

ICEBERGS: BROKEN COMMUNICATION

EPHESIANS 4:25-32

- We're in week 4 of our series called "Icebergs that will sink your families ship" and today we're talking about something that everyone will experience: Broken Lines of Communication.
- Every family, ever marriage, will go through spots when communication is broken down.
- Consider some thought on communication from Eph 4 today.
- A couple years ago I got a Bi-Mart card for Christmas and it was for about \$25.
- Gift cards like that can't buy anything super exciting but they can buy a little something.
- So I went to Bi-Mart with my gift card. And you know what I found? A shovel. And I really liked it.
- It had that nice new shiny wooden handle.
- It had the little rubber pad that covers the top part of the handle.
- It had some sticker telling you about how tough the metal is.
- The part I really liked is that it has this step on top of the blade so when you're digging there is a nice place to put your foot.
- I got an amazing shovel for Christmas!
- I'm pretty sure I have never used it...but I got it!
- A shovel is a great thing to have!
- But for all the cool features it DOES have, you know what it DOESN'T have? Instructions.
- Someone out in shovel land just assumed that you know how to operate a shovel, and so directions are not included.
- And that's how it goes with communication in our families.
- Many people wrongly assume that communication is self-explanatory, that anyone can figure it out, and consequently many families are struggling in the communication department!
- You could read a whole library of marriage/family books and all of them will deal with communication as a key point of emphasis.
- Today we're going to look at a passage that addresses communication and give you some ideas about HOW TO and HOW NOT TO communicate with your family.
- Whether you're married, single, have kids, no kids...we all have to communicate with people.
- This passage will be helpful for all your relationships but our most important relationships are those in our own families.

25 So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body.

- That's a great point to begin with! Stop telling lies and speak the truth. We need to get honest about our family struggles.
- We need to break away from cycles of poor communication.
- And a great place to start is to stop telling lies.
- Stop lying to each other, stop lying to ourselves. And if you're lying about each other...stop that too!
- We need to be honest about what's going on.
- Paul says "we are all parts of the same body."
- That's true for the church but even truer for your family!
- Your family is even more important than your neighbor!
- Your family is more important than your co-workers!
- Your family is more important than the dudes you hang out with!
- Your family is more important than complete strangers!
- And yet...the ***harshes*** ***words*** we may ever speak are to members of your own family.
- And the harshes words ever sent your way...may come from your own family.
- The sad fact is that many people are nicer to complete strangers than they are to their immediate family.
- Our first principle applies to all people in general, but it's magnified even more when it comes to family.

SPEAK TO YOUR FAMILY LIKE A CHRISTIAN! (vs 25)

- Christians are often surprised at how little teaching there is in the Bible that is specifically aimed at Christian families.
- Why doesn't God say more to husbands and wives?
- Why doesn't he give greater details about child-rearing?
- Why doesn't God tell us how to deal with crazy in-laws?***
- It simple: God wants you to treat all people with the same love, courtesy, and respect.
- He doesn't need to give you special instructions for every possible relationship; God wants us to treat everyone in a way that is Christian.
- If Christian husbands would act like Christians with their wives... it'd take care of many of our marital problems!
- If parents and kids acted like Christians toward each other... it would eliminate a lot of family drama.
- If Christian children would act like Christians toward their brothers and sisters...***your parents would pass out!***
- If Christian people just acted like Christ...in their homes...we'd***

put the Christian family-book industry out of business!

- It's not that complicated...and yet...it is!
- Verse 25 calls us to remember that we are parts of the same body. You and all other Christians are family.
- Your son is your brother in Christ.
- Your wife is your sister in Christ. Your sister is also your sister in the family of God. *Like a double sister!*
- God says that in the church we're all on the same team; so add this phrase to your family playbook: ***We're on the same team!***
- As long as you see your family members as enemies and rivals, you'll never have the kind of home and communication you want.
- When you communicate with your family; be a Christian!

