

“How Do I Communicate With People More Graciously?”

Don't we wish we had an instrument that would enable us to see and feel the impact of our words before they leave our mouths? We can all attest to the truth that “a word once spoken is forever history.” Using such passages as Ephesians 4:29, this session provides “A Test for Godly Speech”—biblical, pastoral and practical instructions on how to measure our words before we speak, so that they build up and are a “grace-gift” to those who hear.

Jim Cecy is a regular speaker at the European Leadership Forum. He serves as Senior Pastor-Teacher of Campus Bible Church in Fresno, California. Jim is also founder and President of JARON Ministries International, a training ministry for Christian leaders in the U.S. and abroad. He has a Masters of Divinity in Bible Exposition from Talbot Theological Seminary and a Doctorate of Ministry from Western Seminary. He is a conference and seminar speaker for hundreds of churches, schools, seminars, conference centers, Christian groups and denominations in the U.S. and abroad. In addition to other books and materials, he is the author of “The Purity War: A Biblical Guide to Living in an Immoral World” and “Anger: the Worm in My Apple.” Jim has been married for forty-five years and has ten grandchildren. Information about his materials, books and seminars is available at www.jaron.org and www.puritywar.com and www.campusbiblechurch.com

I. The Challenges of Human Communication

James 3:2 “If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.”

Proverbs 18:7 “A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are the snare of his soul.”

Matthew 12:34-36 “...For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man out of his good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth what is evil. And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment.”

II. The Power of the Tongue

James 3:6 “...the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.”

Proverbs 18:4 “The words of a man's mouth are deep waters...”

Psalms 12:4 “With our tongue we will prevail; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?”

Isaiah 6:5 “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips...”

Colossians 4:6 “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.”

III. A Recipe for Godly Speech

Psalms 119:103 “How sweet are Thy words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Proverbs 16:24 “Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.”

Proverbs 27:9 “Oil and perfume make the heart glad, so a man's counsel is sweet to his friend.”

Colossians 4:6 “Let your speech always be with grace...”

Luke 4:22 “... all were speaking well of Him (Jesus), and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, ‘Is this not Joseph's son?’”

How do we know when our speech is sweetened with grace?

Ephesians 4:29 “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, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

Ephesians 4:30 “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

The Taste Test For Gracious Speech (Ephesians 4:29)

Taste Test Question #1: “Is it good for edification?”

Ephesians 4:29 “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, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

(edification = building a relationship one edifying brick at a time)

James 1:19b “...But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger...”

Edification Question #1. Is what I am about to say intended to build up or destroy?

Edification Question #2. Is it intended to lash out and hurt or to restore?

Edification Question #3. Is it good for my partner's emotional and spiritual progress?

Edification Question #4. Am I about to attack the person or the problem?

Edification Question #5. Does what I am about to say bring hope for resolution of the problem?

Edification Question #6. Will these words feed the soul or starve it? (Prov. 10:21)

Edification Question #7. Am I about to use “loaded” words? (Gal. 5:15)

Edification Question #8. Am I just “digging up the dirt”? (Prov. 16:27)

Taste Test Question #2: Is it according to the need of the moment?

Ephesians 4:29 “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, that it may give grace to those who hear.

Timing Question #1. Is what I am about to say fitting for the occasion?

Timing Question #2. Is it timely?

Timing Question #3. Does it really need to be said now?

Timing Question #4. Should this be said at another time?

Timing Question #5. Is there a better way to say it? (Prov. 12:18; 16:18-19; Matt. 12:36-37)

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

Matthew 12:36-37 “And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment.” For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.”

Proverbs 26:18-19 “Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows and death, so is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, “Was I not joking?” “Like a terrorist who bombs a building filled with innocent people, so is the person who thinks his cruel jokes don't wound people.” (Paraphrase of Proverbs 26:18-19)

Taste Test Question #3: Will it give grace to those who hear?

Ephesians 4:29 “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, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

Grace Question #1. Does the way I'm communicating “minister grace” to those who hear?

Grace Question #2. Does what I am saying benefit those who listen?

Grace Question #3. Are my words a well-packaged gift?

The Power of a Gracious Word

Proverbs 25:11 “Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances.”

Concluding Challenge: We can become expert in communication techniques and still fail miserably in our personal lives. True transformation of a sinful TONGUE begins with a transformation of the sinful HEART.

cf. Ephesians 4:29—5:2; 2 Corinthians 2:14; Colossians 4:6

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