

How to Communicate Christ-like

(Ephesians 4:17-32)

Introduction

Good morning, Lighthouse. Are you ready for the Word of God? Today's message is on communicating kindly as Christians. There was a bickering couple who got often got into heated arguments. However, one day they had an argument so intense they could not find a resolve in their words. Both must have the last word, and neither was willing to lay down their pride. Eventually, they both got sick of arguing and instead of communicating and working it out, they decide to give each other the silent treatment. They went the rest of the day without saying a word to each other. The husband had a flight to catch in the morning and being so set on not breaking the silent treatment, he wrote a note and placed it on his wife's side of the bed that read "Wake me up at 5am." The next morning the husband woke up and saw that it was 8am, he slept through his alarms and had missed his flight. He was so angry and looked for his wife, he then noticed a note on his side of the bed that read "Wake up, its 5am."

Communication is such a big subject to cover, so every aspect of communication we will not be able to cover. Generally speaking, there four main types: Verbal, non-verbal, written and visual. We use communication daily; some are good at it, others, not so much. So how is our communication supposed to be as believers? Is there a standard we should have in our communication that is above the worlds? The Word of God is what gives us our answer. We absolutely should have a higher standard in our communication as believers. How many family members loved ones and even brothers and sisters in Christ have we hurt simply because we don't communicate in the way God intends. We also are representations of Jesus and our church in the things we say and do towards a lost world. If you haven' been paying attention, there is a

world out there hungry for answers. Searching to fill that void in their lives. This world needs Jesus. It is crucial we get this right. This brings us to our text to Ephesians 4 filled with commands and principles when it comes to communicating that way God wants us to.

Background

Author: Paul

Recipients: To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Paul had spent 2 years in Ephesus during his second missionary journey and spent additional time there on his third. This was a city that housed the temple dedicated to the Greek Goddess Artemis. A city full of idol worship.

Theme/Purpose: Unlike many of Paul's other letters, this is not a corrective letter nor written for an individual. It is a circular letter meant to be past around in Ephesus. Paul's purpose was to help the Ephesian saints grow in maturity and unity in Christ. Paul provides many rich truths about God, our salvation, unity and how to live as followers of Christ. This was a well taught church as expected, Paul spent over 2 years with them.

Scripture

Ephesians 4:17-32

(17) This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, (18) Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: (19) Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. (20) But ye have not so learned Christ; (21) If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: (22) That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; (23) And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; (24) And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (25) Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. (26) Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: (27) Neither give place to the devil.

(28) Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. (29) Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. (30) And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

(31) Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

(32) And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Outline

I. Our communication must be rooted in putting off the old man and putting on the new man,

vv. 17-24.

A. The characteristics of the old man, vv. 17-19.

(17) This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, (18) Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: (19) Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

1. We are no longer to walk as other Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind.

a. The term Gentiles here is not referring to anyone not a Jew, but its application is lost people.

b. Paul describes what that walk looks like: vanity in their mind, understanding darkened, alienated from the life of God though their ignorance and the blindness of their heart.

2. Paul addressed the Ephesians in chapter 2 that this is what they once were.

(1) And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; (2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

3. As Christians, we have a proper way and place to walk. It is as if Jesus turned us around and put us in the right direction, and now we must walk and progress in that direction.

Eph 4:1 (1) I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

4. If you are a believer in Jesus, you have a vocation to walk worthy of. You are called to live in a manner above the world's standards.

B. Putting on the new man, vv. 20-24.

(20) But ye have not so learned Christ; (21) If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: (22) That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; (23) And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; (24) And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

1. But ye have not so learned Christ.
2. The word here for “so” in the original is “hoto” meaning “in this way or in this manner.” Paul isn’t saying the people have not learned Christ, but in the way the Gentiles walk in 17-19 they have not learned Christ.
3. Learned Christ and learning about Christ are two different things. There are many who know things about Jesus – such as He was born in Bethlehem, He healed people, He was a good teacher, He died on a cross, but never truly knowing or learning Jesus.
3. Having been taught the truth in Jesus – If you are saved – If you understood that the Bible is God’s Word – Your need for a savior – what Jesus did on the cross for you and you put your trust in Him. This is what you need to do.
4. Put off the old man – the former life – living according to the flesh desires.

