

# A Transformed Heart Changes The Way We Talk

Ephesians 4:29

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The passage of Scripture we will focus on today is just one verse.

It will be broken into two parts.

The first part focuses on what *not to do*. The second part focuses on what *to put into practice*.

As we open the Bible together, God's Holy Word, may today's verse be something we never forget. Years from now, when we look back on this weekend, may it not merely be an occasion when we grew in knowledge and understanding, but rather a pivotal moment in our lives, when the living God of all creation used just one verse in His Word to make a significant difference in our lives.

Today, as the seed of God's Word is planted in the soil of our lives, may it find good soil.

May each of us hear what God has to say.

May each of us receive what God has to say.

For when the seed of God's Word takes deep root in our lives ...

When we take God's Word and live out what it says ...

When we refuse to allow anything to hinder it ...

It produces an abundant and beautiful harvest, positively impacting not just ourselves, but everyone around us – family, friends, coworkers, classmates, neighbors, people in the community, and everyone in the church. From this day forward, as we intentionally and consistently put the following passage of Scripture into practice – *doing* what God's Word says – we can be assured that it will improve every relationship we have and, more importantly, bring honor, glory, and praise to God in the process.

The passage of Scripture we will unpack today is Ephesians 4:29. For this particular message, we will use the New International Version. Rather than reading it together, let's work on memorizing it together. I invite you to repeat after me: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

The main point of today's message is this: A transformed HEART changes the way we TALK.

SERMON POINT #1:

The text begins with the following admonition: "Do not let ANY unwholesome talk come out of your mouth." About one hundred years ago, Television shows started airing. At the time, there were not many TV channels. Today, there are thousands upon thousands of TV programs available to watch. When a person sees a show they really like, it's not uncommon for the person to recommend it to others. Usually, the person will get excited and

exclaim, "You've got to watch this show! It's fantastic! The storylines are great, the characters are amazing, and the episodes really draw you in!" Sometimes, the person may also say something like this: "And you know what's nice? It's also a good, wholesome show."

When someone makes such a statement, what they generally mean is this:

- There is no bad language in the show,
- There are no crude or obscene jokes,
- There are no demeaning or insulting comments that are made, and
- There is nothing in the show that if someone were to walk into the room unexpectedly, your heart would start pounding and you would grab the remote control and change the channel as quickly as you could.

Just as a person could count upon not hearing anything foul from a good, wholesome show, God used the Apostle Paul to write to the church in the city of Ephesus to say this: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths."

Nowadays, finding a good, wholesome show is getting harder and harder. In fact, it's not uncommon to hear people in everyday life, whether in the workplace, in the classroom, out in the community, on the radio, or online, engaging in conversations that are not wholesome. And while there may be many people in the world who use such language, a person who loves God should always be wholesome in the words he or she speaks. A follower of God's one and only Son, Jesus Christ, should never utter words that are impure, but rather speak words that are befitting of one who belongs to a holy, righteous, and pure God. This is why the Apostle Paul says, "Do not let *any* unwholesome talk come out of your mouths."

As we take this all in, perhaps you are thinking to yourself, "That's a pretty high standard. Based on what God's Word says, I am to let nothing—not a single word—come out of my mouth that is unwholesome. How am I going to pull that off? That's like asking me to swim across the ocean. Or telling me to drive from Florida to Oregon on a single tank of gas, without making any stops along the way, and with only one cup of coffee! Does God really expect me not to let ANY unwholesome talk come out of my mouth?"

Yes.

That is precisely what God's Word says.

If you are wondering how this can be accomplished, the answer is this: A transformed heart changes the way we talk.

Let's take a deeper look at this passage of Scripture. As we do, we will discover that the focus is not so much on us, the ones doing the speaking, but rather the emphasis is on others – the ones receiving what we say.

Whenever we study God's Word, it's helpful to see how other translations of the Bible put a particular verse. When we examine Ephesians 4:29 using multiple translations, it reads this way: "Do not let any corrupt, harmful, hurtful, abusive, hateful, foul, evil, dirty, unwholesome talk come out of your mouths." This is helpful, isn't it? By referencing other translations, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of what God's Word is conveying.

But let's go even deeper.

The original Koine Greek word being translated here is *sapros*.

