



CAPITOL
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FOCUSED ON THE WORD

Developing Speech Patterns Befitting of Office



How disciplined are you in your speech patterns? In this study I would like to examine one of my favorite passages from the book of Ephesians that deals with God's expectations of the believer's speech patterns. This passage contains really good substance!

A person's mastery over his tongue is extremely important in public office. Let us open Ephesians 4:29 to learn what God has to say to us in this regard.

Read on, my friend!

Ralph Drollinger

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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

- Governors:** Fridays 9am (EST), Zoom
- Former Cabinet Members / White House Senior Staff:** Fridays 9am (EST), Zoom
- Senate Members:** Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served
- House Members:** Thursdays 8am, AG Hearing Rm., Longworth 1302, hot breakfast served

The views expressed in each Bible Study are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study sponsor.



MINISTRY UPDATE

Ray Strauss Named Oklahoma Ministry Leader



Ray Strauss, a church-planting pastor and former city commissioner, will be leading CapMin’s long-standing discipleship ministry and weekly Bible study to members of the Oklahoma legislature. Pastor Ray is replacing Cheyne Day who has led that ministry since 2018. Pastor Cheyne will continue to lead—and now singularly concentrate on—the weekly Bible study ministry to legislators in neighboring Arkansas which he has led since 2020. Before Pastor Cheyne, the Oklahoma ministry had been led for five years by Dr. Doug Melton who stepped down to join the Southern Baptist Convention’s Board of Trustees for the International Mission Board.

Pastor Ray is senior and founding pastor of Edmond Community Church in Edmond, Oklahoma. His wife, Christina, is a former elementary school principal and current children’s minister at the church. The couple has three sons. Before that, they planted The Church at Sun Valley in Buckeye, Arizona, a Phoenix suburb. The

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I. INTRODUCTION

Beginning in Ephesians chapter four, the Apostle Paul lists various characteristics of Christian behavior. Five of these characteristics appear in Ephesians 4:25–32. Paul specifically instructs the church at Ephesus that believers should no longer be captive to their old sinful nature now that they are indwelt by God the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, their actions should no longer be characterized by deeds of the flesh, such as the following:

1. Lying (v. 25)
3. Anger (v. 26)
3. Stealing (v. 28)
4. Unwholesome speech (v. 29)
5. Unforgiveness (v. 32)

My prayer is that your speech will be guided by the truths of Ephesians 4:29. A person’s speech is a huge matter related not only to his personal character and witness, but also to the purity of the corporate testimony of the body of Christ in his district and the capital community. And, while we do not expect non-Christians to manifest what this study teaches, if you name the name of Christ in the capital, this instruction should most definitely characterize you in an ever-increasing way.

Ephesians 4:29 states:

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

This passage contains the following four practical applications regarding how believers should use their tongue.

II. CEASING YOUR SPEECH: UNWHOLESOMENESS

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth....

The New Testament (NT) word for *unwholesome* (*sapros*) was commonly used by Greeks of that day to describe rotten fruits and vegetables. According to the direct command of this passage, “*Let no*” means that all rotten words should be far, far from the mouths of regenerate individuals. To some degree those who are truly saved will be characterized by speech becoming of the Holy Spirit’s presence.

Philippians 4:8 states the basic virtues that all believers should utilize to reprogram their thought life in order to achieve wholesome speech:

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

The disciplined thinking commanded by and illustrated in this passage will most certainly affect a person’s speech patterns. Even having stated that directive, every believer to some degree will continue to struggle with unwholesome speech until he is *glorified*, i.e., go home to be with the Lord.¹ James 3:6–8 informs us of the reality of this lifelong battle with our fallen nature and tongue:

It is a fire.... ***No one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.***



Accordingly, every believer needs to memorize and meditate on Philippians 4:8 so that the Holy Spirit can immediately bring to mind the truths of this passage when tempted, so as to speak no unwholesome word. Proverbs 22:11 is an excellent, concise summation (and memorization verse) of this relationship: the connection between disciplined thinking, ensuing speech, and increased outward effectiveness. Notice each in the following:

He who loves purity of heart and whose speech is gracious, the king is his friend.

Unwholesome or rotten speech includes voicing off-color jokes, profanity, vulgarity, sexually suggestive double entendre, coarseness, etc. Note what Paul says in this regard in Colossians 3:8 and Ephesians 5:4 respectively:

Put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.

And there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

As you can see, all combined, the list of descriptors as to what is characterized by God as sinful speech is quite extensive. Explaining each of those words is a Bible study in itself. So why is a person's speech pattern so important to God? It follows that if believers are called to be His emissaries, that proper representation via holy living as manifested by and through pure speech is in order! An individual's speech is a proper behavioral depiction of one's high calling and assignment, i.e., representatives of God in the capital!

