

Ephesians 4:25–32 | “Putting Off, Putting On, Part 1: Speech”

Preached on August 31, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 4:25–32 today, as we continue our study in the book of Ephesians. *[pauseeee]*

Paul has been talking about how we are to “walk,” that is, how we are to characteristically live our lives as Christians in this world. *[pause]*

He lifted us up to see the high calling that we have in Christ, and how we are to live in a manner worthy of that.

And then he explained that a prime way to live that way is to put off the old self and put on the new. *[pause]*

What he means by that is that we are to put away that old self and its way of life that we had before we were saved...

And to instead, put on a new, Christ-shaped life that reflects our identity in Him. *[pauseeee]*

Now, Paul probably realizes that that language needs some “fleshing out,” so to say, so he expounds upon what that actually looks like in daily life. *[pauseeee]*

Have you ever heard complex instructions on how to do something, but you were still confused as to what it actually looked like? *[pause]*

That’s why on a sports team, after the coach has given instructions on a new drill, he will have a couple guys demonstrate what the drill looks like.

He wants to show you what it looks like *in practice*. *[pause]*

So also, what Paul does in Ephesians 4:25–32 is he takes different practical topics, and shows us what it looks like to put sin off and put righteousness on. *[pauseeee]*

Since Paul discusses different topics in this section, what I’ve decided to do is to take verses 25–32, and do 3 parts on it. *[pause]*

What I will do is gather what Paul says about 3 different topics, and discuss each one, week-by-week.

So this week is all about speech, next week will be about anger, and the third week will be about work. *[pauseeee]*

Let’s begin by READING our verses today, and be on the lookout for what Paul says about our speech. *[READ 25–32]*

The first instruction that we find about our speech is found in verse 25, and it’s this...

I. Don't lie, but speak the truth. (25)

A phrase that is thrown around a lot lately is the phrase, “fake news.” *[pause]*

It's used to speak about news companies or news articles that are not truthful, instead, these companies and articles spread false information. *[pauseeee]*

Sometimes they state something just utterly and completely false, but other times they say some true things, but then some untrue things. *[pause]*

In this way, they distort the truth and so mislead others by not reporting the actual facts of the situation. *[pauseeee]*

‘Fake news’ is an ever-constant reminder that words can either communicate the truth or not communicate the truth.

But ‘fake news’ does more than either convey or not convey the truth, for ‘fake news’ also reminds us that not reflecting the truth can cause lots of damage. *[pauseeee]*

We all know the damage that can be caused by false news stories...

A person's reputation could be utterly destroyed by a false story. *[pause]*

People could get hurt, if they follow something that claims it's healthy and good for you, but it's actually harmful.

And a country could be torn from within, if false stories are thrown around left and right, for it causes division. *[pauseeee]*

So also, we must remember that *our* words can convey truth, or mislead and cause division with lies.

And that's why Paul says, “Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.” *[pause]*

Did you notice the put off-put on teaching?...

Put away falsehood, and put on truth-speaking—so we are to replace falsehood with truth. *[pauseee]*

You can't put on truth without first putting away falsehood, for the two cannot co-exist.

Like oil and water do not mix, so falsehood and truth do not mix—they are opposites.

To do one is to not do the other. *[pauseeee]*

Some people will try to say, “Although I didn't tell the *whole* truth, a lot of the truth was in there!”

Or they say, “I know it wasn’t fully true, but at least it was *half* true.” [pause]

What good is that?

A half-truth is really a full falsehood because whatever is not fully the truth is fully a falsehood. [pauseeee]

Do not try to skirt around the truth, or sprinkle in some truth into a lie, instead, *put away falsehood!* [pause]

So no lying, no deception, no quote-on quote “half-truths,” or any other falsities—put it all away, Christian! [pauseeeee]

Now why is it that lies are so tempting?

Like, why does Paul even have to tell us to put them away? [pause]

There are a myriad of reasons, but one commentator put it well: “Truth is often inconvenient, untidy or embarrassing, and we are constantly tempted to bend it into a less awkward shape.”¹ [pauseeee]

The truth isn’t always what we want in that moment, for it’s not always pleasant to face. [pauseeee]

A child’s mind thinks about the punishment that they will receive if they tell the truth of what they did, and so they try to avoid that punishment by lying to their parents. [pause]

We know that at times it’s inconvenient to speak the truth, so we seek the “convenient” way of lying...

Maybe you think, “Things would just go so much quicker if I just said something different here, and didn’t share the truth, for if I said the truth, then it would become this big thing.” [pauseeee]

Or the truth is sometimes embarrassing, and we don’t want to look bad, so we hide the truth with a lie.

