

Ephesians 4:29

1. What qualifies as “corrupting”?
 - a. Admittedly, this is a question that deserves close attention
 - b. The first thing we must mention is that corrupting is defined, or at least it is qualified, by the rest of the verse which contrasts corrupting talk with speech that builds up in grace
 - i. Essentially, Paul draws a distinction here between the kind of talk that encourages me to faithfulness in Christ and holy living and the kind of talk that steers me (and my audience) to sinful rot (the term “corruption” literally means “rotten”)
 - c. What are some characteristics of corrupting talk?
 - i. Lewd or coarse
 1. Corrupting talk includes dialogue that talks openly and unashamedly in ways that reflect a lack of concern for God and holiness
 2. Additionally, it includes the utilization of terminology that is identified as improper
 - a. Some people like to quibble by asking how culture defines that is lewd and what is acceptable
 - b. For instance, why is it ok for a doctor to utilize the term “stool” but not a four-letter word that starts with “s” and means the same thing?
 - c. The answer is that our parlance recognizes a need to have an acceptable word to discuss that which needs to be discussed in various settings, but it also understands that sometimes that item in question can also be leveraged in a figurative way to denote something morally reprehensible
 - d. There is a bit of conditionality here... obviously cultures have some say in what is considered acceptable
 - i. Christians should realize that a culture that is awash with sin should not set a higher bar for our speech than the redeemed!
 3. Additionally, corrupting talk is that kind of talk which speaks in insensitive and improper ways about private, sacred or personal matters

- a. We ought not be known for prying into personal lives in with the intention of discussing that which is to remain in private or, at the very least, contained to settings that are geared towards a person's growth in holiness
 - ii. Indifferent or hateful
 - 1. Sometimes corrupting talk is not characterized by the terminology or subject matter, instead it is unveiled by the heart
 - 2. We can talk in ways that betray a lack of love for an individual (particularly in gossip which discusses those who are not present with the intent to insult and diminish)
 - 3. Additionally, corrupting talk includes the kind of speech that de-humanizes or diminishes the value/pain of others
 - d. In all these things, Paul says our vocabulary should not reflect this kind of corruption!
 - i. This faith family, and each of its members, should be known for righteous and faith-filled speaking
 - ii. This does not mean that we do not have courage to proclaim the truth and it doesn't mean that we won't be accused of "hate speech" but it does mean that we will take care to speak with love and an intense desire to see God glorified and others strengthened in Him
2. How should I speak?
- a. While Paul does not give us too much instruction here, he does provide a brief glimpse into our goal in speaking
 - b. We are to speak with the desire that others would be "built up" and give grace
 - c. What does this mean? Well, the picture of building up the body is not isolated to v. 29, instead this image of growing into the truth of Christ pervades this chapter
 - i. The idea is pretty straightforward... our speaking should be motivated by a love for God and others which prompts us to speak the truth in love and pray that our words might lead others closer to Christ
 - d. What does this look like? Here are a few examples
 - i. It looks like warning of the presence of sin
 - ii. Reminding brothers of our hope
 - iii. Laughing about the joys of life and not at another's expense
 - iv. Praying together
 - v. Speaking about things of substance and not fixating on issues that are out of our control and make us angry