

## Opening Illustration:

**Communication is key to effective relationships. Poor communication has contributed to the breakdown of many social settings:**

- Poor communication at work destroys productivity.
- Poor communication on the court can cripple a team.
- Poor communication is one of the top three causes of divorce.
- Poor communication between parents and teens can rip families apart.

## Illustration of the impact poor or deceitful communication can have on a global scene (Boxer Rebellion):

In 1899 FOUR reporters from Denver, Colorado, met by chance on a Saturday night in a Denver railroad station. Al Stevens, Jack Tournay, John Lewis, and Hal Wilshire worked for the four Denver papers: the *Post*, the *Times*, the *Republican* and the *Rocky Mountain News*.

Each had the unenviable task of finding a scoop for the Sunday edition. They hoped to spot a visiting celebrity arriving that evening by train.

However, none showed up, so the reporters wondered what on earth they would do. As they discussed options in a nearby saloon, Al suggested they make up a story. The other three laughed – at first. But before long they were all agreed – they would come up with such a whopper that no one would question it and their respective editors would congratulate them on their find.

A phony local story would be too obvious, so they decided to write about someplace far away. They agreed on China. “What if we say that some American engineers, on their way to China, told us they are bidding on a major job: the Chinese government is planning to demolish the Great Wall?”

Harold was not sure the story would be believable. Why would the Chinese ever tear down the Great Wall of China? “As a sign of international goodwill, to invite foreign trade.”

By 11 P.M. the four reporters had worked out the details, and the next day all four Denver newspapers carried the story – on the front page. The *Times* headline that Sunday read: “Great Chinese Wall Doomed! Peking Seeks World Trade!”

Of course, the story was a ridiculous tall tale made up by four opportunistic newsmen in a hotel bar. But amazingly their story was taken seriously and soon ran in newspapers in the Eastern U.S. and even abroad.

When the citizens of China heard that the Americans were sending a demolition crew to dismantle the Great Wall, most were indignant, even enraged. Particularly angry were members of a secret society made up of Chinese patriots already against any kind of foreign intervention. Moved to action by the news story, they attacked the foreign embassies in Peking and murdered hundreds of missionaries from abroad.

In the next two months twelve thousand troops from six countries, working together, invaded China to protect their countrymen. The bloodshed of that time, born out of a journalistic hoax fabricated in a saloon in Denver, was the time of violence known ever since as the Boxer Rebellion.<sup>1</sup>

**Take your Bible and turn with me to the book of Ephesians 4:25-32.**

- **The Apostle Paul provides several clear exhortations about godly communication in this section of Scripture. Several sermons and booklets contain these wonderful truths.<sup>2</sup> For some reason most of the preachers and authors skip over verse 28 in their analysis. I believe the immediate context helps us with this dilemma. Instead of verse 28 randomly referring to work ethic alone, I believe it refers to the “work” it takes to engage in godly communication.**
  - Be Honest. (25)
  - Keep Current. (26-27)
  - Invest in the process. (28)
  - Attack the problem, not the person. (29-30)
  - Act. Don’t react. (31-32)

**Make the connection with 4:25-32 and the rest of the book of Ephesians.**

- **Believe the truth.**
  - **Chapter One:**
    - **God’s plan involves each member of the Trinity.**
      - God the Father chose us in eternity past. (3-6) [cf. verse 4]
      - God the Son redeemed us in the present. (7-12) [cf. verse 7]
      - God the Spirit seals us for the future. (13-14) [cf. verse 13]
    - **God’s plan includes intentionality.**
      - He chose us. (4)
      - He adopted us. (5)
      - He redeemed us. (7a)
      - He forgave us. (7b)
      - He bequeathed us. (11)
  - **Chapter Two:**
    - The glory of salvation (2:1-10)
    - The reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles into the church (2:11-22)
  - **Chapter Three:**
    - The mystery of the church revealed (3:1-13)
    - Prayer for spiritual strength with God’s power on display to answer our prayers (3:14-21)

