell the truth and that they will be punished for lying.
4. Paul tells us (4:15) to “speak the truth in love.” We must not use the truth to hurt others. We want our kids to tell the truth, but we don’t want them to be tattletales. We don’t want to use the truth in a harmful way.

### B. Reconciliation (.26b)

1. Paul urges us not to let the sun go down on our wrath. In other words, try to resolve conflicts in a timely manner. Settle your conflicts quickly. Don’t allow conflicts to extend over too much time. If possible, try to find a solution to your conflicts by the end of the day.

**Quote:** We must get cooled off quickly and maintain such control and restraint of our temper that we make a Christlike adjustment to the irritating circumstances.<sup>4</sup>

2. The goal whenever a conflict happens in the family is resolution and restoration. You don't want merely to cover over the issue, you want to solve it and restore broken relationships.
3. In conflict resolution, it's often necessary that the guilty party confesses his/her sin/error. I think it's wise for parents to push their children toward confession of their sins/mistakes and apology to those they hurt. Insist that your children say "I'm sorry; will you forgive me?" Insist that the one who is hurt respond to an apology by saying "I forgive you."
4. The words "I'm sorry" and "I forgive you" ought to be fairly common in our homes. Children ought to learn that the best way to solve conflicts is for the guilty person to admit his error and for the offended party to extend forgiveness.
5. Jesus said that we ought to be willing to forgive "seventy times seven" (Mt 18:21-22). In the home, that might not be much of an exaggeration; we have to be willing to extend forgiveness repeatedly.
6. We want resolution to our conflicts, and the best way to do that is to pursue confession and forgiveness. Parents should teach their kids to admit their sins, ask for forgiveness, take the punishment, and move on.

C. Helpful speech (.29b)

1. Speech ought to edify others.
  - a) Edify means "to build up." Instead of tearing others down, we ought to build them up.
  - b) That doesn't mean that we use flattery and compliments all the time, but it means that we try to use positive language, words that uplift and encourage.
2. Speech ought to minister grace to others.

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<sup>4</sup> Edward E. Hindson and Woodrow Michael Kroll, eds., *KJV Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994), 2419.

- a) The text says literally “that it might give grace to the ones hearing.” In other words, our speech ought to be beneficial to those hearing us.
- b) Do you ever talk to people who make your day a little brighter? You have a brief chat with someone, and you go away feeling uplifted and encouraged; you are glad you were able to visit with this person. That’s what we ought to strive for, that a chat with us gives grace to the other person.

I hope others are uplifted and encouraged when they talk to us. I hope that we are not negative, doom and gloom, complaining and griping all the time. Our language should uplift and encourage.

#### D. Kindness (.32)

Paul lists three characteristics that ought to be true of our words.

1. Kind (χρηστός) – fit, useful, virtuous, mild, pleasant; the opposite of harsh, sharp, bitter.

Under this category, I would place things like courtesy and being polite in our speech. Using good manners is an aspect of kindness. It’s a way to love our neighbors.

Good manners are always appropriate. Parents should teach their kids how to conduct themselves with good manners in various situations. That would include how to speak with good manners. E.g., greetings, table manners, how to speak on the phone.

To be kind is to be pleasant. The world needs more pleasant people and pleasant language.

2. Tenderhearted (εὐσπλαγχνος) – literally “having good/strong bowels.” The sense of this word is compassionate, merciful. We should be understanding when others fail.
3. Forgiving (χαρίζομαι) – from the root word for “grace,” meaning “to show favor, to give freely, to forgive.” And we ought to forgive others as we have been forgiven (.32end). We extend grace and mercy toward others as we have experienced grace and mercy from Christ.



**Quote:** This means that a Christian will always treat the offending party graciously, .... It means pardoning the guilty person instead of displaying resentment or exercising retaliation.<sup>5</sup>

In family life, we definitely need to extend grace to the guilty. We don't want to allow ourselves to be resentful and bitter.

Obviously, parents often need to impose punishment when necessary. But once a child repents or apologizes, and the discipline has been meted out, then the parent forgives the child. Same with children forgiving one another. Occasionally the parents may be at fault and the children will have to forgive their parents. Family life requires a gracious, forgiving attitude for all.

4. When we have a kind, compassionate, forgiving attitude, it makes the home a much happier, healthier place to be. Who would not want to be a member of a family described by terms like kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving? I trust that that is the kind of household we want to develop and maintain.

This is the kind of communication that God expects of us in every situation, but I think it's especially critical that we apply these principles in the home.

We typically speak our minds at home; we use less self-editing or self-censoring. When we get home, we somehow think that we ought to be able to be ourselves and say whatever comes into our minds. At home we often verbally vent to our emotions.

But I trust we don't really want to hurt the ones we love by using hurtful words. In fact, we should be more concerned not to hurt those in our own family than we would be about hurting others.

If we want to enjoy a peaceful, happy home, we must avoid communication that is deceitful, angry, foul, and malicious. Instead, we should use words that are true, that build up, and that extend grace to those that hear us.

Psalm 141:3 *Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.*

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<sup>5</sup> Edward E. Hindson and Woodrow Michael Kroll, eds., *KJV Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994), 2420.