What's fascinating about this word, which is most often translated as 'corrupt,' is that it means something that has decayed and gone bad. Put differently, it is something that has gone rotten, such as food that has spoiled and

become putrid. Considering this, whenever we let *sapros* come out of our mouth, the people who hear it are not only subjected to something vile; they are exposed to something that is harmful.

I have a package of meat in my hand. Typically, when a person buys meat at a store, they take it home and store it in their refrigerator or freezer. What if I left it here on stage instead? And then next week, when we gather again in this place (Lord willing), and the meat is no longer brown but green, smells awful, and it is served to you for lunch, would you eat it?

No way!

As we look at this passage of Scripture, of course the God of all creation, who is a loving God who cares very much for all of us, would tell us in His Word not to let ANY corrupt, harmful, hurtful, abusive, hateful, foul, evil, dirty, unwholesome talk come out of our mouths ... because of how it impacts others. Just like you would not want to eat even a bite of spoiled meat, God does not want others to be exposed to any unwholesome talk.

Upon hearing this, let's take a moment for earnest reflection.

As recorded in Luke 6:45, Jesus, the Son of God, said this: It's out of the abundance of one's heart that the mouth speaks.

In other words, if you want to know the condition of a person's heart, all you have to do is listen to the content of their words.

Remember, it's only a transformed *heart* that changes the way we talk.

In light of this, let's pause for a moment of stillness, quietness, and prayer.

*God, we come before You to confess that we have let unwholesome words come out of our mouths.*

*Words that have not honored You.*

*Words that have hurt people.*

*Words that have caused a lot of damage.*

*Words we regret saying.*

*Forgive us, God. Purify us of all unrighteousness and create in us a pure heart.*

*In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

While the first part of Ephesians 4:29 says what is *not* to come out of our mouths, the second part describes what *is* to come out of our mouths.

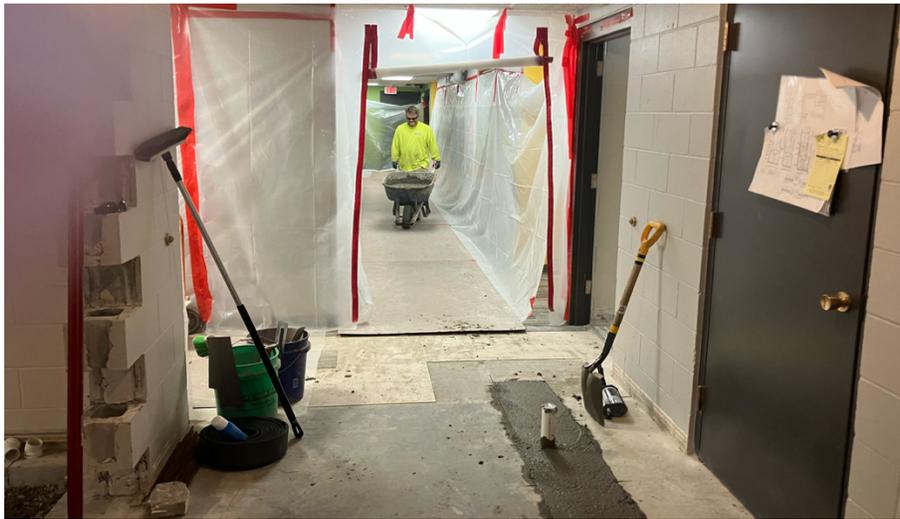
This leads us to the second point in today's message:

“But ONLY what is helpful for building others up according to their needs that it may benefit those who listen.”

Let's continue working on memorizing Ephesians 4:29. Repeat after me: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”

At the Annual Business Meeting in January of this year, the congregation approved renovating the Children's Ministry Lower Level Restrooms.

As you look at the following picture on the screen ...



You can see a person walking down the hallway wheeling in some fresh cement.

Next, you see a guy in boots with a 2X4 going to work!



The guy next to him probably said something like, “Yep, you're doing a great job! Keep up the good work.”

Here is some of the plumbing work done by the floor.



Here is some of the plumbing work done by the ceiling.



Check this out – aren't they doing a fantastic job!



Here is additional work being done, building up the walls.



Here is the finished product. This restroom is for the girls:



This restroom is for the boys:



Both of the restrooms turned out terrific.

