
Speaking God's Way

Ephesians 4:17-5:4

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It is very easy to want to try to transform our talk by jumping immediately into a list of commands and counsels. But we must not do that. We must begin where the Bible does. We have to understand some basic truths before we can have godly speaking.

Understand the Truths for Godly Speaking (4:17-24)

The Old Life and Person (4:17-19)

¹⁷ 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.

We must not live like the old person we used to be before we were believers. We must not live like unbelievers, including in our speech.

Its Futility (v. 17)

The focus is on the futile, empty way unbelievers think that leads to foolish and ungodly living.

Its Mentality (v. 18)

Do you accept this description of unbelievers?

Their understanding is darkened, not enlightened...

They are intentionally and with destructive effect separated from the life of God...

They are ignorant of God and God's ways and often, even the way the world works...

They have hard hearts that resist truth and change...

Its Carnality (v. 19)

There is a slow and constant downward progression into every more carnal, vile, dirty sins.

The New Life and Person (4:20-24)

You are to live like the new person and new position you are.

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.

Its Doctrinal Basis (v. 20-21)

You must know it...

You must be taught it...

It is what is true of you, in Christ...

Its Practical Function (v. 22-24)

Put off the Old Person

Transform your Thinking

Put on the New Person

Obey the Commands for Godly Speaking (4:25-32, selected)

²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 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. 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.

Tell the Truth (v. 25)

Notice the transformation dynamic:

Put off lying – false words or true words leaving false impression...

Put on truth telling – true words with true effects...

Think differently – we are all connected as believers.

Express Godly Anger (v. 26-27)

There are times to be angry, but we must not sin in our anger...

All righteous anger is under control and can be put away at night...

Think differently – anger and conflict give the devil a foothold in relationships.

In regards to Stealing (v.28)

Notice the transformation dynamic:

Stop stealing...

Go to work...

Think differently – gain in order to give...

Speak in a Godly Way (v. 29-30)

Do not speak in a way that tears others down...

Speak in a way that builds up others...

Speak at the right time and in the right way...

Speak so as to give grace to others...

Speak so as not to grieve the Holy Spirit...

Deal with the Sources of Ungodly Speaking (v. 31)

Bitterness that that makes our heart hard and our words harder...

Wrath that slow burns against the wrong doing of others against it...

Anger that flashes up in the moment of being sinned against...

Clamor that unsettles our heart and displaces a meek and quiet spirit...

Slander that seeks with words to destroy the reputation of another...

Cultivate the Attitudes for Godly Speaking (v. 32)

Kindness that softens our words, our tone, our speech...

Tenderheartedness that softens our hearts...

Forgiveness that no longer holds sin and offenses against others, reconciles differences and restores relationships.

Imitate Christ's Sacrifice for Godly Speaking (5:1-2)

¹ Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Its Command...

Imitate God like children who are loved imitate parents...

Its Conduct...

Love others in the same way Christ love us...

Its Sacrifice...

Be willing to sacrifice in order to speak, talk and live as Christ did.

Guard against Impurity in Life and Speech (5:3-4)

What often prevents us or blocks us from speaking and communicating in a godly way?

³ But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. ⁴ Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving

These are commands in their own right. Observe the relationship between these impurity in life and impurity in our speech.

Living an Impure Life (v. 3)

We are not to live impure, immoral, covetous lives. When we allow these kinds of sins in our lives, we will be much more easily tempted to sins with the tongue.

Engaging in Suggestive Humor (v. 4)

This is the heart of what I wanted to address in this section. Paul addresses the common aspect of human living, humor.

Filthy talk - humor, jokes that are about sex in some way.

Foolish talk - treating serious things in a joking, light-hearted frivolous manner. This includes making fun of sin.

Crude joking - humor and jokes about bodily functions.

These may be different for different people and culture. Paul covers it all with "that which is out of place."

When we are light hearted and feel an inward impetus for fun, Paul says the Biblical alternative is to be thankful.

Reflect and Respond

Your communication is a big part of your life.

Your communication is self-revealing. It is telling others who you really are.

Speak in a way that reflects who you are in Christ.

Too many speak in a way that reflects the old person they used to be,

We live by faith; that is, by believing the truths and commands of the Scripture in an obeying way.

Even if you are the "silent" type, you are still communicating by your prideful silence.

Learn and master the Biblical process of transformation.

Put off the old person and all that is associated with it.

Put on the new person and all that you are becoming.

Do so by renewing your mind, changing your thinking.

You must repent of and put away all the heart issues that corrupt your speech.

Are you bitter against someone?

Are you regularly angry with someone?

Do you speak evil to or against someone?

Embrace the cross, the sacrificial way of living.

You must not respond with evil speech against those who sin against you.

You must respond with godly speech to all.

You must allow God to defend you.

Does the way you speak reflect the love of God for us? Does it reflect your love for others?