

Four Rules of Communication

Ephesians 4:25-32

Good relationships are not built upon an absence of problems. They are built upon an ability to handle problems in a godly way. Nobody is immune from problems. All are sinners and that is all it takes to set the stage for conflict! Take heart! Solid and lasting relationships can be built by those who know Christ as Savior and who learn to deal with problems biblically.

In *Ephesians 4:22-24*, Paul talks about “How to grow and change” by replacing “old self” thoughts and actions with biblical thoughts and habits which is God’s way of handling conflicts.

He illustrates this in the following verses (verses 25-32), and in these examples of “put off” – “put-on”, he gives four very effective “Rules of Communication.” They are good for preventing and solving problems.

1) Be Honest (verse 25)

a) Not just put off lying, but speak the truth.

i) Greek imperative: A command. “You Speak!”

ii) People cannot read our mind.

(1) *1 Corinthians 2:11* – “For what man knoweth the things of a man, ...”

iii) Honesty is more than not lying

b) Speak the truth.

i) Problems cannot be solved unless they are expressed.

Note: How to speak the truth will be dealt with in Rule 3 and in the “Six Questions.”

c) Dishonesty is out!

Examples of dishonesty:

i) Outright deceit.

ii) Conflict between body language and tones of voice and the content of what we say.

iii) Disguising the message; innuendoes.

2) Keep Current (verses 26, 27).

a) Get angry, but don't sin.

“... Do not ever let your wrath – your exasperation, your fury or indignation – last until the sun goes down. Leave no [such] room or foothold for the devil – give no opportunity to him.” (Amplified Version).

i) Lying (verse 25) is sin; Anger (verse 26) may not be.

ii) Anger is energy to be used to solve problems.

iii) Anger is sinful when it is used to attack others (*Proverbs 25:28*) or self (stewing about the problem) (*Ephesians 4:26, 27*)

iv) Failure to solve problems daily means we are giving place, or a foothold, to Satan.

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(1) Opening the way to disappointment, resentment, bitterness, and hatred

(2) Distorting subsequent problems.

b) Stop clamming up.

i) Cutting off communication by:

(1) Crying

(2) Threatening an explosion – a volcanic eruption

(3) Bottom lining: “All I have to say is ...”

ii) Deal with problems today.

Matthew 6:34 – Tomorrow will have problems of its own

c) Six questions to ask before bringing up a sticky problem:

i) Do I have the facts right?

Proverbs 18:13

ii) Should love hide it? Is it sinful? Is it hindering growth?

1 Peter 4:8

iii) Is my timing right?

Proverbs 15:23b

iv) Is my attitude right? Am I trying to help the other person?

Ephesians 4:15

v) Are my words loving?

Ephesians 4:15

vi) Have I prayed for God's help?

Proverbs 3:5b

3) Attack the Problem, not the Person (*verses 29, 30; Ephesians 4:15*)

a) Avoid “unwholesome words” (“corrupt communication” – KJV):

i) Words that attack a person's character (*Matthew 5:21, 22*); Name calling

ii) Tear down, rip apart, or hinder growth (*James 3:5-12*)

iii) Clouds or by-passes the root issue.

iv) Grieves the Holy Spirit (*Ephesians 4:30, 5:18*)

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- b) Use “edifying” communication that encourages or builds up (4:15, 29)
 - i) Two ways we must speak the truth in 4:15 are in love and to produce growth.
 - ii) Words that edify, gives “grace” (the desire/ability to do God’s will) to those who hear.
 - iii) Words that zeros in on the conflict – are solution oriented

Note: This rule can also be violated by tones and body language.

4) Act, don’t React (verses. 31, 32)

- a) Reactions (vs. 31) – attitudes and actions that must be “put off.”
 - i) Definitions:
 - (1) Bitterness: the refusal to treat someone as if they never hurt you.
 - (2) Wrath: flaring outbursts of anger.
 - (3) Anger: settled indignation or 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: desire to harm others or see them suffer.
 - ii) The natural tendency of our sin nature is to be defensive about dealing with our own sins.
 - (1) *Ephesians 4:31; Genesis 3:8-13*
- b) Actions (verse 32) – attitudes and action you must “put on” to replace the reactions:
 - i) Definitions:
 - (1) Kind: benevolent, helpful, courteous.
 - (2) Tenderhearted: lit. “of good heartedness,” compassionate, sympathetic.
 - (3) Forgiving; to give up your right or claim to revenge, hold a grudge or get even.
 - ii) You, through God’s Spirit, must learn to be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving.
- c) Conflicts are possible only if each person reacts.

Conclusion

- 1) Changing habits is not easy, but it can be done. (1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 4:13)
 - a) It is much easier than the “way of the transgressor” (Proverbs 13:15b)
- 2) No matter how irresponsible the other person is, you must act biblically!
 - a) You can’t change the other person, but you can change how you respond.