

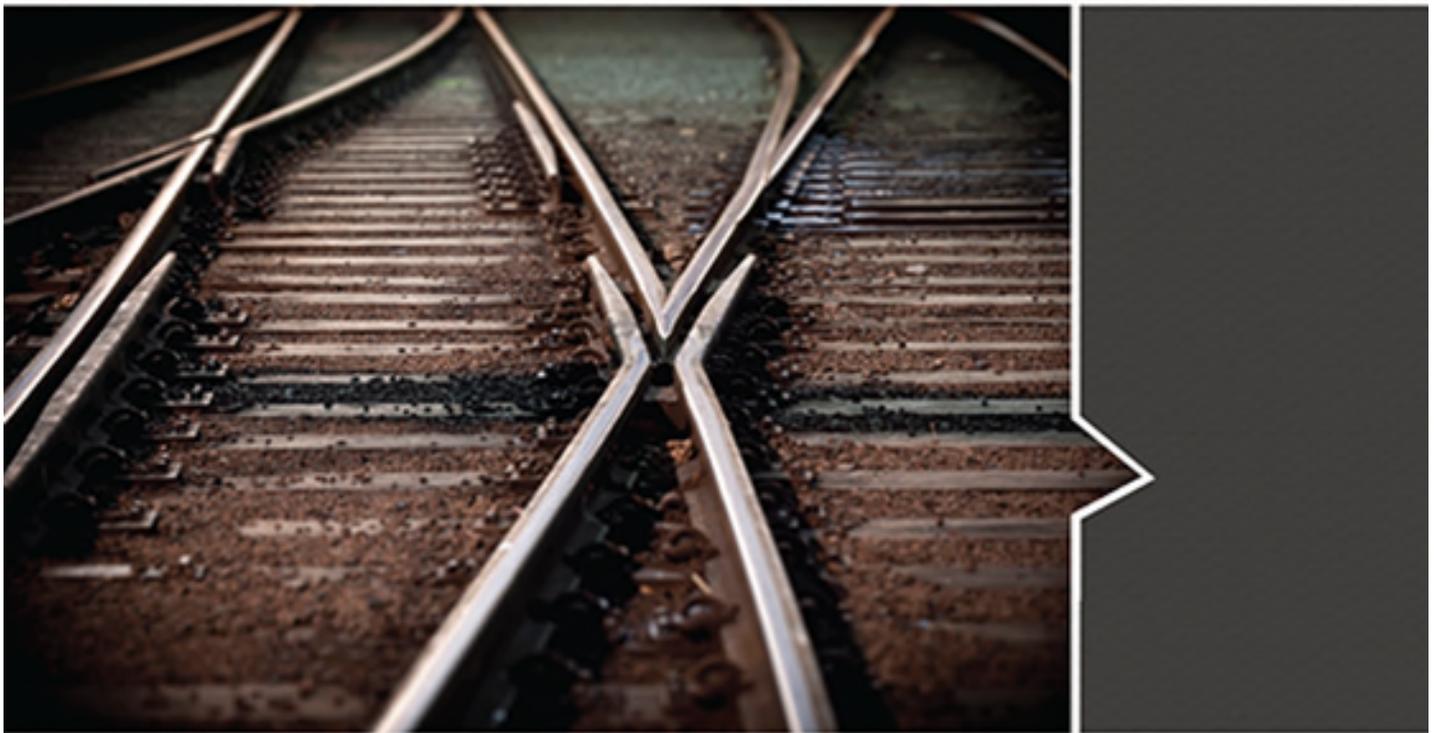
SESSION 4: CONNECTED THROUGH WORDS

SMALL GROUP MEMBER BOOK



# CONNECTED

MY LIFE IN THE CHURCH



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## Question #1: What is your favorite way to share good news?

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### The POINT

*Our words matter*

### The Bible Meets Life

“Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me.”

It’s not true. You and I both know words can be harmful. You and I can both remember a time—maybe even a time recently—when someone said something that slipped past our defenses and struck home. Maybe it was a casual comment. Maybe it was a direct attack. Either way, we can still feel the emotional wound where those words cut with the sharpness of a knife.

Yes, words can hurt us. Words can wreak havoc. But words can also be a powerful force for good. Words can motivate, encourage, and inspire. They can bring hope into darkness and change the direction of a life. This is especially true in the church.

As we’ll see in this session, our words have great impact on how we relate to one another as followers of Christ.

### What Does the Bible Say?

*Ephesians 4:25-32*

*<sup>25</sup> Since you put away lying, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, because we are members of one another. <sup>26</sup> Be angry and do not sin. Don’t let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup> and don’t give the Devil an opportunity. <sup>28</sup> The thief must no longer steal. Instead, he must do honest work with his own hands, so that he has something to share with anyone in need. <sup>29</sup> No foul language is to come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear. <sup>30</sup> And don’t grieve God’s Holy Spirit. You were sealed by Him for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> All bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander must be removed from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup> And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.*

### Key Words

**Redemption (v. 30)**—The Greek term means “liberation by ransom.” Jesus paid the ransom price on the cross to secure our spiritual redemption from sin for those who trust Him.

Ephesians 4:25-28

The church is a body of individuals bound together in a common mission to advance God’s kingdom. For that reason, those inside the church should live in a way that’s noticeably different from those outside.