Note 1 Peter 2:9 in this regard:

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Every public servant who names the name of Christ need be characterized by noble, wholesome speech in contrast to the fruits of unwholesomeness as previously seen. The following verses in the book of Proverbs contain only some of the benefits of a wholesome vocabulary:

There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing (12:18).

Truthful lips will be established forever, but a lying tongue is only for a moment (12:19).

A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but perversion in it crushes the spirit (15:4).

The wise in heart will be called understanding, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness (16:21).

Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than he who is perverse in speech and is a fool (19:1).

He who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles (21:23).

By forbearance a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue breaks the bone (25:15).

VERSE OF THE WEEK



Colossians 4:6

Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt.



Since the believer is saved by God's grace (Ephesians 2:8–9) and kept by God's grace (Romans 8:39), it follows that his speech should be patterned after that sobering reality.



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influence the church had on the community inspired the mayor to ask Pastor Ray to run for city council. It was while serving as a Buckeye city councilman that Pastor Ray learned the benefit of Christians serving in office and the advantage of ministering to all public servants. “While serving in office, I saw I had a role in how God shaped policy through people. It was a moving lesson that left a strong impression.”

Pastor Ray served as city councilman from 2010 until 2016 when he stepped down to run for the U.S. House of Representatives, a race he ultimately lost. Pastor Ray strongly believes that Christians must be engaged in the political process. Throughout our nation’s history Christian pastors and believers have served in political office. However, in recent years a disturbing and unbiblical directive has been issued from many pulpits—that politics is evil and Christians should not become involved. “For generations we have held back some of our best people who sensed a call into politics,” Pastor Ray said. “As a result, we have experienced a great void of Christian influence on our society. It just wasn’t supposed to be that way.”

“So much was lost during those years. We need statesmen to go back into that world, and we need missionaries to go in and support them. It’s a battleground for truth and ideas and its full of lost people. And it should not surprise us when lost people act like lost people. We desperately need to provide a Christian missionary presence to help the lost in the political world not only come to know the Lord, but to teach the truth and help them understand that they are there to serve the Lord’s purposes.”

A lying tongue hates those it crushes, and a flattering mouth works ruin (26:28).

He who rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with the tongue (28:23).

She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue (31:26).

In summary of this first point, in the place of unwholesome words, what must proceed from your mouth are speech patterns that are seasoned enunciations akin to a fine wine or cheese, that is to say A-G-E-D. Words and thoughts that are **Appropriate, Gracious, Edifying, and Delicate** speech patterns must be true of both you and me. Note how this acronym summarizes the gist of what follows from this passage (although in a different order) as Paul defines what the fine flavors of AGED words taste like.

III. THE CONSTRUCTION OF YOUR SPEECH: EDIFICATION

But only such a word as is good for edification...

A. EDIFYING SPEECH DEFINED

When you or I speak words correctly and truthfully, they have a profound, lasting effect. Continually ask yourself, “Is what I am about to say Christ-honoring, biblically mature speech?”

Ecclesiastes 12:10–11 states that a wise man’s words are like *well-driven nails*. That word picture is so excellent because the Greek word for *edification* (*oikodome*) means, “to build up, as in building a home.” Accordingly, the

believer’s speech patterns should be aimed at carefully constructing Christian maturity in others. Edifying others is what words are good for!

Hebrews 10:24 states, *and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds....* Such words that further define what it means to be edifying include encouragement, instruction, and even correction. That’s right, *to correct is to edify*. AGED sage speech includes the correction of others when necessary. Proverbs 9:8 states, *Reprove a wise man and he will love you*. Romans 15:2 states more generally, *Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification*.

In summary of this point, one of the leading commentators on Ephesians, O’Brien, says it well, “Having put on the ‘new man,’ we will want to develop new standards of conversation so that our words will be a blessing.”² The following points contain additional insights regarding edifying speech.

B. EDIFYING SPEECH MUST BE OTHERS-CENTERED

More closely, the implication of this section of our passage indicates that the believer’s speech is directed toward building up *others* (notice the word that I italicized). Talking about yourself all the time is part of the old, pre-Christ fallen nature that needs be put off! The believer’s clear priority is to focus on building up others with his tongue—rather than self. People who talk about themselves all the time (typical of so many today) telegraph immaturity and self-absorption to others who are AGED. Nothing is more unappealing than listening to someone extol his or



George Washington

her own greatness! I find it downright appalling! (One of their typical games is to throw you a question once in a while—like, “But enough talk about me. Let’s talk about what you think about my accomplishments.”)

How much more impressive is hearing a leader deflect comments and refocus attention and praise on others! One of my favorite passages in all of Scripture is Proverbs 27:2:

Let another praise you and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.

As I have seen with my children, memorizing and meditating on that passage will aid you in edifying others with your words. *Edification* means you are focused on building up others.

