

# The Four Rules of Communication

## Ephesians 4:25-32

Good relationships are not built because of an absence of problems. Nobody is immune from problems. All are sinners—and that is all it takes to set the stage for conflict.

Take heart! Solid and lasting relationships can be built by those who know Christ as Savior and who learn to deal with problems biblically.

In Ephesians 4:22-24, Paul tells us “how to grow and change” by replacing “old self” thoughts and actions with biblical thoughts and habits which is God’s way of handling conflict. He illustrates this in the following verses, and in these examples of “put offs/put ons”, gives four very effective “rules of communication” for preventing and solving problems:

### 1. Be HONEST (v.25)

Others cannot read our mind. Honesty is more than not lying. It is SPEAKING THE FACTS lovingly. The “silent treatment” is out. So is outright dishonesty, deceit, innuendo and discrepancy between body language, tone and words spoken.

### 2. Keep CURRENT (v.26-27)

Get angry, but don’t sin. Anger is *energy* to be used to solve problems. Anger is sinful when used to attack others or self (stewing about the problem), opening the way for disappointment, resentment, bitterness and hatred. It is equally wrong to “clam up” or cut off communication by crying (manipulation), threatening an explosion or bottom lining (“All I have to say is...”) Deal with problems TODAY—tomorrow will have problems of its own (Matthew 6:34).

### Six questions to ask before bringing up a sticky problem:

1. Do I have the FACTS right? (Proverbs 18:13—He who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame.)
2. Should LOVE hide it? At issue: Is it sinful? Is it hindering growth? (1 Peter 4:8b—Love covers over a multitude of sins.)
3. Is my TIMING right? (Proverbs 15:32b—How good is a timely word!)
4. Is my ATTITUDE right? Am I trying to *help* the other person? (Ephesians 4:15 “Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ.”)
5. Are my words LOVING? (Ephesians 4:15) Are my words constructive and solution orientated? “Ventilation” is useless.
6. Have I PRAYED for God’s help? Don’t lean on your own wisdom! (Proverbs 3:5b—In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.)

### 3. Attack the PROBLEM, not the PERSON (vs. 29-30 & 4:15)

- Avoid “unwholesome words” (“corrupt communication” KJV). Words that:
  1. Attack a person’s character (Matthew 5:21, 22); Name calling.
  2. Tear down, rip apart or hinder growth (James 3:5-12).
  3. Cloud or by-pass the problem.

4. Grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30; 5:18).

- Use “edifying” communication to encourage or build up (4:15, 29). Words that:
  1. Are true and produce growth (tone of voice is important).
  2. Edify, give grace (the desire/ability to do God’s will) to those who hear.
  3. Zero in on the conflict and are solution-oriented.

**4. ACT, don’t REACT (v. 31-32)**

**Reactions that must be “put off”:**

**Bitterness:** “acrid”, treating someone with deep resentment

**Wrath:** flaring outbursts of anger

**Anger:** settled indignation or hostility; desiring revenge; the “slow burn”

**Clamor:** harsh contention and strife, public quarreling, brawling

**Slander:** speech that injures, attacks or is abusive

**Malice:** desire to harm others or see them suffer

Our natural tendency is to be DEFENSIVE or BLAME-SHIFT in dealing with our own sins (Genesis 3:8-13). Biblical change takes Spirit-led effort.

**Actions that must be “put on”:**

**Kind:** benevolent, helpful, courteous

**Tenderhearted:** lit. “of good heartedness,” compassionate, sympathetic

**Forgiving:** to give up your right to claim revenge, hold a grudge, get even

**CONCLUSION:**

- Changing HABITS OF COMMUNICATION is not easy, but it CAN BE DONE (Philippians 4:13—I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me).
- It is much easier than the *hard* “way of the transgressor” (Proverbs 13:15b).
- No matter how irresponsible the other person is, you must act biblically. You can NOT change the other person, but you CAN change **how you respond**.

**A final, sobering thought:**

“A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes  
will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy.”  
Proverbs 29:1

*(Used by permission of Faith Counseling Ministries of Lafayette, IN)*