DEAL WITH PROBLEMS AS THEY COME UP. (vs 26-27)

26 And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

- If you're having a problem today, try to talk about it today.
- If you go to bed with an unresolved issue today, that means that today's trouble is going to be added to tomorrow's trouble.
- Jesus said each day has enough trouble.
- And couples and families who communicate poorly are almost always guilty of this.
"Much unhappiness has come into the world because of bewilderment and things left unsaid." Dostoyevsky
- In other words, people allow little things to go unaddressed and so those little things collect and build up and make you miserable!
- The laundry list of unresolved issues starts mounding up and pretty soon you have a real mess on your hands.
- And Paul says, that's also the perfect opportunity for Satan to get his foot in the door of your church, or marriage, or family.
- Here's something you have to understand...the less you communicate the **HARDER** it gets to communicate.
- It's like when you notice the lawn needs mowing.
- You wait a couple days and think, I really should mow the yard.
- A couple more days...I should really mow the yard.
- And then you wait a week and now it's a small jungle.
- You have to dump the bag 20 times. Mower is getting clogged.
- You get those little spots that didn't get mowed and then they pop up the next day to taunt you.
- If you'd have tackled it when you first noticed there was a problem it would have taken very little effort to deal with.

- But leave that yard unmowed too long in and it is a real mess!
- So it goes with families. We let little things turn into big messes.
- We let those little things accumulate, build up, Satan sees an opportunity to get in the mix and make it even worse!
- The Bible's advice is to deal with things as they come up.
- Don't let the sun go down on anger, don't the sun go down on problems...deal with them as they come up.
- A man I know was watching a zombie movie with his wife.
- The guy was obviously a hopeless romantic.***
- According to zombie fans you need a headshot to kill a zombie.
- As they're watching the movie she says, "If there is ever a zombie attack I'm calling Ron because he has guns." (neighbor)
- That caused a three day tension in their marriage!
- She was saying "Ron has guns". He heard, "you don't think I'm man enough to protect you from zombies."
- Because I don't have guns like Ron I'm not a real man.
- Three days of marital tension over creatures that don't exist.
- How do we let little things get us so fired up?
- I'm sure we could all tell stories about ridiculous fights we've had
- If you're sitting here today and you have let things build up over time *don't think you can fix that today in the car ride home.*
- If you have a whole laundry list of things, you might need some help or guidance in unpacking all that stuff.
- You might need to join Celebrate Recovery, see a Christian counselor or talk to a pastor. (preferably Jae or Stacey)
- But here's the point: Refuse to let the devil get his foot in the door of your family's home. Deal with problems as they come up.

ENCOURAGE YOUR FAMILY WITH YOUR WORDS. (vs 29)

29 Don't use foul or abusive language.

- This is something that is way too common among Christians.
- We all say things we regret. We all let things slip at times.
- Some of you are very good at controlling your tongue.
- When it comes to cursing...some of you are like artists that can weave a tapestry of profanity on a moment's notice!***
- For the parents in the room; our kids see everything we do.
- They hear everything you say. They are watching and they are following the example that we give them.
- Have you ever worked in the pre-school and heard a little kid say the F-Word? I wonder where they heard that?
- Sesame street is really slipping...

-Have you ever heard teenage kids spout out racist words? Where did they pick up on that?

-Where did men learn to talk down to their wives, or mother's learn to yell at their children...OFTEN TIMES from their parents.

-What does it communicate to our children about our faith?

-We all know the curse words, and we all have probably said them

-No one is perfect so be gracious when people slip up.

-But think about what foul and abusive language does to a family.

-If you're trying to work through an issue with your spouse and swear words come into it...it really changes the conversation.

-If you're trying to work through a problem with your children and cuss words get in the mix...things immediately get more tense.

-When you're trying to get along with your brothers/sisters and derogatory, inflammatory words get spoken...it gets worse.

-Name calling, cursing, rude accusations, exaggerations, unfair criticisms, and foul words don't usually help things along.

-I have a pastor friend who is educated, smart; he counsels people

-He's over 60 years old and confessed to me that he is still affected daily by the stinging words of his parents who told him he was no good, stupid, and wouldn't amount to anything.

-Foul and abusive language is not for people who follow Christ and it's especially a bad idea when we're trying to communicate.

-Here's what the Bible offers as an alternative:

Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

-Imagine what your family's communication *COULD* look like if you talked this way:

-Say good things to people in your family.

-Say helpful things to people in your family.

-Say encouraging things to people in your family.

-Not only is this a good way to talk to family when you're in conflict...this is a good way to talk to family when you're **NOT IN CONFLICT!** This might even help you **AVOID** conflict.

-Last summer my niece's softball team played a tournament in McMinnville and so Laura and I went out to watch her play.

