

Changed | Change My Words

READ – EPHESIANS 4:1-24

CONSIDER THIS -

A mom proofing her 12-year-old son's English assignment found him repeatedly referring to the Specific Ocean. When she asked him about it, he said he meant the ocean next to California – the Pacific. Before we judge the intelligence of the student, or cast stones at the education system that taught him, we should know that using a wrong word in place of another is a common occurrence. In fact, it's so common that it has a term all its own – it's called a malapropism, and through the years, there have been some famous examples. For instance, an Australian Prime Minister once claimed that no one "is the suppository of all wisdom". Former Texas Governor Rick Perry described his state as a "lavatory of innovation". And Chicago Mayor Richard Daley once called O'Hare airport "the crosswords of the nation". While all of us misspeak from time to time, it's also true that our speech, our words, and our tone, reveal a lot about us. Jesus even talked about it in Matthew 12:34, when he said, "For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of". As Christians, what do our words say to those around us, especially those looking to see what a Christ-like life is all about? Are we known for telling the whole truth? What about the jokes and stories we share with our friends and colleagues? Do we gossip? What do we have to say on social media sites? Are we encouraging or do we tear down? In Ephesians 4, Paul reminds us that even our speech needs to reflect our new identity in Christ. It needs to be different than the world around us and follow a pattern of Godliness rather than the pattern of our culture. In short, regardless of where we are or who we're with, our words matter, and our speech is evidence to the world of not only our faith but of the heart-change provided by Christ.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT AND DISCUSS -

- Is it ever okay to lie? If so, when and why?
- What are the changes Paul says should be evident in our speech because of our new identity in Christ?
- Are there people in your life who tend to draw out "inappropriate talk? How can you use the power of speech to model Christ for them?
- Image management, or the desire for others to think well of us can be a form of falsehood as well. In your observation (or experience) how has this played itself out?
- Describe a time when you were built up by someone's words - when you were shown kindness and encouragement. How did those words shape your feelings about that person?
- Identify examples of righteous anger and sinful anger from the Bible. What are the differences between the two?
- Why does it feel good at times to put others down? How does God view our actions when we disregard and disrespect each other?

NEXT STEPS -

This week, pay attention to your words. Are you telling the truth or shading it to your advantage? Are you building others up or tearing them down? Ask God to help your speech be honoring to Him!

PRAYER -

Father, many times we don't pay a lot of attention to the words we say. Please help us to monitor our speech, and lead us to speak in such a way that your presence in our lives is unmistakable.

Let this week's verses encourage and challenge you as you prepare your heart for worship and teaching this coming Sunday!

Monday – I Samuel 28:3-19 **Tuesday** – II Samuel 11 **Wednesday** – Esther 7
Thursday – Jonah 1 and 2 **Friday** – Matthew 26:47 - 56 and 69 - 75