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Aurandt, ed., *More of Paul Harvey’s the Rest of the Story* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), pp. 136-138.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.faithlafayette.org/resources/sermons/christian\\_life\\_and\\_growth\\_four\\_rules\\_of\\_communic](https://www.faithlafayette.org/resources/sermons/christian_life_and_growth_four_rules_of_communic)

- **Walk in the truth. (chaps. 4-6)**
  - Ephesians 4:1 begins with the word "THEREFORE..."
    - John MacArthur Study Bible: "This word marks the transition from doctrine to duty, principle to practice, position to behavior. (see Rom. 12:1; Gal. 5:1; Phil. 2:1; I Thess. 4:1)
  - Chapters 4-6 are intensely practical! The key word to follow is "WALK."
    - Walking in unity (4:1-16)
    - Walking in purity (4:17-32)
      - Regarding how you think (4:17-24)
      - **Regarding how you talk (4:25-32)**
    - Walking in love (5:1-7)
    - Walking in light (5:8-14)
    - Walking in wisdom (5:15-21)
      - Walking in wisdom in your marriages (5:22-32)
      - Walking in wisdom in your parenting (6:1-4)
      - Walking in wisdom in the workplace (6:5-9)
      - Walking in wisdom in the spiritual realm (6:10-20)
    - Final farewell (6:21-24)
- **Understand the structure/argumentation in Ephesians 4:25-32.**
  - Put off / Put on pattern
    - Part 1 - A negative command
    - Part 2 - A positive command
    - Part 3 - The reason behind the positive
- **Practice the five principles.**
  1. **Be Honest. (25)**
    - Part 1 - A negative command
      - Put away falsehood.
    - Part 2 - A positive command
      - Tell the truth. (4:15)
        - *Conforming your words to reality.*
    - Part 3 - The reason behind the positive
      - Believers are all members of one another in Christ's body, the church.
        - We live together. We know you. You can't fool us.

**Gospel Truth:** Ephesians 4:15-16 – Christ as the head... we are members together.

**Illustration:** Picture of a community group of PBC!

2. **Keep current. (26-27)**
  - Part 1 - A negative command
    - Don't become sinfully angry.
  - Part 2 - A positive command

- Keep short accounts.
- Part 3 - The reason behind the positive
  - The devil wants to trick you into justifying the intensification of your anger so as to turn it into sin.
    - The devil is tricky. He wants to turn your righteous anger into sinful anger. (see vs. 31 – anger...clamor...slander... malice)
    - James 4:7 – Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

**Gospel Truth:** Ephesians 2:1-3 – Jesus set us free from the bondage of the prince of the power of the air.

**Illustration:** “A handsome elderly man stopped at my study one day and asked me if I would perform a wedding for him. I suggested that he bring the bride in so that we might chat together and get better acquainted, since I hesitate to marry strangers. “Before she comes in,” he said, “let me explain this wedding to you. Both of us have been married before – to each other! Over thirty years ago, we got into an argument, I got mad, and we separated. Then we did a stupid thing and got a divorce. I guess we were both too proud to apologize. Well, all these years we’ve lived alone, and now we see how foolish we’ve been. Our bitterness has robbed us of the joys of life, and now we want to remarry and see if the Lord won’t give us a few years of happiness before we die.” Bitterness and anger, usually over trivial things, make havoc of homes, churches, and friendships.” – Warren Weirsbe, *Expositors Commentary on Ephesians*

### 3. Invest in the process. (28)

- Part 1 - A negative command
  - Do not steal.
- Part 2 - A positive command
  - Work hard.
- Part 3 - The reason behind the positive
  - Practice Christian charity by working hard to have resources to give away.
    - *Try not to be a “needy” person.*
    - *Work hard enough to provide for your own needs and have extra to share with those in need. (Acts 20:33-35; I Thess. 4:11-12; 2 Thess. 3:7-12)*

### Connection to communication?

Sometimes you will find yourself deficient when confronted by the sin of others. When this happens, take time to replenish your resources by...