5. Fundamentally, Paul says that for the Christian, there must be a break with the past. Jesus isn't merely added to our old life; the old life dies and He becomes our new life.

6. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

a. Some will say controlling your thoughts is impossible, but the Word of God begs to differ.

b. Having your thinking renewed is fundamental to Christian living; in fact; that is where change starts. We are told as well by Paul in Romans to not be conformed to the world but to be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

7. "Put on the new man."

a. This is the new you, the real you; who God created after true righteousness and holiness.

b. This word here for "put on" is associated with clothes. Can you imagine someone who is released from prison and still wears his prison clothes and acts like a prisoner instead of a free man? That essentially what we do when we live after the old man.

c. This principle Paul illustrates for us is how we defeat sin in our lives.

d. If it was as simple as "stop it." Counseling would be incredibly easy. We don't just stop unrighteous activity – you replace it with righteous activity.

e. Paul follows that principle for the rest of the section.

II. Be honest, v. 25.

A. Put away lying.

1. This includes deceit, body language that is in conflict of what you say, disguising the message and denial. This eliminates even what people love to consider “half-truths” and “white lies.” Denying anything is wrong when there is something wrong “I’m fine. Nothing.”
2. This is sin that is quick to kill the trust if your family and friends. It can take a long time to regain that trust.
3. We are born to be natural liars. No one here in their right minds would teach a child how to lie or even have to teach them do it.
4. This even goes for contributing to the spread of rumors if its possibly true.

B. Speak truth in love.

(25) Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

1. This is key in our communication. Honesty. How do we put off lying? By speaking truth, but specifically speak truth in love. In verse 15, Paul writes this.

(15) But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

2. Honesty without love is insufficient and can be dangerous.
3. It is said that “speaking truth without love is like doing surgery without anesthetic.”
4. There are many who use cruelty in the name of honesty and try to justify it by claiming “it’s truth, or I speak what’s on my mind.”
5. In many cases, not saying anything is the best thing you can do.
6. A big difference between lying and truth is you won’t have to make effort to remember the truth.

6. There may be times we have to confront another's sin, and that is always difficult. Our responsibility is to be honest and motivated by love for the individual. God is responsible to produce the results. In other words, we can't neglect our responsibility for honesty just because I believe the person may not respond as we hope he will. His response is between him and God, and we must leave that in God's hands. Our responsibility is to speak the truth in love.

III. Keep current, vv. 26-27.

(26) Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: (27) Neither give place to the devil.

A. Be angry and sin not,

1. Not all anger itself is not a sin. We are told in James to be "slow to anger."
2. Anger is energy to be used to solve problems.
 - a. You can be angry without yelling.
 - b. Yelling at your family or others to get your point across is sinful and causes more problem than solves.
3. Anger is sinful when it is used to attack others.
4. Unfortunately, Satan loves to capitalize on a person's anger. It is all too easy to allow temptation in when you are angry. It can lead you to say foolish things, hurt others and face severe consequences.
 - a. This is why we are not to let the sun go down on our wrath.
 - b. If you have an issue, resolve it quickly. Failure to do so is to give place to the devil.
 - c. The concept of not going to bed angry is wise. If you have conflict with your spouse, or your children, don't until tomorrow to cover it up.

B. Stop clamoring up.

1. Don't cut off communication simply because you don't like how it feels.
2. Deal with the problems timely. Don't store them up for later or use them again after its been resolved.
3. Here some questions we can ask ourselves before bringing up a sticky problem.
 - a. Do I have all the facts right?
 - b. Should love hide it? Is it sinful? Is it hindering growth?
 - c. Is my timing right?
 - d. Is my attitude right? Am I trying to help the other person?
 - e. Are my words loving? Are my actions loving?
 - f. Have I prayed about? Have I asked for God's help? Am I trusting His help?

