

Sticks & Stones

Long Beach Alliance Church January 25, 2015 • Pastor Chris Lankford

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

~Ephesians 4:29 (ESV)

1) **Speak The Truth**

- A) The church is built in Christ through a passionate dedication to the truth (Ephesians 4:25, cf. 4:15-16, 21, 24). The imperative command to speak the truth has been repeated numerous times in the context of ‘walking a worthy life of those in Christ’ (4:1). Speaking the truth is a primary characteristic of “the new self” (4:24).
- B) Speaking the truth to your “neighbor” (fellow believers) is fundamentally logical because those “in Christ” are “members one of another,” part of the same “body” (4:25, cf. 4:12, 16). In the same manner that your left hand does not deceive your right hand because it is governed by your head, the members of the body (the church) do not live deceptively with one another because they are governed by the head, Christ (4:15).
- C) Growth in “righteousness and holiness” (4:24) are produced in the “new self” through the loving expression of truth among those who are in the body of Christ, His church. Our experience “in Christ” is revealed in how we speak to one another. Do we “speak the truth” to others as Christ speaks the truth into our own lives?

2) **Be Angry And...**

- A) The imperative command to “be angry” (4:26) assumes a context of relationships in the church, with others and with our own selves. Anger is “urgent” because it is a natural response to the corrupt and deceptive mind of the “old self” (4:22, also 14, 17-19). However, the command should not be considered prescriptive, but rather recognizes the force and fierceness with which the “new self” puts off the “old self” (4:22-24).
- B) In fact, the command is balanced with three simultaneous imperative negative anger commands dealing with the now (sin), later (resting

in sin), and results (lacking control, 4:26-27). This keeps with an **overwhelming** biblical theme commanding avoidance of anger, righteous or otherwise. But, when anger is inevitably experienced, it should be shed, like the heat of the sun, lest it have sinful results (cf. Psalm 4:4-8; James 1:19-20; Proverbs 15:1, 18; 22:24; 29:8, 11; Ecclesiastes 7:9; Matthew 5:22; Galatians 5:20; Colossians 3:8; 1 Timothy 2:8; Titus 1:7). Do we respond to others as Christ has responded to our own lives?

3) Labor Honestly

- A) The vocation (student, worker, volunteer...) of a Christian is worship of God (4:28). Since there are some who take advantage of the 'brethren,' there is an imperative command to 'do honest work' (4:28). seeking to share with others rather than steal from others for personal gain (cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:10; Acts 20:34-35).
- B) Many of those being saved in the Ephesian church had come from less-than-reputable backgrounds (e.g., Onesimus/Philemon). The "new self" reorients the central purpose of one's life, shifting a person from an old self of dishonest gain to a new life of honest labor and giving as generously as Christ gives grace.
- C) Further, this allowed the church to provide care for the actually poor, orphaned, or widowed (lacking ability and/or connections; James 1:27; Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 5:1-16) especially those from within the church. Do we labor for others as Christ has sacrificially labored for our lives?

4) Be A Voice Of Grace

- A) The vocabulary of the "new self" uses words which build up others, provide strength to a person, words which build up the life of the listener (Ephesians 4:29). The "new self" is attentive to the needs of others instead of the "old self," providing the right words for the right moment, vocabulary which supports, purifies, and lavishes grace in every occasion.
- B) If the words of the "new self" are like a master craftsman who speaks beauty and grace (cf. 2:10), "corrupting talk" is the sledgehammer which destroys. The phrase literally means "rotten," "decaying," "crumbling." Corrupting talk deconstructs the foundation of others, leaving rubble and ruin. The "old self" hammers away, 'tearing down' with their words.
- C) Simply stated, we are to speak to others as Christ speaks to us (4:29)! Giving grace to others means speaking 'new life' into the lives of others. It's the opportunity to represent Jesus in what we say, how we say it, when we say it, where we say it, and why we say it. You are the life-giving voice of Christ, speaking the truth of the Gospel to those who will hear! Do we speak to others as Christ speaks into our own lives?



Growth Group Guide



*“sticks and stones”
ephesians 5:25-29
january 25-30, 2015*

Ice Breaker!

Describe a compliment you have received which motivated you to do a better job.

Looking Up!

Identify the four attributes of God listed which are reflected in the lives of those who follow Him.

Which is most important in your life and why?

Leaning In!

Do you see any common thread(s) running through this passage?

What are they and how do they apply to your growth group?

Stepping Out!

Last week John Carriveau preached “Walking Lessons,” what it looks like to follow Jesus. This process consists of three D’s: Desire, Decide, Do. What phase of the process is a struggle for you?

Respond!

Identify one of the four attributes of God discussed this week which God is calling you to conform to His image. Commit to it and be ready to share with the group your successes and failures!

This Week!

Focus on responding to others as Christ responds to you.

This Week I’ll Pray For...

