



October 10, 2010
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The One Another Druthers: Speak to One Another Ephesians 5:19-20; 4:15; 25; 29

I'd like to start my message this morning with a question: **does it make any difference?** Is it making any difference? For five weeks now we've been talking about how God wants us to treat one another. You've listened, laughed, talked back, stamped your wrists, knelt, bowed, kissed. We've had a lot of fun with this series. But back to my question: **is it making any difference?** Are you thinking more carefully about the way you treat one another? Are you more loving? Have you greeted each other more warmly without being reminded? Have you encouraged someone on purpose? Have you submitted to someone because you love Jesus? Have you put up with an annoying person?

I know God's Word is making a difference for some of you. Last Sunday, after listening to the message about "bearing with" annoying people, when the time came for communion, one man didn't move. His wife asked him, "Aren't you going to go up?" And he answered, "Not yet. I need to ask your forgiveness first." So...right here in God's house...God's word spoke to one of God's kids and changed his heart. Made him see how annoying he had been and compelled him to set things right so that he could go to the Lord's Table with a clear conscience. It made a difference to **him**.

So...one more time...is any of this making any difference to you? Every Sunday I pray that God will use what I say to bring his Word to life...so that it might make an eternal difference. Let's ask the Holy Spirit to make a difference right now. (Pray-read Ephesians 5:19-20)

Did you see our next "one another?" "Speak to one another...." **How we speak to one another may be the single most important way that we live out the other one-anothers.** How do we love one another or encourage one another or spur one another on or greet one another without speaking to one another in the right way? And what better way to **disobey** the Lord's call to unity than to speak hateful, dishonest, discouraging, demeaning, gossipy, destructive words to one another? How many of you had something hurtful said to you this last week? And how many of you **said** something hurtful this last week...something that you would give anything to reel back inside your mouth? Has any part of our body ever caused us more trouble than our tongues? Listen to what James says: (3:6): **"The tongue ...is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell."** Don't sugarcoat it, James. Tell us what you really think!

The book of Ephesians also has a lot to say about how we speak to each other. I want to give you a guided tour of some highlights. Underline each reference to our speech just to remind you how much God cares about the way we talk to each other.

First stop, Ephesians 4:15. Paul warns the Ephesians not to be like spiritual babies tossed back and forth by waves of false teaching. Then he goes on to say: **Instead, speaking the**

truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

What is our mission statement here? "Working together to present everyone mature in Christ." That's what this verse is talking about. God wants us to grow up; to become mature in Christ. And one of the ways we work together to achieve maturity, we find right here. Do you see it? **Speak the truth in love!**

You know what "pithy" is, right? Something pithy is condensed down to the bare essentials. Well, you won't find a much pithier, much more valuable maturity principle than this one. **Speak the truth in love.** I cannot tell you how many times we pastors have reminded each other of this principle when we were dealing with a difficult person or a difficult situation. Truth and love. Both are essential, aren't they? Truth without love is disastrous. Anyone here ever watch "Bones" on TV? The central character is a woman who ALWAYS speaks the truth...brutally! She has no idea how her words hurt others. She doesn't care.

It's funny on TV. It is not funny in real life. There are people who pride themselves in being "brutally honest," as they would call it. And...that is exactly what they are. Brutal. Truth by itself can be brutal and destructive. **But love by itself can be indulgent.** Have you ever known anyone who was so loving, so conciliatory and so sweet... that they couldn't bring themselves to speak hard news to anyone? They would rather live in pain or frustration than risk hurting someone's feelings. Of course, the irony is, **this isn't love at all.** The really loving thing is to tell the truth even though it might hurt. This is like the parent who refuses to discipline a spoiled child because they love them so much, they don't want to hurt their feelings...and they end up ruining them for the rest of their lives.

Truth without love is brutal. Love without truth is gutless. But when you bring them together...when you speak the unvarnished truth into someone's life but do so with a heart of genuine empathy and compassion, that is the kind of communication that will help a person grow up.

Let's do a test. How many of you tend to err on the truth side? Raise your hands. How many of you err on the love side? How many have it perfectly balanced, always speaking the truth with love. I'm teasing...but there are some of you that actually do this very well. The rest of us need to learn from you. Speak the truth in love.

