

The Challenge of Communication: Correction

Family Talk #2 - Pastor Gary Combs - July 27, 2025 - Ephesians 4:17-25

INTRO: Good morning church! We're continuing our 4-week sermon series called: "Family Talk." It's a study of the apostle Paul's teachings on family communication found in Ephesians 4. This is a teaching for both your family and the church family.

Series Theme: Ephesians 4:15-16 (ESV) ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ

Last week, we learned that the goal of our family talk, our communication, is oneness, unity. This week, we're going to address The Challenge of Communication: Correction.

Need: In families and churches alike, conflict and the need for correction are inevitable. But how we speak the truth, and how we receive it, makes all the difference. Without spiritual preparation, correction can wound instead of heal. We need Christ to shape us into people who can both give and receive correction with grace, truth and love.

ILL: Many Christians admit they struggle with giving or receiving correction. In fact, a recent study by Barna revealed that nearly one in four believers avoid difficult conversations to "keep the peace." (*Barna Group Survey*)

Trans: But Paul challenges that mindset. Real peace doesn't come from avoiding truth, it comes from speaking and hearing it in love, with hearts transformed by Christ. Paul knew that correction was essential for unity in the church, but it had to come from hearts shaped by Christ. In today's text, he shows us how to prepare our hearts for those challenging, but necessary conversations.

BODY: In the apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he taught believers how to spiritually prepare themselves to truthfully give and receive correction in unity. We can be spiritually prepared to truthfully give and receive correction. How can we be spiritually prepared to truthfully give and receive correction? The text gives **three heart-postures** for being spiritually prepared to truthfully give and receive correction.

Read text: Ephesians 4:17-25 (ESV) ¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰ But that is not the way you learned Christ!— ²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. ²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

THREE HEART POSTURES FOR TRUTHFULLY GIVING AND RECEIVING CORRECTION:

1. A tender heart that puts off the old self through Christ.

EXP: (17-19; 21) Our 1st heart posture is "to put off your old self" (22). Paul began this section describing this "former manner of life" as having "hardness of heart" (18) and being "callous" (19). He explained that this hardness leads to alienation from God and every kind of impurity. The command to "put off" the old self shows that spiritual change begins with a heart made tender by Christ's grace.

"Put off your old self" (22) (ἀποτίθημι, *apotithēmi*) (AMN) - to put off or aside; of the former self

"Manner of life" (22) (ἀναστροφή, *anastrophē*) - manner of life, conduct, behavior; conversation.

"Corrupt through deceitful desires" (22) (φθειρω, *phtheirō*) - in an ethical sense, corrupt, depraved

"Now this I...testify in the Lord" (17) (μαρτύρομαι, *marturomai*) - to bear witness, to declare solemnly.

"Futility of their minds" (17) (ματαιότης, *mataiotēs*) - vanity, futility, devoid of truth, weak, frail, empty.

"Darkened in their understanding" (18) (σκοτίζω, *skotizō*) - darkened, to be blind in understanding.

"Alienated" (18) (ἀπαλλοτριόω, *apallotriōō*) - to alienate, to be shut out from fellowship

"Ignorance" (18) (ἄγνοια, *agnoia*) - lack of knowledge, ignorance;

"Hardness of heart" (18) (πώρωσις, *pōrōsis*) - the covering with a callus; obtrusiveness of mental discernment, dulled perception; the mind of one has been blunted, of stubbornness, obduracy

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“Callous” (19) (ἀπαλγέω, *apalgeō*) - to become callous, insensible to pain, apathetic.

“Given themselves up to sensuality” (19) (ἀσέλγεια, *aselgeia*) - unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness,

“Greedy to practice” (19) (πλεονεξία, *pleonexia*) - greedy desire to have more, covetousness, avarice

“Every kind of impurity” (19) (ἀκαθαρσία, *akatharsia*) - uncleanness; the impurity of lustful living

ARG: God desires a tender heart, one with the posture of unity, love, and humility.

1 Peter 3:8 (ESV) Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

Pray as David did. Ask God to search your heart that you might put off anything He points out.

Psalm 139:23-24 (NLT) ²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

²⁴ Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

ILL: When we tenderize meat for marinades and seasonings, it creates more surface area and pathways for seasonings to penetrate, resulting in more flavorful dishes. Our heart is similar. When we have tender hearts towards God, we can absorb truth and live with the “flavor” of the Gospel in our lives.

Example of David and Nathan (2 Samuel 12): David's heart was tender enough to receive correction when Nathan said, “You are the man.” He repented, showing a soft heart.

Family illustration: A father who humbly confesses to his child after losing his temper. “I was wrong to raise my voice like that. Will you forgive me? I want to model Christ to you.”

