



## **Ephesians 4:29**

**NKJV:** "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers."

**NLT:** "Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them."

**AMP:** "Do not let unwholesome [foul, profane, worthless, vulgar] words ever come out of your mouth, but only such speech as is good for building up others, according to the need and the occasion, so that it will be a blessing to those who hear [you speak]."

## **Context**

### **1. Who Wrote It and Why**

Paul is writing to the church at Ephesus — a diverse mix of former pagans, Jews, slaves, free people, rich and poor. They're learning how to live together as the body of Christ. In the surrounding verses, Paul addresses how to "put off" the old self and "put on" the new self. Our speech is one of the primary markers of transformation. The way we talk reveals whose we are.

## 2. The Greek Breakdown

The word "corrupt" is sapos — meaning rotten, worthless, foul, like decomposing fruit. It's not just profanity — it's ANY speech that spreads decay: gossip, criticism, sarcasm, put-downs. The word "edification" is oikodome — a construction term meaning "building." Your words are either construction materials or demolition tools.

## 3. The Connection to Our Series

Week 1: Pause. Week 2: Stop complaining. Now Week 3: Confront the words that wound. This is where it gets personal — the cutting remark to your spouse, the sarcastic jab at a coworker, the criticism disguised as "honesty," the insult hidden in a "joke." These words can kill relationships, confidence, dreams, even faith. Time to chill and choose differently.

### Truth About Your Mouth

#### 1. Words Leave Permanent Marks You Can't Unsay What's Been Said

**Proverbs 18:21** says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." This isn't poetry — it's reality.

Words wound deeper than fists.

A single harsh sentence from a parent can echo in a child's mind for 50 years.

An offhand insult from a spouse can create emotional distance lasting months.

**Proverbs 12:18** says words can be "like the piercings of a sword." Sword wounds leave scars. So do verbal ones.

### **Life Application:**

Before you speak to someone especially spouse, children, or close friends, ask: Could these words leave a permanent mark?

Run them through **Ephesians 4:29**: Is this building up? Is this fitting? Will this impart grace?

### **Real Talk:**

Words are like toothpaste... once they're out, you can't put them back in.

And unlike toothpaste, you can't just wipe them up and pretend it didn't happen.

Some people have squeezed out so much toothpaste, they're standing in a mess that'll take years to clean up.

## **2. Sarcasm Is Just Insult in a Costume Humor Should Never Wound**

Sarcasm has become culturally celebrated we call it wit.

But the word itself comes from the Greek sarkazein, meaning to tear flesh.

When your "joke" requires someone else to be the punchline, it's not humor — it's harm with a smile.

Ever been the target of a "joke" that stung? And when you reacted, you were told "Relax, I was just kidding"? That's manipulation... wounding while avoiding accountability.

### **Proverbs 26:18-19**

**Just as damaging as a madman shooting a deadly weapon**

**19 is someone who lies to a friend and then says, "I was only joking."**

### **Life Application:**

Examine your humor this week.

Are your jokes at someone else's expense?

Do you use sarcasm to say things you're uncomfortable saying directly? If your humor requires a victim, retire it.

### **Real Talk:**

I was just kidding is the adult version of "I didn't mean to" after pushing your sibling down the stairs.

If you have to explain that you were joking, you probably weren't — or at minimum, it didn't land the way you intended. Either way, the wound is real.

## **3. Be an Architect, Not a Wrecking Ball Your Job Is to Build**

Paul uses oikodome — "building up."

He casts you as an architect, not a demolition crew.

Every conversation is either adding to someone's structure or chipping away at their foundation.

**1 Thessalonians 5:11** So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

You're either reinforcing their identity in Christ or undermining it. There's no neutral speech.

The question is: what are you constructing today?

**Romans 14:19** So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up.

### **Life Application:**

Choose ONE person this week and intentionally build them up. Look for specific things to affirm.

Catch them doing something right.

Speak vision over their life. Tell them what you see in them.

Be an architect of their confidence.

**Real Talk:** Research shows it takes about 5 positive comments to undo 1 negative one.

That's a TERRIBLE exchange rate.

It's way easier to just lead with encouragement than spend the rest of the week in emotional damage control. Build first.

Build often. Keep building.

## **4. Replace Criticism with Curiosity — Ask Before You Attack**

Most insults and criticisms come from assumptions.

We assume we know why someone did what they did.

We assume the worst. And then we attack.

