

**LETTERS FROM GRANDPA**  
**# 177**

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with this verse: **“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs” (Eph. 4:29)**. This verse is on my mind because a few days ago (3/7/18) a 12 year old girl from Carl Junction committed suicide. She was apparently the victim of bullying and bad things that people were “saying” about her.

Since nature abhors a vacuum this verse is part of some general teaching encouraging everyone to avoid a vacuum and replace evil with good: Notice in Ephesians 4:25 ff. Put off falsehood - speak the truth. Don't steal - but work so you can share with those in need. Don't use unwholesome talk, but use good words to build up others. Note the contrast. Stop doing bad, and start doing good! Stop unwholesome talk and use words that are wholesome and good!

There is an old saying “sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me”. This is not true! Names do hurt! James wrote: **“Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue is also a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell” (Ja. 3:5, 6)**. Someone's cruel tongue set one little girl's heart on fire.

As paradoxical as it may seem, even truth can be spoken in an “unwholesome” way. Jesus realized this and told His disciples: **“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear” (Jn . 16:12)**. Later they would be ready for such truth, but not now! The writer of Hebrews echoed the same sentiment. He wanted to tell them deep truths about Melchizedek but to do so would have been like giving strong meat to a weak baby (Heb. 5:11 -14). A loving parent does not ask a child to carry so much weight that it will hurt them. The same truth also applies to information.

The Scriptures encourage us to only say wholesome things that will build people up. Our words should “encourage” not “discourage” anyone.

Before repeating the gossip we need to remember that truth is not the only criteria that needs to be considered. The gossip may be true, but is it “wholesome”. Just because something is true does not prove that anyone needs to hear it. Some things, as you know, are not even to be “named” among believers (Eph. 5:3).

The expression “little ones” in the Bible does not always refer to children. John once came to Jesus explaining that they had told someone to stop casting out demons because he was not one of them (Mk. 9:38). Jesus said they were wrong to do this for “whoever is not against us is for us”. He then explained that **“if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck” (Mk. 9:42)**. There are obviously adults in the flesh who are still babes in Christ (1 Cor. 3:1).

The Scriptures admonish us to be **“quick to listen, slow to speak” (Ja. 1:19)**. David prayed that God would set a guard over his mouth (Ps. 141:3). How helpful it would be to have God pass judgment on the words we speak before we open our lips to say them. Since we speak out of the abundance of our heart David’s thoughts went even deeper when he prayed: **“May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer” (Ps. 19:14)**.

You can do it! With the help of Christ you can frame your words in such a way that they will help some struggling soul to stay in the race and not give up. Remember! **“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Prov. 25:11)**. Or as Isaiah said: **“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, Your God reigns” (Is. 52:7)**.

May all your words be wholesome and helpful,

Grandpa Boyce