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Studies show that on average people speak thousands of words each day. That's a lot of words! This means that as we go about our day, we have many opportunities to choose what words we speak. We can choose words that build up or words that pull down. In the Body of Christ, one key to cultivating strong, godly relationships is choosing words that edify, or build up, others in love.

As God's children, we choose to speak words that will build up others. God's Word exhorts believers to edify one another.

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 the words that proceed out of our mouths to be edifying, to build up. We want to encourage and uplift the hearer. When we edify other believers, we are building them up and helping them grow. With God's Word as our standard, we can do that for each other.

As parents of two children, my spouse and I endeavor to edify our kids by sending them off to school with prayer and Bible verses each day. How thankful we are when they come home at the end of their school day and share how they were able to claim a scripture to help themselves overcome a challenge. The Word that we shared with them built them up, prepared them for their day ahead, and pointed them in the right direction to claim God's Word.

The opposite of edification is destruction, which means a pulling down or demolition. In terms of the words we speak, destruction can refer to communication that is harsh or critical. We want our words to *encourage* rather than *discourage*. Let's read the

first part of Ephesians 4:29 again:

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth....

Here God exhorts us to let no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouths. “Corrupt” means rotten or putrid. If you’ve ever eaten or smelled something rotten, you can understand how that type of communication would not be a blessing. A rotten word would do the opposite of building someone up.

To help us determine if our words will build up or pull down, let’s first pause *before* we speak.

James 1:19:

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak....

Then let’s check our words *before* we say them. Here are three checkpoints of communication—questions we can ask ourselves before we speak:

1. DO OUR WORDS MOTIVATE WITH LOVE?

Since we love our fellow believers and want God’s best for them, we choose loving words that motivate them to think and do the Word. In contrast, harsh words tend to motivate with fear rather than love. They can often pressure people into doing something or thinking a certain way. But God wants people to obey out of love, so we endeavor to motivate with love.

2. DO OUR WORDS HELP ELEVATE ANOTHER’S THINKING TO THE WORD?

Remember how Bible verses helped my children overcome challenges in their day? We can redirect or raise one another’s thinking to a higher plane with the words we share. We help each other think God’s Word so we can abound more and more as sons of God.

3. DO OUR WORDS CULTIVATE UNITY ON THE WORD?

God put us all in the one Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:12-27). What we say should help unify us on God’s Word, not divide or throw walls up between us. As we stay like-minded on God’s Word, our edifying words can bring us together with even greater love.

As we go about our day, we can pause before we speak and can check our words. We can ask ourselves if our words are motivating with love, if they are helping to elevate another's thinking to the Word, and if they are cultivating unity on the Word. Then we choose to speak words that build up, encourage, and uplift. We have an abundance of opportunities to do this throughout the day. And as we do, we cultivate strong, godly relationships and build up one another in the Body of Christ.

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