No one *wants* to feel embarrassed, so that desire to look good tempts you. [pauseeee]

When you think about it—our reasons for lying often come down to *what we want*. [pause]

We want to get ahead of someone else, we want to be more comfortable, we want to look better, or we want to not face the consequences.

But this is not the way that we have been called to live! [pause]

¹ N. T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 12, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 142.

So put away lying and put on truth-speaking, and that means saying to yourself, “I’m not going to lie, but I’m going to speak the truth.” *[pauseeee]*

“Putting away” means that you need to be intentional about this.

You can’t sit back, and expect to continually speak the truth, rather, you need to actively put away falsehood, and speak the truth. *[pauseeee]*

We speak whatever lines up with reality, and we do not mislead, distort, or twist the truth in any way. *[pause]*

The truth covers everything: accounts of what happened, facts about something, and everything else—we speak truth.

And what’s the reason that Paul gives for speaking the truth to one another?...

He says, “for we are members one of another.” *[pausee]*

Paul is primarily talking about our relationships with others in the church, and he’s emphasizing how important it is to speak truth to fellow believers. *[pauseeee]*

A reason why we speak the truth with fellow believers is because we are *one* together in Christ. *[pauseeee]*

In America, we are so individualistic that we don’t often think this way, but we need to discard that individualistic thinking...

We are all members one of another. *[pause]*

Paul is referring to the ‘body’ imagery of the church—the church is the body of Christ. *[pause]*

Think of a human body: a person’s body is made up of different body parts, so also, as the church, we are each like different body parts in one body. *[pause]*

That means that we belong together and are connected together in Christ, and so we should live in ways that reflect and promote that oneness. *[pauseeee]*

Imagine if all of your different body parts were against each other and were fighting each other—it wouldn’t go well, would it?

So also, lying to one another is like a person’s body parts lying to each other. *[pauseeee]*

Imagine if your eyes lied to your feet, you’d be tripping and falling all over the place.

Or imagine if your taste buds lied to your hands, and so you kept feeding yourself something really bad for you. *[pause]*

No, we are members one of another!

We are in this together, belong together, and how we treat one another affects the whole. *[pause]*

As one commentator put it, “A lie is a stab into the very vitals of the Body of Christ.”²

[pauseeee]

Just think of what would happen if a church kept lying to one another...

It would disintegrate trust, so that no one would be sure if they could trust the word of another.

[pause]

It would ruin the reputation of people in the church, as lies were spread, and people were hurt.

[pause]

People would be hesitant to do anything, for they wouldn't know what to trust, and disunity and discord would be everywhere. *[pauseeeee]*

Can a church really function and flourish under those conditions?! No way! *[pause]*

Lying to one another hurts the whole body, so how could we lie to one another, knowing that we are members of the same body? *[pause]*

We are in this together for the glory and mission of God—remember that.

And remember that falsehood only hurts and brings ruin, but the truth is always beneficial, even if it's not the most pleasant-sounding thing in the moment. *[pauseeee]*

So reshape your thinking about other believers...

No longer see them as distinct or separate from you, but as being one with you as the body of Christ. *[pauseee]*

How often would the temptation die down, if you thought *that way*? *[pauseeeee]*

God is showing us that we are to be truth-speakers.

And really, we should speak the truth so much that people can't help, but notice. *[pauseeee]*

No matter who we are interacting with, we should speak the truth so often that people know that they can trust our word. *[pause]*

At the workplace, we should be known as those who speak the truth, even if it means we will feel embarrassed for some mistake we made. *[pause]*

In the home, we should be known as those who speak the truth, even if it means we will have to apologize for something that we did. *[pauseeeee]*

² John Mackay quoted in: John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians, The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 185.

Let's put away falsehood, and speak the truth with one another. *[pauseeee]*

Have you lied to someone?

You need to make it right, so confess your sin, and tell them what the truth is. *[pause]*

Be more concerned with the truth than with the consequences of what may happen as a result. *[pauseeee]*

Have you spread things on the internet that you know wasn't 100% true?

Confess that sin, and seek to only share truthful things. *[pause]*

In God's power, determine that anything you say is going to be true.

So take off lying like old, nasty clothes, and put on the fresh, clean, beautiful clothes of truth-speaking! *[pauseeee]*

So we are not to lie, but speak the truth, but something else that we see about our speech is found in verses 29–30...