- Reflecting on the forgiveness offered to you by God in Christ Jesus (Eph. 4:32)
- By examining the status of your own heart. (Acts 20:33-35)
  - Personal contentment/serenity (vs. 33 – Do not covet.)

- Personal responsibility (vs. 34a – these hands ministered to my necessities)
- Personal generosity (vs. 34b – and to those who were with me... vs. 35 – by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’)

**Gospel Truth:** Ephesians 2:10 – We are His workmanship... created for good works

**Illustration:**

- Seek first to understand before being understood. – J. Richard Clarke
- Zacchaeus returning 4x what he stole (Luke 19:8)

**4. Attack the problem, not the person. (29-30)**

- Part 1 - A negative command
  - Don't speak unwholesome (rotten) words.
- Part 2 - A positive command
  - Speak in ways that help others (good words).
- Part 3 - The reason behind the positive
  - Helpful speech builds up others and keeps you from grieving the Holy Spirit.
    - The Holy Spirit seals you until the Day of Redemption. Why would anyone want to bring dissatisfaction to the giver of the greatest gift?
      - Grieving the Holy Spirit
        - Acts 7:51 – “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always **resist** the Holy Spirit...”
        - Psalm 78:40-41 – “How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and **grieved** him in the desert! They *tested* God again and again and *provoked* the Holy One of Israel.”
        - Isaiah 63:10 – “But they rebelled and **grieved** his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them.”
          - The children of Israel grieved, resisted, tested, and provoked the Holy Spirit by forgetting His goodness toward Him and ceasing to trust Him for provision.
          - We grieve the Holy Spirit when we forget that God is the source of our gifts/resources... we are simply recipients. This failure will cause us

to be humble in the way we treat others... even patient with them when others make mistakes.

**Gospel Truth:** Ephesians 1:13-14 – The Holy Spirit seals believers and guarantees our inheritance. Ephesians 2:11-22 – The Jews needed reconciliation the same way the Gentiles do... through JESUS CHRIST! (2:17)

**Illustration:** A word fitly spoken (Proverbs 25:11)

## 5. Act. Don't react. (31-32)

- Part 1 - A negative command
  - Get rid of the evil vices. (all 6 of them)
    - *Bitterness (pikria) – resentment, animosity, spite*
    - *Wrath (thymos) – fury, passion, rage (internal)*
    - *Anger (orgē) – state of relatively strong displeasure (external via emotional)*
    - *Clamor (kraugē) – shout, shouting, screaming*
    - *Slander (blasphēmia) – denigration, defaming, disrespecting*
    - *Malice (kakia) – baseness, depravity, wickedness*
- Part 2 - A positive command
  - Live a transformed life. (3 commandments)
    - *Be kind (chrēstoi) – gracious, easy, loving*
    - *Be compassionate (eusplanchnoi) – tenderhearted toward another*
    - *Be forgiving (charizomenoi) – give graciously, cancel, pardon*
- Part 3 - The reason behind the positive
  - In Christ, God was kind, compassionate, and forgiving.

**Gospel Truth:** Ephesians 2:4-9 – For by grace you have been saved! / Eph. 2:14-18 – Christ is our peace. / Eph. 3:20-21 – He is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, according to the power at work within us...

**Illustration:** Jerry Springer Live Cable TV Show (avoid unwholesome speech)

## Apply the Text:

- **The words you speak reveal the condition of your heart. (Lk. 6:45)**

<sup>45</sup> The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

Repent.

Recommit.

- **Good communication is the fruit of a renewed mind. (Eph. 4:20-24)**

Recalibrate your motives.

Reflect on Gospel truths.

- **Good communication takes work.**

Prioritize which of the 5 exhortations needs your immediate attention.

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- Keep Current. (26-27)
- Invest in the process. (28)
- Attack the problem, not the person. (29-30)
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