

***The Transformation of our Speech***  
*Ephesians 4:17-31*

**Introduction:** During Steve's sermon on Sunday, he mentioned that if we want an education about the way we should speak, Scripture is a reliable teacher. He also shared, that over time, the Scriptures can train and equip us to speak in ways that are compatible with our calling in Christ. This week we will explore ways in which God's Word can serve as our source for training our hearts and our speech in ways that are complementary to the purposes of God.

**Opening Question:** When the words "encouragement, caring, genuine concern or understanding" are used to describe a person's speech, who comes to mind (i.e., a friend, family member, teacher, minister, etc.)?

**Read Ephesians 4:17-31**

1. Describe some of the characteristics of the Ephesian lifestyles before they became Christ-followers (vv. 17-18). How big of a life-style change was Paul asking them to make?
2. Steve shared examples of several unhealthy speaking habits (i.e. criticizing people, correcting everyone around you or saying angry things to others). Which of these annoys you the most in other people?
3. Was there a particularly unhealthy speaking habit in question 3 that you feel compelled to work on in your own life?
4. If you were to work on improving your unhealthy speech habits, how long would it take for those around you to notice a change? In other words, the need for minor changes would hardly be noticed; the need for major changes would be immediately obvious to those around you.
5. If you were to commit to using your words in a way that is more compatible with our calling as people who have been made alive with Christ, who would need your attention the most (i.e. your spouse, your children, co-workers, or random people who for some reason upset you such as store clerks or people who move too slow/too fast, etc.)?

Steve said:

True to his pattern, Paul doesn't merely tell us what not to say; it's not enough to "not sin" with our words. Paul goes on to state positively what our words should accomplish: 29 ... *but [speak] only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.*

6. What are some examples of a "word of edification according to the need of the moment" in the following examples?
  - a. A friend has just lost their job
  - b. A student who is away from home for the first time
  - c. A family member who has been diagnosed with a major health problem

Steve said:

Paul had a very different vision for what our words should be and do. His vision was for our words to give grace. After a conversation with me, instead of people feeling like I've taken something away from them, they should feel like I've given something to them.

7. What are some practical ways we can give grace/gifts to people through our words, instead of just saying whatever comes to mind?

Steve said:

Jesus teaches that my words are an accurate reflection of what is in my heart. This is so true that Jesus says that my words will either justify or condemn me.

8. If your words were the report card of your heart, what would your grade be recently?
9. Read Proverbs 10:19. Can you think of times when, "saying nothing" might be the most appropriate "need of the moment"?
10. Last week we saw how Scripture can train us in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16-17). What are some ways that you can allow the Scripture to train you in your speech this week so that you will more instinctively give grace to those who hear?