

29 Let no unwholesome word come out of your mouth, but if there is any good word for edification according to the need of the moment, say that, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

Let no unwholesome word come out of your mouths-- The Greek word *sapros* means rotten or decayed, and is used of rotten wood, withered flowers, and rancid fish. Just think about the smell of rotten wood, or even better, rancid fish coming out of your mouth when you're speaking unwholesome words—kind of makes us want to close our mouth, doesn't it? In the New Testament, it refers to worthless or withered trees that produce evil or worthless fruit Matt 7:17–19 **17 So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.** When you see the fruit, then you know the tree, and of course Jesus brings up that we have accountability for the way in which we conduct ourselves. Matt 12:35-36 **35 The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. 36 But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”** So our words, the content and intent of our language lets us know what our heart is like. Have you ever said something, and then said, “Where did that come from?”, “I didn't know that THAT was in there?” Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. When our emotions are running high, when we've just hit ourselves in the finger with a hammer, when we've just backed into a parked car, when someone has just offended or betrayed us, then we get a chance to see what's deeper in our hearts. So, it's not just foul language, or cussing or cursing that we're talking about here, but also criticizing, gossiping, maligning others, and things like this that make our language unwholesome, and foul. And, in both passages, Jesus brings the culpability for judgement that this brings upon us. This is why Jesus says in Matthew 15:11 **11 It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man.”**

So, Paul just says, let no corrupt word out of your mouth go forth. And this implies that we have the opportunity to stop it before it does! Yes, if it tries to come forth, and you stop it, then it lets you know that you still have a heart problem that needs to be dealt with. But, when you let those kind of hurtful, backbiting, foul, cynical, cutting, harmful, or otherwise evil, or corrupt, or unwholesome words come forth, then not only do you have the heart problem to deal with, you've made it worse by reinforcing it by hearing yourself say it. Not only that, you've probably compounded the problem, and made additional problems with whomever heard you say these words. You can harm your witness as a Christian, so that no-one wants to hear you tell them about your life changed by Jesus. You can harm and even destroy relationships. Proverbs 18:21 **21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.** The tongue can speak words of life, of strengthening and edification, building up the person spoken to, or the tongue can tear down and kill and destroy. There's a lot to be lost by allowing ourselves to lose our temper and speak. So, we must watch over our mouth. Psalm 39:1 **I said, “I will keep watch over my ways So that I do not sin with my tongue; I will keep watch over my mouth as with a muzzle While the wicked are in my presence.”** If we let God handle things, then He will, and He will save us from getting ourselves in a lot of trouble with our mouth.

James, ever the practical teacher illustrates the power in the tongue, and it's ability to guide the course of our lives, if we are not careful saying in 3:7-9 **7 For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. 8 But no one among mankind can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people, who have been made in the likeness of God;**

So, if the tongue is the most dangerous thing about us, then why is it that most people so often leave it unguarded?! Yes, the Bible admits that this is difficult, but sometimes we have to bite our tongues instead of saying something, and some days we're going to have to do it so often that we come home with a sore tongue. Proverbs 15:1 **A gentle answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger**

Gossip, and talking about people may be a popular pastime, and it's certainly what a lot of television is filled with, but it's at best a waste of time—it doesn't change anything, does it? In 1752 a group of men, including John Wesley, who were nicknamed Methodists, signed a covenant which every man might hang on his study wall. The six articles of the solemn agreement follow:

1. That we will not listen or willingly inquire after ill concerning one another;
2. That, if we do hear any ill of each other, we will not be forward to believe it;
3. That as soon as possible we will communicate what we hear by speaking or writing to the person concerned;
4. That until we have done this, we will not write or speak a syllable of it to any other person;
5. That neither will we mention it, after we have done this, to any other person;
6. That we will not make any exception to any of these rules unless we think ourselves absolutely obliged in conference.

If we would follow these rules, then there would be no gossip, or tale-bearing, or false-witness against others. Tale-bearing poisons the person who speaks, the person who hears, and the person who is talked about. My old pastor used to say, if there were no gossipees, then the gossip would be out of business. Deuteronomy 13:14 gives the procedure that we should use to find out the truth. 14 then you shall investigate, search out, and inquire thoroughly. And if it is true and the matter is certain that this abomination has been committed among you, Unless you've done all that you can to ensure that everything that you're saying is true, then you shouldn't be saying it. It isn't the people who tell all they know that cause most of the trouble in this world, it's the ones who tell more than they know.

“but whatever is beneficial for the building up of that which is lacking. Beneficial words should be used for the purpose of building up a needy individual or a needy body of believers. Any word that comes out of a believer's mouth should be good and not evil which causes injury. The ministry that God has given us includes that words that we say to other believers, we are to build up, edify, strengthen our brothers and sisters. Eph 4:12-13 **12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ** The word used for “building up”, “edification” is oikodomé, which translates literally as “the building of a house.” It means “to instruct and improve, especially in moral and religious knowledge.” As used in the New Testament, Vines says “edification” indicates the promotion of “spiritual growth and development of character of believers, by teaching or by example, suggesting such spiritual progress as the result of patient labor.”

That means that edification includes any activity by word or deed, or example that results in more Christlikeness, either in ourselves or in another believer. Mutual edification involves helping one another along the road to Christlikeness, and it requires the participation of all members of the church. Teaching and preaching improve our understanding of God; encouragement promotes conduct that develops Christlike character. When we exhort one another and hold one another accountable, we are prompted to engage in activities that promote godliness. Accountability means we lovingly check each other's spiritual progress. The church exists in community. The church is described as Christ's flock, His body, and His building. None of these metaphors highlight individual identity.

in order that it might give grace to those who hear.

Grace means bestowment of unmerited favor and/or enablement. As a body of believers we have many lacks or needs, and beneficial words contribute to our individual and corporate spiritual growth in Christ. their individual growth and enable them to fill up that lack or need among them. What people first noticed about Jesus' preaching in Luke 4:22 was the grace and authority with which He spoke. **22 And all the people were speaking well of Him, and admiring the gracious words which were coming from His lips;** He is our model in telling people about the grace He offers in the forgiveness of sin through His sacrifice on the cross, and a relationship with God made possible by His bridging the gap, atoning for our sin.