-If you haven't watched high school girls' softball before you wouldn't realize that they can be a clinic in encouragement.

-When a girl is a bat and gets a strike, the whole bench starts chattering. "It's ok. You can do it! Hang in there!"

-My favorite was "way to battle!!!" (*I'm thinking she just stood there and watched the ball go by? How is that battling?*)

-When they were out in the field they were just talking it up and it was all positive. It really stood out to me!

-And you know what...my niece is probably one the weaker players. She doesn't get in a lot. But she loves it. Why?

-Who doesn't love to be part of something that is positive, affirming, good, encouraging?

-We all want to that. We may not set the tone for the kind of words that are used at work, or school, or around town.

-But we have the ability to set the tone at our house.

-Again...there are no perfect homes. No one gets this right all the time, not me, not you...but we can aim for it!

-EVEN WHEN you're working through a problem you can use good, helpful and encouraging words.

-Let's make this real for a moment:

-You have a fight with your wife; communication breakdown

-How do you reopen the lines of communication?

-“Honey, I love you. I'm sorry for the things that I said.

-I want to work this out and I don't want to fight with you.

-When you're ready I want to talk about this more calmly”

OR...

-Or how about you and your teenager? Something happened; things are a little tense, conversation starts escalating!

-Instead of fighting maybe the parent or the teen says, “If I talk about this right now, I'm going to say things I'll regret.

-Can I have a few minutes to calm down?” Then start again.

-OR EVEN BETTER:

-This conversation isn't going well...we need to pray.

-Holy Spirit we need your help in sorting this out. Help us to show respect in our conversation, help us stay calm, and give us some kind of solution, answer. Bring us peace in our home.

You want to fix your family's communication? Invite God into it!

-There are hard conversations that have to be had.

-There are truths that have to come out.

-There are serious issues that will never be resolved without some painful and intense dialogue.

-I'm not advocating putting a smiley face on ever tough situation

-But *WHEN YOU HAVE* those kinds of talks, they go much better if you're not throwing gas on the fire with foul and abusive language

Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

-Paul reinforces his case here in verse 30:

30 And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live.

-Our family is part of God's family. He's the Heavenly Father that is the head of our households.

-How it grieves his Spirit when he sees us fighting and yelling and dividing in our families.

-The Bible says, "Don't bring God sorrow by the way you live"

-Don't break God's heart by the way you treat each other.

-My mom used to say, "What would God say if he saw you talking like that with your sister?"

-Well...news flash! **HE DID SEE ME TALK THAT WAY!!!**

-And he didn't like it! But here's why:

-We're better than that. End of verse 30:

Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

-We're people who have been adopted into God's own family!

-We're people who have received a kind of love we didn't deserve

-We're people who have been saved and set aside to be ambassadors for Jesus to a lost world!

-We are the people that are supposed to be an example of what God's power can do, when you let him into your life.

-Remember, he has identified you as his own...act like it!

-Don't grieve the Holy Spirit by the way you treat each other, bring joy to the Holy Spirit by the way you treat each other.

GET RID OF BITTERNESS, RAGE, ANGER, HARSH WORDS, AND SLANDER (vs 31)

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.

-You may not look at all the things on that list and immediately think about communication.

-But if those are the things you're full of what comes out when you open your mouth?

-If you are filled with bitterness, rage and anger, and then you speak...what words will come out.

Luke 6:45 "For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of."

-If you're packing around all that negativity it's going to come out of your mouth and it's going to affect your family.

-Don't lie to yourself and say it's only affecting you.

-I remember we were on a camping trip and I had some slick shoes on. I was walking out the door of an RV and I slipped and landed right on my rear end on the metal edge.

-Man that hurt! And I let a cuss word fly.

- My daughter Sadie was about 12 at the time & she started crying.
- She wasn't crying because I was hurt...she is surprisingly unsympathetic about my self-inflicted injuries.
- She was crying because she witnessed her father be less of the man that she believed him to be. That hurt worse than the fall.
- But our success or failure in this isn't defined in 1 single moment
- Our legacy is being written day after day with the words we speak, with successes and failures and how we recover from our failures. I'll close with this last point...vs 32.
- If you're looking for a family verse you'd be hard up to find a better one.

BE KIND, TENDERHEARTED, AND FORGIVING WORDS (vs 32)

32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.