

## UNWHOLESOME TALK

**“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).**

Since nature abhors a vacuum the Holy Spirit teaches us to replace bad conduct 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 good words!

The importance of this truth was driven home a few days ago when a 12 year old girl in Carl Junction, Mo. committed suicide. She apparently did this because of what others were saying about her. How sad! James reminds us of the destructive power of the tongue by stating: **“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).** This poor little girl was a victim of unwholesome talk.

As paradoxical as it may seem, even untimely truth can sometimes be “unwholesome”. Corrie Ten Boom's father illustrated this to her by refusing to answer a question. He pointed to her luggage which was too heavy for her to carry. Later, he explained that someday she would be strong enough to carry both the heavy luggage and also heavy truth. 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).

The simple solution to building people up involves only saying wholesome things that will be helpful. Our words should “encourage” and “build up”, not “discourage” and “tear down”.

Almost everyone has heard gossip about some hypocrite. Before repeating the gossip, however, we need to know that truth is not the only criteria that needs to be considered. We also need to consider if these words will be “unwholesome” to the person we are talking to. The fact that certain words may be true is not proof that someone needs to hear them. 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).**