As we take a moment to thank and praise God for the excellent work that was done and celebrate how the new restrooms have benefited the children, it's important to point out that this major renovation was not done haphazardly.

It was undertaken with purpose. With design. With a timeline. With excellence. To meet important needs.

Back in 2024, a group of committed individuals met to consider how best to renovate the restrooms.

After much discussion and prayer ...

After a lot of planning and preparation...

With the support of the staff, the Trustee Board, the Deacon Board, and the members of the church ...

Work commenced in April and was completed in August.

The chief reasons it turned out so well were the detailed plan that was developed, a commitment to ensure the plan was effectively executed, and an unwavering faith that God would bring everything together, blessing every phase of the renovation.

A lot of time, effort, and resources went into improving the restrooms. And you know what? It was time, effort, and resources well spent! The children and the EdgeKids staff and volunteers rave about how great the restrooms are and what a difference they have made.

As we reflect upon what God's Word says in Ephesians 4:29 and consider the various people in our lives – family, friends, coworkers, classmates, neighbors, people in the community, and everyone in the church ... how much more should we put in the time, extend the effort, and even invest personal resources to help them, build them up, meet their needs, and live our lives in such a way that it benefits them.

According to Ephesians 4:29, a powerful, meaningful, impactful way we can do this ... is with our words.

Just like a group of people got together to determine the best way to improve certain restrooms, wouldn't it be great to also gather with a group of people to determine the best way to improve people's lives with our words!

### **Men . . .**

Whether you are single or married, whether you are younger or older, how great it would be to get together with other guys and each one develop an intentional plan for how best to use one's words to bless other people. After sitting around a table for an hour thinking, discussing, praying, and writing notes, imagine one guy speaking up and sharing his plan of how he is going to use his words to **help** his coworkers.

After this, another guy speaks up and describes 10 different ways he is going to use his words to **build up** his wife. He says, "I am going to build her up not just according to what she does, but who she is ... and who she is becoming in Christ. In every word I speak, I want to consistently build her up in her faith.

The guy next to him then explains how he is going to use his words to meet the **needs** of his children. After pausing for a moment, he says this: "I noticed something about the way Jesus, the Son of God, spoke to people. For some, he was gentle in the way He spoke to them; for others, He was quite stern.

When Jesus came into contact with people who were proud, arrogant, stubborn, and looked down on other people, Jesus had some very strong words for these people to hear. Words of rebuke and correction. Words of warning and instruction.

But when Jesus came into contact with people who were broken, rejected, and treated as though they were worth nothing, Jesus ministered grace to them. While others spoke words that led to defeat and hopelessness, Jesus spoke words of life.

I think the reason why Jesus spoke one way to some and another way to others is that He knew their hearts. When interacting with my children, I pray that God helps me go beyond *what* they are doing and focus instead on *why* they are doing it – what’s behind it; what’s in their heart. By knowing this, I will be in a much better position to use my words to meet their real needs.

Finally, the last guy describes how he is going to use his words to **benefit** his neighbors and everyone he knows. He then said this, “Guys, let’s all make the same commitment. Moving forward ...

- 1) Let’s not use our words to harm people, but to help them.
- 2) Let’s not use our words to tear people down, but to build them up.
- 3) Let’s not use our words to meet our needs, but to meet the needs of others.
- 4) Let’s not use our words to benefit ourselves, but to benefit all who listen.

### **Ladies ...**

How great it would be to do the same.

Whether you are single or married, whether you are younger or older, how impactful it would be to get together with other women, and each one develop an intentional plan for how best to use one’s words to bless other people. After sitting around a table for an hour thinking, discussing, praying, and writing notes, imagine one of the ladies speaking up and sharing her plan of how she is going to use her words to **help** her friends. She shares, “I was recently reading God’s Word and discovered that Proverbs 12:25 says this: ‘Worry weighs a person down; an encouraging word cheers a person up.’ From this day forward, I am going to be committed to helping my friends as often as I can by encouraging them. Hebrews 3:13 says we are to encourage one another *daily*. In each new day that God gives me, I am going to pray and ask God to show me who needs encouragement.”

Another woman then describes how she is going to use her words to **build up** her husband. She says this: “Rather than being overly critical of my husband, pointing out the different ways he is falling short, I am going to be more intentional about recognizing the things he does well, and expressing my heartfelt appreciation for all that he does.”

