

THE POWER OF SPIRIT-FILLED SPEECH

Read Ephesians 4:22-5:20

INTRODUCTION

This section of Ephesians deals with very practical challenges to Christian living in every area of life, but particular emphasis on speech

7 Questions to ask before you speak:

1) Is it true?

v25 – “each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour”

NOT just lies but deception – the Greek word translated “falsehood” literally means “the falsehood” i.e. falsehood in ALL its forms (compared with the truth that is in Christ)

Q. Can people trust our words to have integrity? Do we reflect truth as Christ did or is there hypocrisy in us?

2) Is it controlled?

v26 – “In your anger do not sin” – we must be careful not to speak hastily in anger

We can all think of personal experiences of wishing we could take back words!

Q. Do we know when to hold our tongue? Do we practice v27 – keeping short accounts!?

3) Is it wholesome?

v29 – “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths”

5:4 – “Nor should there be any obscenity”

This is a high standard – NOT just bad language, but anything that is malicious or harmful

Q. Is all of our speech wholesome? Who do we set our standards by (the world, or the Lord)?

4) Is it beneficial?

V29 – “... only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs”

V32 – “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you”

V31 – “get rid of all ... slander”

Proverbs 12:18 says, “Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing”

This does NOT mean that we will never rebuke a person, but that we should only speak words that are really intended to build them up & help them

Q. Are we constantly aware of the needs of others and seeking to speak building words?

5) Is it worth saying?

5:4 – “nor should there be ... foolish talk”

“Blessed is the man who, having nothing to say, abstains from giving us wordy evidence of the fact” George Eliot

A very high standard! How often do we talk with other Christians and say nothing of any worth?

Proverbs 10:19 says, “When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise”

Q. Is our speech valuable, or only fit for the cutting room floor?

6) Is it plain?

5:4 – “nor should there be coarse joking” – literally means “an easy turn of speech” i.e. versatility and witty repartee

Could this include sarcasm, which is a dominant part of our speech? I am not suggesting that we should never use sarcasm, but it should be limited and balanced with honest, building statements.

Q. Are our words straight and plain? Do we balance the joking with constructive encouragement?

7) Is it honouring to God?

5:4 – “but rather thanksgiving” – I Thessalonians 5:18 says, “give thanks in all circumstances”

It is as serious not to give honour to God in our speech as to speak unclean or unkind words

Q. Are our conversations full of thanks and honour to God? Do we bring conversation round to Christian things?

Why should we care?

1. **Effect on our witness** (vv8-14) – we should be a shining light that convicts others & may even lead them to Christ. Our speech is a vital part of our witness!
2. **Effect on the body of Christ** (v25) – “we are all members of one body” – hurting our brother or sister is also hurting ourselves. Immense damage can be caused to churches by speech!
3. **Effect on the Holy Spirit** (v30) – we can grieve the Holy Spirit by our speech!

How can we reach this standard?

- Imitate Christ (v32&5:1)
- Be careful and wise (5:15)
- Understand God’s will (5:17) / find out what pleases Him (5:10)

BUT HOW? The key is being FILLED with the Spirit

V18 – “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit” (present tense)

Drunkness leads to a loss of control over our speech, but the Spirit leads to increased control and purity.

Results:

“Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always give thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (5:19&20)