II. Don't use corrupting talk, but build others up. (29–30)

Think about the difference that *one* word can make when it is either added or removed from a statement. *[pause]*

The word "not" is very small, yet it's very important, isn't it?

It's very powerful because its presence or absence can have dire consequences, depending on the circumstance! *[pause]*

Think of the difference between, "You can eat that," versus, "Do NOT eat that."

The difference could mean being poisoned or sick, and being OK and healthy. *[pause]*

Or think of the difference between, "Feed the bear," and, "Do NOT feed the bear."

The difference could be life or death! *[pauseeee]*

This is because words have *power*.

They can hurt or heal, but they can also lead to health or illness, life or death. *[pauseeee]*

We must understand that what we say has great power—the tongue can bring either great harm or great blessing upon other people. *[pause]*

Words can cultivate life or cause death to a relationship or community.

Or words can change people's beliefs, attitudes, and life-trajectory for good or evil. *[pauseeee]*

Think about how words can break or create a friendship...

There are some prior friends who never talk to each other again because of something said.

[pause]

There are some family members who won't talk to other family members for years upon end because of the tongue. *[pause]*

Churches are divided and some are brought down because of the mishandling of the power found of words. *[pauseeee]*

Words may seem so innocent and harmless—"they're just words, right?"—but they can cause great harm or great good.

And that's what Paul shows us here in verses 29–30: our words can corrupt or build up. *[pauseee]*

First, the negative side, he says, "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths." *[pause]*

The word that is translated as "corrupting" here has the root meaning of "rotten." *[pause]*

It's a word that's often used when talking about bad fruit—so this is talk that is rotten, decaying, worthless, bad, and unsound.

And that's why translations will use words such as "corrupt" or "unwholesome."³ *[pauseeee]*

Paul isn't super specific here of what he means, but I believe that he's using a general term to refer to *any* talk that is detrimental to others.

And that's why the contrast is with words that build up. *[pauseeee]*

Think about something 'unwholesome' or 'corrupt'—it is detrimental. *[pause]*

Unwholesome food or an unwholesome living situation is detrimental to your health.

So also, things that corrupt make things worse, and so it's not going to work well. *[pause]*

Therefore, Paul is talking about talk that produces 'bad' in relationships...

It's speech that degrades, corrupts, and spoils relationships.

And that means that this term most likely covers things like foul language, for it is rotten, nasty, and spoiled speech. *[pause]*

But it also covers things such as offensive and abusive speech, and all other speech that hurts or damages others. *[pauseeee]*

³ The ESV & KJV use "corrupting" & "corrupt," respectively. The NIV, NET, & NASB use "unwholesome."

Consider all of the rotten results that unwholesome talk has caused in the lives of individuals, families, and communities. *[pause]*

Words have been used to cause trouble and destroy neighbors. *[pause]*

Twisted, false words discourage, dishearten, and demoralize people.

They break, crush, and fracture one's spirit, and can penetrate and pierce us when uttered. *[pause]*

Have you ever had someone speak to you and say something so hurtful that you were like, "Wow. Ouch!" and it just penetrated and hurt so deeply, like you got stabbed? *[pause]*

That's what can happen with our words—now that's extremely powerful, but in a bad way. *[pauseeee]*

We may think, "Oh, it was just a little word that I spoke."

Or we can think, "Come on, it was just words, it's not like I physically hurt you."

But it's more damaging than you think—words can penetrate to the deepest parts of a person. *[pauseeee]*

Some people to this day are still affected in their lives by words spoken by others in years gone by. *[pauseeee]*

Put away corrupting talk!

It has to do with our old way of life before Christ, but it has nothing to do with who we are now in Him! *[pause]*

It only hurts and is detrimental to others, do not engage in it!

Don't think, "Oh, it's just a little bit here and there," no, do not let it come out of your mouth *at all*. *[pause]*

Instead, what are we to replace this "corrupting talk" with?

"Only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion." *[pauseeee]*

So it's not just that we say, "Well I never say anything that hurts others," but God wants us to not just avoid hurtful speech, but to also actively build others up with our words. *[pauseeee]*

Christians aren't just those who avoid bad things, but we are those who bless others, too. *[pauseeee]*

So instead of tearing down, we build up!

And so this is speech that edifies others, encourages them, helps them to grow, become spiritually strengthened, and advance in godliness. *[pause]*

This kind of talk is also to be fitting to what the situation and person needs at the time.