The woman next to her then explains how she is going to use her words to meet the **needs** of everyone she interacts with in the community. She shares, “James 1:19 in the Bible says, ‘Be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.’ Instead of being the first to say something, focusing on my own needs, I am going first to ask people how they are doing, take the time to learn about them and what they are going through in life, and consider how I can use my words to meet their needs.”

Finally, the last woman describes how she is going to use her words to **benefit** everyone she knows. She says, “A few weeks ago, I was really struggling with something. Then, someone came and spoke to me about what I was going through, and it made such a difference! The person was so kind, compassionate, patient, and caring. When we were done talking, the person walked away, and I thought to myself, ‘I am so glad we talked.’ I want to be that type of person for others. With every word I speak, I want it to help others, build them up, according to their needs, so that it benefits those who listen. After each conversation I have, when I walk away, I want the person to think to themselves, ‘I am so glad that we talked.’”

### **Teens and children ...**

How great it would be for you to do the same as well.

Whether you are in elementary school, Jr. High, or High School, whether you are homeschooled, go to a private school, or go to a public school, how great it would be to get together with other students, and each one develop an intentional plan for how best to use one's words to bless other people. After sitting around a table for an hour thinking, discussing, praying, and writing notes, imagine one of the students speaking up and sharing their plan of how they are going to use their words to **help** their fellow students. The teen or child says, "I don't know why, but there is so much gossip that takes place, and things that are said are not helpful and end up causing a lot of drama. It seems like whenever someone has a problem with another person, instead of talking *to them*, they just talk *about them*. From this day forward, I will no longer have any part of it. Even though others may complain and say horrible, nasty things about others, I will only say helpful things."

Another teen or child then describes how they are going to use their words to **build up** others. The student says, "I can't tell you how often someone puts another person down, and then to make matters worse, everyone around laughs about it. Now that I know what God's Word says, I won't do that anymore, and I won't participate in that anymore. Instead of putting someone down, I will only build others up."

After this, another teen or child says this: "Instead of thinking just about myself, I am also going to focus on the needs of my family. I am going to totally surprise my dad when he comes home tonight and ask him how his day has been and how I can pray for him. I can't wait to see the look on his face!"

Finally, the last teen or child says this: "I am going to make it a priority to say things that are loving to others. Not just the people I regularly hang around with, but everyone. In fact, even to go out of my way to talk with people I normally don't hang around with and use my words to help them, build them up, meet their needs, and benefit them from how I speak to them."

Men, women, teens, and children, how great it would be if we all did this. By putting God's Word into practice, it will certainly improve every relationship we have and, more importantly, bring honor, glory, and praise to God in the process.

Church, you've been doing a great job today memorizing Ephesians 4:29. Let's say it together one last time: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."

Excellent. You all sound fantastic!

James 1:22 says, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." On your way out today, you will be handed some cards to help you put God's Word into practice. If you would like more, I invite you to visit the Welcome Desk to pick up additional cards. Each of the cards has the verse we focused on today, along with a box where you can write someone's name.

When you go home today, think and pray about whose names to write in. Then, develop a plan of how you can use your words to bless those people.

Another way to go about this is to get together with others and do this as a group, just like it was talked about earlier. If you are in an Edgewood Growth Group (whether here at the church facility or in someone's home), perhaps this is something you can do together ... and then follow up on in a few weeks to hear how it went for everyone.

However you do it, what's important is this: To live out what God's Word says.

Before we close in prayer, let's listen to the words of the following poem:

## **A Builder or a Wrecker**

*As I watched them tear a building down  
A gang of men in a busy town  
With a ho-heave-ho, and a husky yell  
They swung a beam and the side wall fell*

*I asked the foreman, "Are these men skilled,  
And the men you'd hire if you wanted to build?"  
He gave a laugh and said, "No, indeed,  
Just common labor is all I need."*

*"I can easily wreck in a day or two,  
What builders have taken years to do."  
And I thought to myself, as I went my way  
Which of these roles have I tried to play?*

*Am I a builder who works with care,  
Measuring life by rule and square?  
Am I shaping my work to a well-made plan  
Patiently doing the best I can?*

*Or am I a wrecker who walks to town  
Content with the labor of tearing down?  
"O Lord let my life and my labors be  
That which will build for eternity!"*