**James 1:19** Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.

But what if, instead of assuming, we asked?

Your spouse forgets something you asked them to do  
you could say do you ever listen when I speak? or

Hey, I know you've had a lot going on, is there anything I can do to help our communication... Same situation, radically different outcomes.

**Proverbs 18:13** Spouting off before listening to the facts is both shameful and foolish.

**Life Application:**

This week, every time you're tempted to criticize, pause and ask a question instead.

"Help me understand..."

"What's going on with you? You good?"

"Can we talk about this?"

Curiosity builds bridges. Criticism burns them.

### **Real Talk:**

Before you assume the worst,  
try this revolutionary approach: ASK.

Hey, I noticed you seemed distant tonight — everything okay? works way better than "What's YOUR problem?"

**Curiosity opens doors. Accusation slams them.**

### **5. Impart Grace, Not Judgment — Speak What They Need, Not What You Feel**

Paul says our words should "impart grace to the hearers."  
Grace is giving someone what they don't deserve —  
favor through speech.

The focus isn't what YOU need to say;  
it's what THEY need to hear.

### **Proverbs 15:23 NKJV**

A man has joy by the answer of his mouth,  
And a word spoken in due season, how good it is!

Your teenager messes up — do they need condemnation  
or correction wrapped in love?

Your spouse disappoints you —  
do they need your frustration or your patience?

## **Colossians 4:6**

Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt,  
that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

### **Life Application:**

Before you speak, use the THINK filter:

Is it **True**? Is it **Helpful**? Is it **Inspiring**?

Is it **Necessary**? Is it **Kind**?

If it doesn't pass at least 3 of those 5, maybe just... don't.

**Your silence might be the kindest thing you say all day.**

Not every thought you have needs to be vocalized.

## **Discussion Questions**

**1. Can you remember a specific time when someone's words wounded you deeply — and you still remember them years later? What was the lasting impact?**

**2. What's the difference between constructive criticism and tearing someone down? Where's the line?**

**3. Why has sarcasm become so normalized and celebrated in our culture? What's the appeal, and what's the danger?**

**4. Think about the words you speak at home versus at work or church. Are they different? Why does that matter?**

**5. Paul says our words should "impart grace." What does it look like to speak grace to someone who has disappointed or hurt you?**

**6. Is there someone you've wounded with words that you've never apologized to? What's holding you back from making it right?**

**7. Who in your life needs to be 'built up' this week? What SPECIFIC words will you speak to them?**

SOAP Method

S - Scripture: Read Ephesians 4:29, Proverbs 12:18, and 1 Thessalonians 5:11. Write Ephesians 4:29.

O - Observation: What THREE characteristics should mark our speech? (Good for edification, fitting the occasion, imparting grace.)

A - Application: Think of ONE person you've wounded recently. What could you have said differently? How can you make it right?

P - Prayer: Father, I confess my words have torn people down. I've been critical, cutting, careless. Teach me to build instead of destroy. Help me see people as You see them. Make my tongue an instrument of healing. Amen.

### Commentary Insights

**Jack Hayford:** "'Sapros' describes something so rotten it stinks. Paul isn't just talking about profanity — he's addressing any speech that spreads decay. Gossip, criticism, sarcasm, put-downs — all 'sapros.' All off-limits."

**Matthew Henry:** "Our words should be 'good for edification' — fitted to build up those who hear. We're not merely to avoid evil speech but actively promote good speech."

**Jimmy Swaggart:** "Notice Paul says words should 'impart grace.' Grace is undeserved favor. When you speak, are you giving people what they deserve or extending grace? Your tongue can be an instrument of grace or judgment. You choose."

Cross-References

Proverbs 21:23 — Series Anchor

Proverbs 15:4 — "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness breaks the spirit."

Colossians 4:6 — "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt."

Proverbs 16:24 — "Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul."

James 3:5-6 — "The tongue is a small member... See how great a forest a little fire kindles!"

### Weekly Challenge

Choose 3 people: one in family, one at work/school, one in community/church. Speak SPECIFIC words of affirmation to each — not generic compliments, but specific observations about their character, value, or impact.

Bonus: apologize to someone your words have wounded.

### Closing Encouragement

Your words have real power — power to wound or heal, tear down or build up, kill or give life.

This week you're making a choice: wrecking ball or architect?

Will your words leave permanent scars or permanent blessings?

Chill. Think. Build. And watch how everything changes.