Now, drop down to verse 29: ***Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.***

Some of the guys in my Life Group climbed Pinnacle Peak Friday. It is scary enough to keep you focused and provides the most breathtaking view of Mt. Rainier and the rest of the Cascade Range. While we were climbing...in fact, every time we get together...we joked. A lot. And sometimes the humor is a little bit...mmm...indelicate. We joke, we tease, we poke fun. But when some of us complain about the various parts of our bodies that aren't working like they used to...then, magically, there is a transformation. The rest of us empathize and sympathize with that person, right? Are you kidding? We rush in like hyenas on a wounded water buffalo and savage them. All in great fun, of course. Now, ladies, I realize this sounds unthinkably brutal, right? How can your pastor be party to such behavior? So just to be fair...men... how many of you behave exactly that same way when you are with your friends. Confess!

One of the ways that men connect is to tease and poke fun at each other. I can always tell how the Mexico Build is going by the way the men joke with each other. **But reading this**

verse again made me wonder...is this the unwholesome talk Paul refers to? I asked my Tuesday morning sermon Life Group what they thought. They felt that the answer is found in the second half of the verse... did you see it? What kind of talk is supposed to come out of our mouths? **"...only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs."**

Say **"speak up!"** (Some of you are saying, "What did he say?") I said, "Say, 'Speak up!'" Normally we use that phrase to mean, "Talk louder! I cannot hear you!" But here, Paul gives new meaning to the words, **"Speak up."** Paul says, "I want what you say to build people **up**, to lift people **up**, to buck people **up**, to buoy people **up** ...I want you to speak up! Don't speak down to people. Don't speak people down! Don't speak words that tear down or wear down or run down. They get enough of that from the world. **Speak up!** Let the words that you say lift your brothers and sisters to a higher place...to a place of hope and confidence and encouragement and joy! **Speak up!"**

In this context, then, "unwholesome talk" is any talk that does not build **up** your listeners. Guys...if your joking and teasing is a way of deepening your affection and trust with each other so that you are able to speak the truth in love... by all means, joke and tease...even if it is indelicate. But if your joking and teasing is really a means of elevating yourself by putting someone else down...or if they are just thoughtless words that have no more than giggle value...Paul would probably say, "Stop it! Stop talking like that. Instead, **speak up!**"

"Speak the truth in love," "Speak up!" Finally, look at our morning's text again. (19) **Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.** I want you to do something for me, okay? Right now, think about your favorite hymn or praise song. Raise your hand when you have one. Mine would be, "Come Thou Fount." Now...think of your favorite line in that song. Mine would be, "Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above." Got yours? OK...are we agreed that this is God's Holy Word? And that we do what it tells us to do? **"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs."** Okay...turn around to someone right now...and sing that line to them! Go for it!

"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." I'll tell you the truth; for a long time this seemed an odd verse to me. I memorized much of Ephesians when I commuted to seminary. I repeated these words over and over again as I drove the Grape Vine between Bakersfield and Pasadena. But I was always puzzled by this verse. **"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs."**

The next line says, "Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord..." That part I get. We sing praise to the Lord. But how do you speak to each other by singing? Does this mean that every time I pass you in the hall I greet you with, "Holy, Holy, Holy?" I was thinking of how I could speak to my wife Cyndi with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Maybe I greet her every morning with **"Joyful, joyful I adore thee"** or **"Great is thy faithfulness..."** or **"Good Christian Man Rejoice"...** or **"What wondrous love is this, o my soul, o my soul?"** I could do that to Cyndi!

But is that what Paul means when he says, "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs?" I don't think so. What Paul is saying is, "when you are singing your praises to God, **eavesdrop on one other.** Let the worship of your brothers and sisters ring in your ears. Let their praise become your praise and vice versa and so encourage and inspire and uplift you." I was sitting in front of "Bob" in worship a few weeks ago. He doesn't normally sit there. But when it came time to sing, Bob belted out the hymns with incredible gusto. It was beautiful...and inspiring. In fact, when we were done singing, I turned around and said,

"Thank you! Your singing helped me to worship!" The great theologian Thomas Aquinas said that singing addresses three audiences: God, one's neighbor and one's self.

It is very interesting to look around on Sundays during our song times. Many people sing boldly and joyfully but there are some who will not sing at all. They stand politely, but refuse to even crack their mouths open. Honestly, it's usually men... of all ages. If you are a follower of Christ and this describes you, I want this text to challenge you. First of all, for reasons we cannot understand, it makes God happy when we sing to him. You might say, "I'm not a singer." God would say, "I know; I made your vocal chords. You don't have to be a singer. But I still want you to sing. Even if it is off key...even if you speak the words quietly...I am your God, your creator, your savior...and one of the ways you say, 'Thank you,' to me is by singing. I don't care how horrible the sound is to others; your voice...your praise...is precious to me. Please—(the Lord asks)—will you sing to me?"