C. EDIFYING SPEECH MUST BE IMPARTIAL

Although this aspect of edifying speech is not apparent from the home passage, Scripture teaches that all the actions of a believer need to be free from partiality. In other words, in the capital, do you possess a similar attitude in your conversations with the janitor as you do with the President? James 2:1 states, *Do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism.*

Speak to the janitor as you would the President.

Both are created in the image of God; therefore, each is important and is due respect. Speech favoring one over another is sinful. Edifying speech is impartial.

D. EDIFYING SPEECH IS VOID OF GOSSIP

Another common problem to which this portion of Scripture relates is idle conversation, chatter, and gossip. Sheer idle talk is prohibited by the governing phrase but only such a word. The believer’s speech must be noted by few words that are meaningful to others versus the following:

- Building up oneself
- Acting important by dropping big names
- Talking for the sake of being heard, or worse,
- Slandering³ others

Proverbs 10:19 states summarily on this point:

When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise.

E. EDIFYING SPEECH STEMS ONLY FROM HUMILITY

Edifying speech can stem only from an inner attitude of humility. Matthew 12:34b states, *For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.* Your speech makes it clear to others whether you are in love with yourself or in love with Jesus Christ and others. Paul told the Philippian Church to *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus...who emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant... He humbled Himself* (2:5–8). Your speech shows whether you’re proud of heart or humble of heart. Accordingly, the believer’s speech must be Christ-like, humble, self-deflecting, and others-centered.



“Direct my thoughts, words and work. Wash away my sins in the immaculate blood of the lamb, and purge my heart by thy Holy Spirit, from the dross of my natural corruption, that I may with more freedom of mind and liberty of will serve thee, the ever lasting God, in righteousness and holiness this day, and all the days of my life.”

— George Washington, first President of the United States, Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, member of the Continental Congress, President of the Constitutional Convention, “Father of His Country,” judge.

William J. Johnson, *George Washington, The Christian* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1919).



Timothy Pickering



“Pardon, we beseech Thee, all our offences of omission and commission; and grant that in all our thoughts, words, and actions, we may conform to Thy known will manifested in our consciences and in the revelations of Jesus Christ, our Savior.”

— Timothy Pickering, American Revolutionary War general, judge, ratifier of the U.S. Constitution, postmaster general under President George Washington.

Charles W. Upham, *The Life of Timothy Pickering* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1873), Vol. IV, 90, from his prayer of November 30, 1828.

Quality before quantity: it is better to speak less and say something of significance.

Proverbs 15:23 states, *A man has joy in an apt answer, and how delightful is a timely word!* Conversely 17:7 states, *Excellent speech is not fitting for a fool...* Herein is speech that’s AGED.

B. ILLUSTRATING APPROPRIATE SPEECH

This sensitive spirit in conversation and speech is evident in the writings of the Apostle Paul in several ways. First, notice what he said to the believers at the church in Corinth. Prior to writing 1 Corinthians, Paul had penned a previous letter to them (per 1 Corinthians 5:9), which, to this day, is lost to the church. Evidently the Corinthians grossly misunderstood the content of its instruction. And so, among other reasons, Paul writes this epistle stating in verse 2 of chapter 3, *I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able.* In other words, the Corinthians again needed Paul to teach them the simplest aspects of Christian doctrine. Accordingly, Paul gave them the need of the moment: milk versus meat in terms of a spiritual diet. And as a servant-minister, Paul met them where they were and communicated appropriately.

Another illustration of Paul’s speech being according to the need of the moment is illustrated in 1 Thessalonians 5:14: *We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.* Paul taught the church

Last, and profoundly important, only from the cognizant, sobering acknowledgment of Christ’s atonement for your sins and your utter realization that you cannot save yourself can you possibly possess a basis for a truly humble heart. Every other basis for humility is to some extent self-conjured hypocrisy. Make no mistake; herein is the theology behind genuine humility: only from our utter realization of personal brokenness and indebtedness to the cross of Christ can we possibly possess the motives which in turn manifest humility and ensuing speech patterns that are genuinely edifying to other human beings!

IV. THE CAUSE FOR YOUR SPEECH: APPROPRIATENESS

According to the need of the moment...

A. DEFINING APPROPRIATE SPEECH

Biblical speech considers the occasion, fits the needs, and is attentive and appropriate. Such speech, which displays the skill and wisdom of an astute listener, takes great discipline and practice to achieve. Few are those who possess this type of ability. But how powerful it is! James 1:19 carries a strong admonition in this regard,

This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak...

