

# FOUR RULES OF COMMUNICATION

(Ephesians 4:25-32)

Good relationships don't happen automatically! Neither are they immune from problems. All men are sinners (Romans 3:10-12, 23) meaning they are selfish and finite — and that's all it takes to set the stage for conflicts. Take heart! Good marriages and solid lasting relationships can be built by people who know Jesus Christ and follow His principles for communication, especially as they relate to problem solving. In Ephesians 4:22-24 Paul stresses the importance of laying aside the "old self" and its way of doing things and putting on the "new self," which is God's way of handling matters. The following verses (25-32) detail the "Four Rules of Communication" which we are to use in all our relationships. They are good for both preventing and solving problems.

## 1. BE HONEST (v. 25)

### A. Speak

- 1) Greek imperative- i.e. a command- "You speak!"
- 2) People cannot read our minds. "For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him?" (1 Corinthians 2:11).
- 3) Clamming up is out for the Christian!

### B. Speak truth

- 1) "Speaking the truth" in 4:15 is a verb form that involves continuous action. We are to always speak truth!
- 2) Examples of dishonesty
  - a) Outright deceit
  - b) Incongruency: when "halo" communication and "content" communication conflict
  - c) Disguised communication: when the real message is masked; innuendo
- 3) Honesty is more than not lying—it is being open and truthful.
- 4) "Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices" (Col. 3:9)

### C. Speak the truth lovingly (4:15)

- 1) You can be brutal with the truth!
- 2) Christians are to speak the truth with the other person's best interests in mind. Care must be given to not only what you say but also how you say it. (e.g. tone of voice; volume; facial expressions, etc.)
- 3) "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned as it were with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person" (Colossians 4:6).

## 2. KEEP CURRENT (vv. 26, 27)

A. "**Be angry and sin not.** Do not ever let your wrath—your exasperation—last until sundown. Leave no such room or foothold for the devil." (Amplified Version)

B. **Failure to solve each day's problems** that day means you are:

- 1) Guilty of sin - you're commanded to do it!
- 2) Opening the way to resentment and hatred
- 3) Distorting subsequent problems
- 4) Endangering your sexual relationship

C. "**Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow**, for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:34).

### 3. ATTACK PROBLEMS – Not People (vv. 26, 27)

#### A. “Unwholesome words” (“corrupt communication” – KJV)

- by-passes the real issue
- zeroes in on the person’s character (cf. Matthew 5:21-22)
- tears down or rips apart (cf. James 3:5-12)
- grieves the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30)

#### B. “Edifying” communication

- encourages or builds up
- zeros in on the real issue
- centers on personal responsibility (cf. Matthew 7:1 f f).
- gives “grace” (i.e. the desire and ability to do God’s will) to those who hear.

### 4. ACT! DON’T REACT! (vv. 31-32)

#### A. Reaction (v. 31) – attitudes and actions you must “put off” completely

- 1) Bitterness – the inability to treat someone as if they never hurt you
- 2) Wrath – flaring outbursts of rage
- 3) Anger – settled indignation of hostility that frequently seeks revenge; the “slow burn”
- 4) Clamor – harsh contention and strife; public quarreling; brawling
- 5) Slander – speech that injures; abusive speech
- 6) Malice – the desire to harm others or to see others suffer

#### B. Actions (v. 32) – attitudes and actions you must “put on” to replace the reactions

- 1) Kind – benevolent; helpful; courteous
- 2) Tenderhearted – lit. “of good heartedness”; compassionate; sympathetic
- 3) Forgiving – to pass over an offense and to free the offender from the consequences of it. “just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” i.e.:
  - \*Firstly: before you confessed
  - \*Freely: without merit on your part
  - \*Fully: for every offense

#### C. Arguments are possible only if there are two people who react.

### CONCLUSION

- A. Changing habits is not easy, but can be done (1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 4:13)! It is much easier than the “way of the transgressor” (Proverbs 13:15b KJV).
- B. No matter how ungodly others are in their attitudes and actions, you must communicate biblically! Their sin does not justify your sin!!