But a second reason we sing is to witness to each other...to encourage each other. I really think there is something more to this verse. It is not just about singing to or in front of each other. **It is about speaking the deep things of God into each other's souls.** It is caring and daring to speak to one another about things that matter. About God and His mission and relationships and family and pain and brokenness.

This is an area that comes easily to most women; it is one of God's amazing gifts, ladies, that you are able to share so deeply so easily, most of you. Not so with men. We will talk about the Huskies, about the Seahawks, about the Mariners... (all right, we don't talk much about the Mariners)...about golf, about business, about money...but we find it very difficult to talk about God and life and ...well...things that matter. There are guys who have been meeting every Saturday for 25 years for breakfast who would consider themselves dear friends...but they have never spoken about deep things. About real things. About the things of God.

When Paul says, "Speak to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," he's not telling us that we have to walk around singing to each other. But he is saying, "**Speak of deep things.** Have the courage to speak of things that matter." One way our Life Group does this is to periodically ask the question, "Go around the circle and rate your marriage on a scale of 1-10. Tell us the truth and tell us why." Is that speaking "deep?" Last week I met with a man whose life is falling apart. He wants to use this experience to bring himself back to God. I told him to read the book of Philippians...jot down a few notes...and get back to me; we would talk some more. I made an identical offer four weeks ago to another man in crisis. Didn't hear a peep from him. Imagine my delight, then, when I received this: four single-spaced, typewritten pages of my friend's reflections on the **entire** book of Philippians. This man is ready to "speak deep."

When was the last time you steered a conversation away from the banal ...away from the sports scores and stock prices and school gossip...and toward something like, "How is your spiritual walk right now?" Or, "What you are telling me reminds me of a Psalm I was reading yesterday." Or, "Seriously, sister, your flirting is going to destroy your marriage." As long as we are content to tiptoe through the tulips with each other, **we will never be used by God to help each other grow up.**

The way we speak matters. Notice I haven't said too much about how we ought not to speak. You know what that is the minute you say it. Gossip, lies, gossip, slander, gossip, criticism, gossip, put-downs, gossip...do you notice a theme here? Gossip is the sanctified Gig Harbor sin. We ought not speak that way; it is a fire that burns us up and everyone around us. But if you focus on speaking what is good—**Speak the truth in Love... Speak Up... Speak Deep—**

you won't have the time to speak stupid or petty or destructive words. Just imagine if, for one week, we were ruthless in our own self-censoring. **Speak the truth in love... Speak Up... Speak Deep.** Will you remember this when you walk through the Doors of Amnesia back there? Will this make any difference in your life this week? What is God calling you to work on?

To close, I thought we'd take Paul a little more literally. The hymnody of our church is one of our treasures. There is so much that inspires when we speak to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. So...I've picked ten of my favorites. We are going to sing one verse of ten great hymns. Everyone, let's sing! Men, too! Tone deaf people, too! Let's delight the Lord and let's build each other up as we close in worship.

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **Read the passage out loud.**

- **Reflect & Apply Individually:** Each person take 5-7 minutes to circle words or phrases that jumped out at them; jot down your reflections; check the notes in your Study Bible for insight or help. Grapple with what the Spirit is saying to you, your group, the church—write down some applications.

- **Reflect & Apply Together:** Share your thoughts. Don't teach! Listen and reflect on God's word together; grapple with what God is calling us to do and be through this passage.

- **Pray together:** tell the Lord one thing you are thankful for and lay one concern before the Lord.

Dig deeper

1. Why are both parts of Ephesians 4:15 essential? Recall a time when this formula was out of balance in your own life. What happened? How could it have been better.

2. What does Paul mean by unwholesome talk in the context of 4:29? What did Pastor Mark mean when he uses the phrase "Speak up!"? Did someone "speak you up" this week? Describe.

3. Do you find Ephesians 5:19 unusual? If so, why? What does Paul mean about "speaking to one another" with singing? How do the words, "Speak deep" get at what Paul is talking about here? Give one example of a question you could use to drive conversation to a deeper place with a friend or group. Use it in your group!