

Sermon Series: The Building Blocks of Healthy Relationships

Sermon Title: The Building Block of Wholesome Words

Sermon Text: Ephesians 4:29

Sermon Summary: In this text Paul tells the people of the church at Ephesus to not let any unwholesome talk come out of their mouths but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen! It is so vital that we follow Paul's advice if we are to have healthy relationships. This study looks at three strategies for incorporating the building block of wholesome words into our relationships: Building a defense against unwholesome talk, going on the offensive with wholesome talk, and realizing what's at stake.

Full Sermon Notes:

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace!" In order to do what we're going to talk about today, you will need to turn your eyes upon Jesus and look full in His wonderful face! In order to do what we're going to talk about today, we will need to let the things and ways of earth grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace! Let's pray and ask God to teach us today how to build our relationships with the building block of wholesome words! Pray.

Our text for today is found in Ephesians 4:29. Grab your Bibles and let's read it.

Ephesians 4:29 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.

What Paul said in that one verse is powerful and extremely important when it comes to building healthy relationships. If we aren't supposed to let any unwholesome talk come out of our mouths then we need to know what wholesome means so we can know what unwholesome means. Are you kids up for a little English lesson? This will help you with your activities from Miss. Lacey!

Wholesome - conducive to or suggestive of good health and physical well-being.
conducive to or promoting moral well-being.

Conducive means helpful! And we will see today that the words we speak can affect our health and physical well-being and are either helpful or hurtful to our spiritual well-being. There are three strategies we must employ if we are going to utilize the building block of wholesome words in our relationships.

1. The first strategy is to build your defense against unwholesome talk.

Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths...

Why is this so important? Well there's about a billion reasons. Here's one...

Proverbs 21:23 Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity.

Here's another reason why...

Proverbs 14:3 A fool's talk brings a rod to his back, but the lips of the wise protect them.

The writer of Proverbs is warning us that words have consequences! Foolish talk or unwholesome talk can get you into trouble quickly! God's Word is full of warnings. In my weekly devotion for the Fire Department this past week I talked about the importance of warning signs and especially the placards that are posted on trucks or rail cars which are carrying hazardous materials. Each one of those placards you see on chemical trucks are in essence warning signs. The colors, numbers, letters and symbols indicate whether it is flammable, explosive, corrosive, an inhalation danger, a biohazard, radioactive, and there are others. These placards determine a firefighter's response and the protective gear they will need. You may not realize this, but there are some chemicals that do not take kindly to water. In fact, water can cause them to release gases that are toxic or flammable. So if a firefighter doesn't understand these warning signs their very lives are placed in jeopardy! The same is true if we don't understand or follow the warning signs God has given us in His Word and especially when it comes to unwholesome words. Let me give you another warning from God's Word about unwholesome words. James tells us this...

James 3:3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal.

James 3:4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go.

James 3:5 Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.

James 3:6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

James 3:7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind,

James 3:8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

And now you might be thinking, "well, I guess there's just no hope if it's impossible for a human being to tame their tongue!" Hold on a minute! We can't control the tongue on our own, but God has offered to help us tame the tongue and actually use it for good!

In other words, He will help you build a defense against unwholesome words. and then take literal, practical steps to stop them from forming in the first place or ever coming out of our mouths.

What are some ways we can prevent unwholesome talk from coming from our mouths? We have to go on the defensive. We have to understand what should not be allowed to come out of

our mouth! In order to do this we have to take conscious steps to deal with words where they are formed!

Steps to build a defense:

A. Realize the harm unwholesome words can do.

You have to first understand the horrible things that can happen when we allow unwholesome words to come out of our mouths. It tears people down, it hurts them, it destroys relationships, and it breaks God's heart to see His children treating each other in such despicable ways. The writer of Proverbs reminds us...

Proverbs 15:1 ... a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 15:2 ... the mouth of the fool gushes folly.

Proverbs 15:4 ... a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.

Proverbs 15:28 ...the mouth of the wicked gushes evil.

Proverbs 16:27 A scoundrel plots evil, and his speech is like a scorching fire.

Proverbs 16:28 A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.

In fact James says...

James 3:9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness.

James 3:10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.

Talk about hypocritical! When we use our tongues to sing praise to God and then turn around and belittle a brother or sister in Christ, that's just not good and it indicates some serious internal issues. You may not actually curse, but when you say things like: you're just not smart, you're no good, you'll never amount to anything, or when you lie to someone, you're guilty of using unwholesome words! This takes us to the next step in building our defense against unwholesome words...

B. Realize the source of unwholesome words.

Broadman Commentary says..."Words are an index of character..."

Jesus put it this way when addressing the hypocrisy of the religious leaders of his day...

Matthew 12:33 "Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.

Matthew 12:34 You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

Matthew 12:35 A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.