IV. Attack the problem, not the person, vv. 29-30.

(29) Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

(30) And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

A. Avoid "corrupt communication."

1. This includes but is not exclusively cursing.
 - a. Curse words has been described as the language of the ignorant.
 - b. Curse words should not be found in the Christians vocabulary.
2. Words that attack the person's character.
 - a. Name calling, insults.

b. This happens too often. When we are in disputes, there is no reason to include insults and begin to speak ill of the person. The problem needs to be the focus.

3. Tear down, rip apart or hinder growth. A little spark can do a lot.

a. Labeling others with words like “stupid” or “slob” or saying things like “I wish I didn’t have to be around you” or even things like “you always” or “you never” are attacks on the person or their character (as well as lies). This does nothing to help solve the problems.

b. I don’t know what to do to fix the problem if I’m called a “slob”, but I do know what to do to fix “you did not clean your room today.” I can clean my room and restore the unity. I can’t fix “stupid” but I can attack the problem of “leaving the lights on.”

4. Words that cloud or by-pass the issue or problem.

5. Words that “grieve the Holy Spirit”

a. Any two believers, regardless of the human relationship (spouse, parent/child, sibling, employer/employee, neighbor, friend) are on the same side.

b. We are teammates, and must treat each other as such, teaming up to attack any problem that would divide us and destroy unity.

c. When you attack someone, you are attacking someone made in the image of God. Someone that Christ died for.

B. Use communication that edifies or encourages.

1. The same put off put on principle continues.

2. We need to use words that edify, give “grace” to those who hear.
3. Words that zero in on the conflict – are solution oriented.
4. Words that help reach a solution.
5. Words that make the individual see Christ in you.
6. Our tone and body language can ruin the right words.

V. Act, don’t react, vv. 31-32.

(31) Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

(32) And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

A. Reactions and attitudes, and actions that must be put off.

1. Bitterness- the refusal to treat someone as if they never hurt you.
 - a. Bitterness has been described as drinking poison and then waiting for others to be poisoned.
 - b. Life is too precious and short to be bitter.
2. Wrath – flaring outbursts of anger.
3. Anger – This is different than simply being angry – this word means settled indignation or hostility that often seeks revenge.
4. Clamor – Harsh contention and strife.
5. Evil-speaking – slander, abusive speech and speech that hurts, untrue words and gossip.
6. Malice – Desire to harm others or see them suffer.
7. All these reactions must be put away. Our natural tendency is to be defensive with our own sins, but we are called to go above this and put on these actions:

B. Actions we must put on.

- 1, Kind – benevolent, helpful, courteous
2. Tenderhearted – compassionate, sympathetic.
3. Forgiving – to give up your right to claim revenge, hold a grudge or get even.
 - a. As Christ forgives us, we must do that same. Considering how much Chris has forgiven us, this should be something we ought to do with ease and eagerness.
 - b. When we choose to forgive, we are choosing to do these three things:
 1. I will no longer use it against you. 2. I will not tell others about it. 3. I will not dwell upon it.
4. A key thing we have not disclosed yet in communication is listening attentively. Someone once said, “Most conversations are simply monologues delivered in the presence of a witness.” Too often we think about what we are going to say back instead of listening. If you really want to be a better communicator and get the right words out. You need to be a better listener first.
5. Conflicts resolve when we act and don’t react.

Conclusion/Application

It is one thing when those who do not know God have ungodly communication. We should never be surprised when a lost person acts like a lost person. Unfortunately, saved people can do just about what lost person can and does often. Throughout our passage, Paul has been dealing with communication with other believers. How much more and critical should it be with our families? Our spouses, our siblings, our children? Our foundation always needs to go back to Jesus. It’s why the title of the message is “Christlike communication.” Who do you want to be more like when you talk, the world or more like Jesus? We must put off our old man. If there has never

been time where you put your trust in Jesus to save you from your sin, there is no new man to put on. You're still in your sins, but you don't have to be. God who was rich in mercy and love provided you the only way of being saved. That's through His Son; He died for you, and He rose from the grave three days later. Putting your trust in Him is your only hope to go to heaven. And when do you that, you can now start putting off the old you and putting on the new. This broken world needs us Christians to stand out in the way we live and the way we talk to another. We must be honest and speak the truth in love, keep current, attack the problems and not the persons, and act, not react.

Prayer