The idea of *slow to speak* doesn’t mean awkward pauses in your responses; rather, you give careful measure to what you say. Such wisdom in conversation will be evident to all as it beckons to others, suggesting to them that listening to you is far more important than speaking.



at Thessalonica to sum up the real needs people had and minister accordingly: Notice the differing needs of the moment: if a believer is unruly, then one's speech and actions need to be corrective. If a believer is fainthearted, one's speech should be encouraging, and with a believer who is weak, one's speech needs to be helpful. Such displays AGED communication.

C. APPROPRIATE SPEECH IS OFTEN CORRECTIVE

Some years ago as I was surveying the 13 epistles that Paul wrote in the New Testament, I noticed that 10 of them contained heavy polemic content. In other words, more often than not, the need of the moment which Paul faced was for admonition purposes rather than encouragement. And while correcting false teaching is sometimes appropriate, such attempts should always be motivated by patience and love. The patient and loving person will go to another in private and address errors versus immediately making the failure a public matter. The motivating cause behind all appropriate speech is always to build up and restore—not to tear down or destroy. The need of the moment is never to “detonate a bomb.”

V. THE CONSENSUS ABOUT YOUR SPEECH: GRACIOUSNESS

So that it will give grace to those who hear.

Since the believer is saved by God's grace (Ephesians 2:8–9) and kept by God's grace (Romans 8:39), a believer's speech should be patterned after that sobering reality. *Let your speech always be with grace*, said Paul to the Church

at Colossae (4:6a). In essence, our speech directed toward others should depict how gracious God has been toward us. By definition *grace* means that you will give to another what they do not deserve.

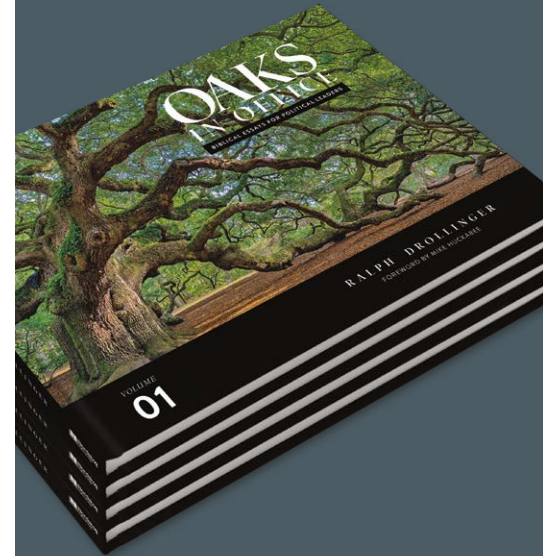
I memorized this verse years ago in desperation to appropriately answer inquiries asking, “How tall are you?” I am sure you too as a public servant are peppered with repetitive, less-than-appropriate inquires as well. All believers need to speak words and display actions toward others, which are not necessarily deserved.

Finally, notice this passage is not a suggestion. We are commanded by God to give grace to those who hear.

This is a serious matter of obedience to a command of Scripture. So-called Christians who swear and act unbecomingly are not depicting of God's grace.

Martin Lloyd Jones summarizes the manifestation of grace that every believer needs to possess in his or her speech:

My dear Christian people, there are weary people round and about us, weary of sin, weary in sin, weary of life. There are Christian people round us carrying burdens, carrying loads, suffering illness and sickness, disappointment, the treachery of friends, some fond hope suddenly gone, dashed and vanished illusions; there are men and women around us who are



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weary! And as we meet them and speak to them, let us forget ourselves; let us not regard the meeting as an occasion when we can display how wonderful we are. God forbid! Let us pray that we may...be enabled to speak a word in season to some poor, weary soul. Our Lord came from heaven to do that...that is the way for us also. As we travel through this journey of life we are to help men and women by a word, a word of encouragement, a word of cheer, perhaps a word of rebuke, but a word that will remind them that they are under God, and that if they are in Christ they are precious to Him.⁴

VI. SUMMARY

This delicate practice is honed by constant attention to one's heart and communication disciplines. Again, this delicate choice of words can only be mastered through programming one's heart with a constant diet of scriptural nutrition. Beloved in the Capitol, herein is AGED, mature, sage speech! The communication transformation of the new man or woman in Christ needs to be radical! May your peers share a consensus opinion about your speech as being Christlike.

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- Montevideo Uruguay
- Port Vila Vanuatu
- Lusaka Zambia
- Harare Zimbabwe

1. When Peter denied the Lord in Matthew 26:74, he did so with unwholesome words.
2. Peter O'Brien, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary Series, The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 345.
3. Slander, according to Merriam-Webster is "utterance of false charges or misrepresentations which defame and damage reputation."
4. David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Darkness and Light: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:17-5:17* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1982), 263.



Making Disciples of Jesus Christ in the Political Arena Throughout the World



Capitol Ministries provides Bible studies, evangelism, and discipleship to political leaders. Founded in 1996, we have started ongoing ministries in over forty U.S. state Capitols and dozens of foreign federal Capitols.

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