Matthew 12:36 But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken.

Did you see that? The source of the tongue's evil is internal. The source is our heart, our mind, our attitudes, our thought life! Talk about some warning signs or placards from God's Word! Jeremiah said...

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Jesus said...

Mark 7:21 For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery,

Mark 7:22 greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.

Mark 7:23 All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean'."

Check this out from the writer of Proverbs...

Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

Proverbs 4:24 Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.

Why are these verses back to back? Because we must realize the source of perversity and corrupt talk comes when we are not guarding our heart! We speak what is in our heart!

Is there any hope for us to rid ourselves of unwholesome words? I'm happy to report, yes there is hope when we...

C. Realize the source of the power to control unwholesome words.

Paul told this to his young apprentice Timothy...

2 Timothy 1:6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

2 Timothy 1:7 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

2 Timothy 1:8 So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God,

2 Timothy 1:9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,

2 Timothy 1:10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

And in verse 14 Paul lets us know the source of that spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline, the source of being able to control unwholesome words and to live the Holy life God desires us to live! Check it out. Paul tells Timothy to...

2 Timothy 1:14 Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

When you get aggravated, start to get angry or start to say something unwholesome, remember the Holy Spirit of Jesus who lives in every born again believer! Let the Holy Spirit bring to remembrance the verses of Scripture we talked about a few weeks ago, also found in the Book of James...

James 1:19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,

James 1:20 because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

So take note of that! Make a note about that! A mental note or a post it note, a note to self...be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry! Ask the Holy Spirit to help you control any unwholesome words that might try to surface. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you what part of your heart and mind needs work because we know that unwholesome attitudes don't start with the tongue, but end up on the tongue! So now we have some defensive strategy, but there's more.

2. The second strategy is to go on the offense with wholesome talk.

Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs...

What does this mean? Building up according to their needs? Maybe it means you should say something like this...

"I'm going to pray for the person who has wronged me. They need the Lord so badly. I can tell they are miserable and have no peace in their life. I'm going to continue to pray they get right with the Lord!" Do you spend time thinking about and intentionally choosing your words so you can build others up and not tear them down? Encouraging words like: We can work this out, let me help you, I care about you, God loves you so much, you got this, you're really gifted and have so much to contribute, you are a blessing, God's got a wonderful plan for your life. Let's see if God's Word has anything to say about this.

A. Realize the good wholesome words can do!

Proverbs 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath...

Proverbs 15:2 The tongue of the wise commends knowledge...

Proverbs 15:4 The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life...

Proverbs 15:28 The heart of the righteous weighs its answers,

The writer of Hebrews says this...

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds.

Hebrews 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Paul tells the members of the Colossian Church...

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

B. Realize the source of wholesome words!

Remember what Jesus said?

Matthew 12:35 A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him...

But how do we store up good wholesome words in our hearts and minds so wholesome words will flow from us? Do any of you ever get nervous about choosing the right words and what to say and how to say it? Paul gives us this amazing advice in Philippians. The first two verses you've heard a lot lately, but they go together with the third verse that helps us realize the source of wholesome words...

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Are you training your mind, with the help of The Holy Spirit, to think on whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—things that are excellent or praiseworthy? Where do you allow your mind to

wonder? Where do you allow your mind to go? This begs the question: How do we find the power to think and say these amazing things Paul told us to think about? The answer is to...

C. Realize the source of the power to generate wholesome words instead of unwholesome words.

God's Word says this...

2 Corinthians 10:3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.

2 Corinthians 10:4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

2 Corinthians 10:5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Once again we must depend on the Holy Spirit's presence and His power to be able to go on the offensive when it comes to what we think and what we say! We need to ask The Holy Spirit to change our attitudes remembering that He will if we will let Him. And that means we have to be sincere about wanting to have a different attitude. If we truly desire to live differently He will give us the strength to do so. Sometimes we say we want to be different, but deep down inside we have no intention of changing or thinking differently. Why? Because sometimes we get more pleasure out of unwholesome talk than wholesome talk. Why? Because unwholesome talk feeds our sinful human nature, and let's face it, me, myself and I like for the spotlight to be on us and sometimes the best way for that to happen is when we are tearing others down to make ourselves look better. Let's face it, building others up with wholesome words takes humility and putting others first! Paul gives us clear direction on this in Galatians 5...

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Galatians 5:23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Galatians 5:25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Galatians 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

So the power source for the defensive strategy of avoiding unwholesome words, and the offensive strategy of learning to use wholesome words is none other than The Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ! And there is one final strategy we must use in order to incorporate the building block of wholesome words into our relationships.

3. The third strategy is to understand what's at stake.

Did you notice the last part of the verse?

Ephesians 4:29 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.