For example, Paul encouraged his readers to be truthful. I recently heard about a survey in which 547 business professionals were asked, “Is it ever OK to lie at work?” Most of the respondents said it’s OK to lie in some situations. Specifically, they said it’s OK to lie when being honest would be perceived as a “career limiting” move. They also felt

lying was justified when people in management were less than honest, or when lies were necessary to cover up errors in business cultures that don't allow for mistakes.

As a society, we've also become adept at practicing deception even as we "technically" tell the truth—we simply omit certain details or fail to mention key facts. We justify deception by categorizing it as a "white lie" or a "necessary evil."

Such actions are devastating in the church. Dishonesty destroys trust and unity within the body of Christ.

Paul also warned his readers about anger. Notice he didn't say we should avoid anger altogether. Instead, he gave these instructions for when we get angry:

- Don't sin.
- Don't let the sun go down on your anger.
- Don't give the Devil an opportunity.

There are different ways to handle anger when it comes. For example, many people stew in their anger, replaying the offenses that provoked them, looking for ways to justify their rage. The problem is that feeding anger this way provides the Devil an opportunity to tempt us toward bitterness, hatred, and revenge. That's why this passage says to settle disagreements before sunset.

The better choice is to go to the person who angered you and seek peace as quickly as possible. Choose to forgive. Words hurt, remember? And words spoken in anger can be especially damaging in the church.

**Question #2: What is your initial reaction to Paul's commands about honesty and anger?**

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**Question #3: How does a church benefit when its members speak with integrity?**

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<b>BE ANGRY. DON'T SIN?</b>	
Highlight any of these words that cause you to feel angry.	HUNGER DRUGS CRIME POLITICS WALL STREET CONGRESS DIVORCE BANKRUPTCY POLICE GLOBAL WARMING DECEPTION GOSSIP FACEBOOK HYPOCRISY
How can the commands in verses 25-32 influence the ways you deal with anger?	
<input type="text" value="Type your response here"/>	

Ever try putting toothpaste back inside the tube after you've squeezed it out? It's virtually impossible. Words work the same way. Once spoken, they can't be taken back. Yes, you can apologize, but you can't un-say something that's been said. Harsh words can leave an emotional mark on others just like a physical blow leaves a bruise.

Paul warned the Ephesian believers to choose their words carefully when communicating with one another. In verse 29, he warned them specifically against using foul language with one another. The word translated "foul" refers to something rotten, such as spoiled food.

We tend to think of foul language in terms of cursing or saying something inappropriate. Certainly that kind of speech dishonors God and undermines our Christian witness. But in the context of these verses, Paul's reference to unwholesome talk has more to do with malicious gossip and slander. He was referring to speech that inflicts harm on someone and causes division within the body—speech that tears down spiritually and emotionally rather than building up.

Rather than tearing others down, let's be intentional about using words to build one another up—especially within the body of Christ. Think back to when someone spoke the right words to you at the right time. We value such encouragement. As representatives of God's kingdom, we must be intentional about speaking words that encourage others and help them grow. In this way, we serve as channels of God's grace, allowing Him to minister through us and provide what our brothers and sisters in Christ need to hear.

#### ***Question #4: How does technology amplify the impact of our words?***

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Paul also warned against grieving the Holy Spirit—a caution all Christians should take seriously. We have the opportunity to please God when we use words that build one another up within His church. At the same time, we possess the ability to disappoint God and grieve His Spirit when we use words to tear one another down.

#### ***Question #5: What habits, routines, and choices will empower us to make the changes commanded here?***

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Ephesians 4:31-32

A family is driving to church when a discussion about the checkbook quickly becomes a full-blown argument. By the time they arrive at the church, everyone is frustrated and upset. When they get out of the car, however, everyone looks polished and happy. They smile and pretend like nothing is wrong.

What are we to make of such behavior? The answer is that we often compartmentalize our lives. One compartment holds "church life," while other compartments reveal how we really operate.

The Christian life doesn't work that way. It makes no sense to profess our love for Jesus in one setting and then verbally abuse or gossip about others in another. James wrote, "Praising and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers, these things should not be this way" (Jas. 3:10). To follow Jesus Christ requires that we relate to others the way He relates to us. Because God showed us kindness and compassion—because He forgave us when we didn't deserve it—we must treat others the same way.

In Ephesians 4:31, Paul told his readers to get rid of ungodly attitudes and actions such as bitterness, anger, wrath, shouting (clamor), slander (evil speaking), and malice. Paul concluded the chapter with an admonition to show kindness and compassion, and to forgive one another the way God forgives us.

One word characterizes this kind of speech: loving. As followers of Jesus and members of His church, everything we say and do should be based on the foundation of love

## Live It Out

Choosing to speak in a positive way seems easy, but it can be difficult to accomplish. Here are some options for being wise with your words:

- **Speak positively.** Look for opportunities where your words can encourage, motivate, give hope, provide guidance, or even just make someone smile.
- **Memorize Psalm 19:14.** Pray this verse every morning as you prepare for the day ahead. Let it guide your speech.
- **Resolve your dishonesty.** Identify a person with whom you've been dishonest in recent months. Confess your deception, request forgiveness, and affirm your commitment to honest speech moving forward.

Words can certainly hurt us. That's the truth. But words can also be a powerful force for good. That's our hope. Choose to bring hope into darkness and connect others with Christ through your words.