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Have you ever been around someone who is always speaking positive, loving words? Do you remember how built up and encouraged you felt after spending time with them? Do you know that you can do the same for those around you?

Romans 14:19:

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

God's Word encourages us to follow after, or seek after eagerly, things which make for peace and edification. To "edify" in this verse means to build up; it involves promoting another's growth in godly wisdom, holiness, and happiness. So, how can we build up and promote growth in one another? One powerful way is with our words. We can speak loving words that edify and minister grace to one another.

Ephesians 4:15:

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

Ephesians 4:29:

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

We want to speak loving, wholesome truths that build believing and dispel doubt, worry, and fear. As we share God's Word with people, we will be giving them profitable words that will build them up and strengthen them.

Ephesians 4:29 also shows what we will *not* speak if we are speaking words of edification: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth...."

We are not to allow anything bad, rotten, or putrid to come out of our mouths. Those words do not edify or build up anyone—they do just the opposite. The opposite of edification is destruction, which is a pulling down or demolition (II Corinthians 13:10). This could be any communication that is harsh or critical or that discourages and pulls someone down from thinking the truth of God’s Word.

Our words are powerful and have a strong effect on people. Proverbs 18:21 says that “death and life *are* in the power of the tongue.” One type of destructive communication is sarcasm. By definition, sarcasm is “designed to cut or give pain,” and it is usually directed against an individual. Sometimes we may be tempted to think that being sarcastic is funny, but it is often at the expense of someone else. This can be very discouraging and disheartening not only for the person it is directed at, but also for those who are around to hear it.

Psalms 34:13,14:

*Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.
Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.*

As God’s people, that is what we want—to do good, to seek peace, and to bring edification, not destruction. We want to build a habit of speaking edifying words rather than sarcastic, harsh, or critical ones. But speaking words that are loving and full of grace doesn’t come automatically. We each have to decide to speak them, and it takes deliberate thought and action. Here are two simple, practical keys to help us speak words of edification.

1. Fill our hearts with the Word. Read it, study it, listen to it, love it. We let it dwell in us richly, “...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matthew 12:34). What we spend our time thinking about is what we spend our time talking about. So if we want to build up and edify one another, we must keep an abundance of the Word in our hearts.
2. Think before we speak. Proverbs 13:3 says, “He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: *but* he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.” The words “keepeth his mouth” mean that he is careful in his words, speech, and conversation. We are to be careful with what we say. We can control what we say by thinking before we open our mouths. Then we will keep—protect or guard—our lives. We want to think before we speak so that we are edifying and building up those around us, because what we say is powerful.

Every day is full of opportunities to encourage those around us. Let's decide to think first and speak loving, gracious words from hearts full of God's Word. Our words of edification have the power to help others reach a higher level of thinking in their spiritual development. We can inspire them, build them up, love them, and strengthen them with our words. Let's use powerful words of edification!

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