

STUDY 2

Choosing Wholesome Words

EPHESIANS 4:22–5:4

I grew up in a non-Christian home where mild expletives were part of our everyday language. I also took secret pride in my ability to exchange sarcastic comments with others, scoring points with witty, yet cutting, remarks. It felt good to hit back or to emphatically push my viewpoint, even if I hurt another person's feelings. Then I became a Christian. My heart started to change—and so did my language.

Yet, in a world where we are continually bombarded with crude, explicit language on television, in the movies, at shopping malls, in our neighborhoods, or in the workplace, it's almost impossible, even for Christians, not to absorb what we hear. Words that make us recoil lodge in our minds and sometimes, to our shock and dismay, erupt out of our mouths. "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths," wrote Paul (Ephesians 4:29). In a day of slipping moral standards, this study highlights the importance of choosing words

that reflect who we are: followers of Christ living out *his* pure standard of thought and speech in a verbally polluted culture.

1. Describe a time, if any, when you struggled to change the way you talk. What helped you?

READ EPHESIANS 4:22-32.

2. What needs to happen before we can be motivated to change our words (verses 22-24)?
3. Why do you think Paul focused on being “made new in the attitude of your minds” before he addressed the topic of a Christian’s words (verse 23)?

4. In order to change a bad habit, we must replace the behavior. Contrast the kinds of words we are to “put off” and “put on” (verses 25-32).

Put Off

Put On

5. Note the strong commands Paul gave in verses 25, 29, and 31. What personal lessons regarding unwholesome talk do you find in these verses?

6. What reason did Paul give for his instructions in verse 25?

Why is it important to speak truthfully with other members of the body of Christ?

- ✧ 7. What do you think is meant by “do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God” (verse 30)?

In what ways can we grieve God’s Spirit through the words we use?

8. How do words of kindness, compassion, or forgiveness change relationships for the better (verse 32)?

If you feel comfortable doing so, describe a time when you gave or received these kinds of upbuilding words.

What impact did these words have on your Christian experience?

READ EPHESIANS 5:1-4.

9. According to verses 1 and 2, whom are we to imitate? Why?

How might knowing we are dearly loved affect what comes out of our mouths?

- ✧ 10. List the kinds of words that are “improper for God’s holy people” (verses 3-4).

What can we do or say instead?

Life Changes

11. What steps can you take this week to imitate God through the words you choose to say to others?
12. As you consider what you've learned from this study, where do you need God's help—and the support of those in your small group—to more fully reflect who you are: a follower of Jesus?