Wow! People are listening to you. They hear what you say and the way you say it. They can tell whether or not you're living a life of forgiveness or a life that refuses to forgive. What are your children learning from the way you talk about those you have a problem with? Are they learning the ways of Christ, or the ways of the enemy? Are they learning to forgive or to hold a grudge? What they learn from you could save them from future tragedy or lead them straight into tragedy. And if not your children, what about others you are talking to? What are others learning from you? Are you promoting peace, harmony and forgiveness? We're going to have a whole sermon on that next week. Of course you might wonder what you are supposed to do when someone is mean to you and is speaking unwholesome and unkind words to you? Andrew Ogea was telling me that his youth pastor told them at a youth camp years ago to just say 429! 429 to remind them of Ephesians 4:29...

Ephesians 4:29 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.

God's Word also tells us in Romans...

Romans 12:17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.

As a servant of God, and as a child of God, I have rights. I have freedoms. I have privileges. But as a servant of God I must exercise discernment! The Corinthian Church had problems with discernment so Paul gave them specific instructions. Check it out...

1 Corinthians 10:23 "Everything is permissible"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"—but not everything is constructive.

1 Corinthians 10:24 Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.

So just because you have a right to say something, or may be justified, that doesn't mean that it's a good thing or that it will benefit you or others! Do you think about the impact on others before you say something or do something? I'm not talking about you considering what everybody else thinks because you want people to think good about you from a personal pride standpoint, but what they think about you as a servant of God! You see, you and I are representatives of God and that means something. Think about it! And let me just say this: Wholesome words are not always positive. Sometimes the most wholesome thing to tell someone is the truth, and it may be a negative thing to have to bring up with them, but we can do it in love and with pure motivation if we are being led by The Holy Spirit. When led by The Holy Spirit we will be speaking wholesome words because we truly care about the other person. Let me give you an example. James needed to let his readers know a critical truth and it was not a positive thing to have to communicate! However, it was so important he posted a placard, a warning sign designed to warn people about very real spiritual danger. Here's what he said...

James 1:26 If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue,

James 1:26 he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.

Why did God tell James to write such a harsh statement? Because the harsh reality is this...

James 1:26 If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue,

James 1:26 he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.

"Wait a minute Pastor Larry! Is James saying that if I've ever lost my temper and said mean things or gossiped about somebody that I'm not saved?" I don't believe James is saying that. But if that's a pattern in your life, then you need to examine your heart, your motives, and whether or not you have a personal relationship with the Lord. We're not talking about perfection, but when you don't keep a tight rein on your tongue and if you don't allow the Holy Spirit to help you control your temper, something is wrong. Either you don't have the Holy Spirit in your life, or you're not allowing Jesus to be Lord of your life on a daily basis. You've heard me say it before, but letting Jesus be your Savior is a one and done, but letting Jesus be the Lord of your life, your attitudes, your actions and your words, well that's a daily decision we all must make! Think about this: When you lose it with your spouse, your child, your co-worker, sibling, neighbor, or whoever, then you've just destroyed the effectiveness of your witness to them. At that point in time all they can think is, "Well I guess all that religious talk was just that, talk!" You see, when you don't keep a tight rein on our tongue, then no matter how religious you are and how often you attend church or Bible study, to those around you, your religion is worthless because they see no difference between your actions and the world's actions. "Wow, Pastor Larry, I've done that! What can I do?"

I've learned from experience that even preachers and maybe especially preachers who are trying to live for Jesus every day must depend on The Holy Spirit for everything! Especially when it comes to controlling the temper and the tongue! Again, no one is perfect and never makes a mistake. But for a committed follower of Christ, when they mess up, lose self-control and use unwholesome words, they are truly sorry and are convicted by The Holy Spirit of God to do better and to make amends. The good news is I can tell you that God's Spirit has truly helped me down through the years to grow less and less vulnerable to the whims of temper and the loose tongue and as for the times I've stumbled, I remember 1 John 1:8...

1 John 1:8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

You may hear those verses again next week!

The Psalmist had some amazing words of advice for us as well...

Psalm 34:12 Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days,

Psalm 34:13 keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies.

Psalm 34:14 Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

What's at stake here with the building block of wholesome words? According to the Psalmist: Your very life! Unwholesome words not only hurt those who hear them, they destroy those who speak them. And wholesome words not only encourage those who hear them, but invite God's blessing and favor on those who speak them! What is at stake here? Relationships! Every single one of them! Words not only have meaning and usage, they have impact! They build up or tear down! Rarely are they neutral. And if you have a personal relationship with God as your Savior and you are walking in fellowship with God by allowing Him to be The Lord of your life, then His precious Holy Spirit will guide you in how to carefully choose what you will say, how you will say it, and just the right time to say it! I love the way Isaiah put it...

Isaiah 50:4 The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught.

Let's pray!