APP: Are you quick to correct but slow to repent? Ask yourselves: Before correcting others, have I put off my own pride, anger, or hypocrisy? Pray Psalm 139 to prepare your heart for both correcting others and receiving correction. Ask God to give you a tender heart that puts off the old self through Christ.

2. A teachable heart that is being renewed by the Spirit of Christ.

EXP: (20-21;23) The 2nd heart-posture is a teachable heart, which comes from being “renewed in the spirit of your minds” (23). This inner renewal is not something we do, but something God works in us through Christ by His Spirit. It's a call to allow Christ to continually reshape our thinking. In the context of correction, this means we need a mindset that embraces the truth, even when it convicts. Correction without renewal leads to defensiveness, but a mind being renewed by Christ delights in the truth.

“Renewed in” (23) (ἀνανεώω, *ananeoō*) (PPN) - to renovate, reform, to renew (in the mind)

“Spirit of your minds” (23) (πνεῦμα, *pneuma*) - spirit. the inner orientation, posture, or moral compass that governs how your mind processes truth.

“Not the way you learned Christ” (20) (μανθάνω, *manthanō*) - to learn. Not about Him. Knowing Him!

“Assuming that you have heard” (21) (εἶγε, *eige*) - if, assuming. “You have heard about Christ right?”

“Truth is in Jesus” (21) (ἀλήθεια, *alētheia*) - truth, objectively true. Christ is the truth, in Him is salvation.

ARG: Be transformed by the renewing of your mind in Christ Jesus:

Romans 12:2 (ESV) Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

The righteous will welcome correction and grow in it, but the hard-hearted will not:

Proverbs 9:8-9 (NLT) ⁸ So don't bother correcting mockers; they will only hate you. But correct the wise, and they will love you. ⁹ Instruct the wise, and they will be even wiser. Teach the righteous, and they will learn even more.

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ILL: **Story of Apollos** in Acts 18:24–26 — he was a gifted teacher but humbly received instruction from Priscilla and Aquila. He was teachable.

A church member humbly taking feedback on a harsh tone in a small group and adjusting in love.

APP: Are you teachable or defensive when someone corrects you? You cannot speak or receive correction rightly if you are unteachable. A renewed mind requires a yielded tender heart; a heart that lets Christ challenge and change our thinking, a teachable heart.

3. A truthful heart that has put on the new self in Christ.

EXP: (24-25) The 3rd heart-posture is a truthful heart, which has “put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (24). This heart is truthful to self and to neighbor, “having put away falsehood” (25), it “speaks the truth,” seeking oneness and unity.

“**Put on the new self**” (24) (ἐνδύω, *enduō*) (AMN) - to sink into (clothing), put on, clothe one's self.

“**Created after the likeness of God**” (24) (κτίζω, *ktizō*) - to create, to form, shape

“**True righteousness**” (24) (δικαιοσύνη, *dikaïosunē*) - integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness,, righteousness, the condition acceptable to God.

“**Holiness**” (24) (ὁσιότης, *hosiotēs*) - piety towards God, fidelity, holiness

“**Put away falsehood**” (25) (ψεῦδος, *pseudos*) - a lie; conscious and intentional falsehood

“**Speak the truth**” (25) (λαλέω, *laleō*) (PAM) - to speak, utter, tell. Command: “speak the truth.”

“**Members one of another**” (25) (μέλος, *melos*) - a member, limb: a member of the human body.

ARG: **Speak truth and seek peace:**

Zechariah 8:16 (ESV) These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace

The new self is in the image of the Creator and speaks truth: (*Parallel passage*)

Colossians 3:9-10 (ESV) ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

ILL: **A married couple who learns to lovingly express truth** instead of suppressing frustrations—“When you dismiss my feelings, I feel hurt. Can we talk about that?”

A believer who gently corrects a friend for gossiping, not to condemn but to restore.

APP: Challenge: Are you more concerned with being nice than being truthful? Ask: Am I a safe person for someone to bring correction to? Do I respond with defensiveness or with Christlike openness?

Remember our theme verse: “Speaking the truth in love” (15). Truthful speech isn’t just about not lying, it’s about living out of a transformed identity. A truthful heart that doesn’t manipulate, exaggerate, or hide. But also a heart of love. Because truth without love is harsh. Love without truth is hollow. But truth in love can be healing. It can transform your relationships to greater unity and maturity.

CONCLUSION: In Christ, we can have a new heart—tender, teachable, and truthful. Through faith in His death and resurrection, He made a way for our hearts to be softened, our minds renewed, and our lives clothed in righteousness. That’s the power of the gospel: He changes us from the inside out so we can speak truth in love, just as He did and still does by His Spirit.

So before you speak correction—or receive it—ask: Has my heart been shaped by Christ? Let the gospel do its work in you, so your words can help bring unity, healing, and maturity to your home and to this church. Let’s pray.