And the beautiful result of this “building up” speech is that it gives grace to others. *[pause]*

Our words used rightly can be a precious gift to other people that blesses and benefits them, so that they grow in their spiritual walk with the Lord. *[pauseeee]*

That encouraging word at just the right time—builds that person up. *[pause]*

That challenge from God’s Word—grows them and benefits them. *[pause]*

That kind word lifts their spirit, so that they are led to speak kind words to others. *[pauseeee]*

Christians: use your words to build up, not tear down!

Before you say something, reflect upon which one of those it does. *[pause]*

Is it unwholesome and detrimental to them, or wholesome and beneficial? *[pause]*

Is it fitting for the situation and person, or unfitting? *[pauseeee]*

Now what’s interesting is that the verse about not grieving the Holy Spirit is given right after these instructions about how to use our words. *[pause]*

Certainly, other sins can grieve the Spirit, but I believe the placement of this verse is purposeful...

We need to be especially aware that hurting or tearing down others with our words grieves the Holy Spirit. *[pause]*

Listen to verse 30, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” *[pauseeee]*

A big reason for putting away corrupting talk is that it grieves the Spirit! *[pause]*

Do you ever think about or realize that—that the way that you talk to others can grieve the Holy Spirit within you? *[pauseeee]*

The Holy Spirit is not some impersonal force, but this verse reminds us that He can be grieved...

The way that we live can actually cause the Spirit to be saddened. *[pauseeee]*

God cares so much about us and others that He’s grieved over our sin. *[pause]*

He’s not just stoically unconcerned with how you live, but He deeply cares about how you live and how you treat other people. *[pauseeee]*

He does not rejoice in our wrongdoing, but grieves over it. *[pause]*

He wants us to live for Him, and think about it this way—if you are continually grieving the Spirit, then you won't be led by the Spirit, as you are called to be.⁴ *[pauseeee]*

Remember this as you live your life—it is possible to grieve the Spirit by the way you live. *[pause]*

This is the *Holy Spirit*, the *Spirit of God*, that we are talking about.

And don't do this, for you were sealed by Him for the day of redemption. *[pauseeee]*

When a person trusts in Jesus Christ, the Spirit takes residence in their life...

And so marks them as a child of God, and guards their eternal life, guaranteeing that they will someday be fully redeemed. *[pause]*

So if that is true in your life, why would you grieve the one who marked you as His? *[pause]*

Why would you grieve the one who is with you all along the way? *[pause]*

Why would you grieve the one who cares so much about you? *[pause]*

Why would you grieve the one who guards and guarantees you your redemption? *[pause]*

No, we do not want to grieve Him, but we want to live in a way that's pleasing to Him, and to be led by Him!

So Christian, do not grieve the Spirit, especially by the way you talk to others, but walk by the Spirit. *[pauseeee]*

If we take all that Paul says in verses 25–32 about our speech, what do we see?...

Christians are to be truth-speakers, who use their words for good and not evil.

As we conclude this morning, I want to mention a couple, final things...

First, I want you to take a moment and ask yourself this: how have *you* used your words? *[pause]*

Have you lied to someone? *[pause]*

Have you hurt others with your words? *[pause]*

It's easy to dwell in guilt and shame for those words, but know that in Christ, there is forgiveness for those sinful words.

⁴ A reference to Galatians 5:16–18.

For He who, “committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth,”⁵ died on the cross for your sins, so that you don’t have to bear the punishment for your sinful words before God!

[pause]

Rest in the forgiveness of Christ, but also know that you need to make it right with the person that you sinfully used your words against. *[pause]*

Confess your sin to that person, and see the beauty of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation with another person. *[pauseeee]*

Secondly, maybe you have been hurt by another person’s words...

You feel the pain, you feel the hurt, and it has really upset you a lot. [pause]

Go to the person and lovingly tell them how their words have hurt you, if you haven’t already.

[pause]

Humbly and graciously approach them, remembering that you too have used your words in sinful ways. [pause]

Extend forgiveness to them, and I pray that you would find healing in Christ. *[pauseeee]*

And lastly, how can we speak words of truth and words that build up, more and more in our lives?...

We need the Lord—so go to the Lord, asking Him and relying upon Him to give you the ability and strength to not lie and tear others down, but to speak the truth and build them up. *[pauseeee]*

Let’s not use our words in sinful and selfish ways, but let’s use our words for the good of others!

[pause]

Realize the great, beneficial impact that your words could make in someone else’s life...

They can be blessed by you—benefited—so that they are built up. [pauseeee]

What a blessing to be forgiven and blessed in Christ, so that now we can bless others with our words!

⁵ 1 Peter 2:22.