

The Restoration of Communication: Forgiveness

Family Talk #4 - Pastor Gary Combs - August 10, 2025 - Ephesians 4:30-32

INTRO: Good morning church! We're concluding 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 (ESV) ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.

We've learned in our study of Ephesians 4 that the goal of our family talk, our communication, is oneness, unity. We've also learned that The Challenge of Communication is Correction and the Danger of Communication is Anger. Now in this final sermon, we'll see how the Restoration of Communication is Forgiveness.

Need: We all know the pain of broken communication—harsh words, unresolved conflict, silence that grows like a wall. Whether in our homes, marriages, friendships, or church family, we've all experienced the damage that unforgiveness causes. But God has given us the way to restoration: Christlike forgiveness. Without forgiveness, communication breaks down and relationships fall apart.

Trans: So how do we move from brokenness to restoration in our communication? In a word: forgiveness!

BODY: In the apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he exhorted believers to put away relational sins and practice Christlike forgiveness as a Spirit-led expression of their new life and oneness in Christ. We can restore broken communication with Christlike forgiveness empowered by the Holy Spirit. How can we restore broken communication with Christlike forgiveness? The text gives **three steps** we can follow to restore broken communication with Christlike forgiveness.

Read text: Ephesians 4:30-32 (ESV) ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

WE CAN RESTORE OUR BROKEN COMMUNICATION WITH CHRISTLIKE FORGIVENESS:

1. By confessing what broke it.

EXP: (30) Relational sin doesn't just hurt people, it grieves God's Spirit. This verse reveals that broken communication is a spiritual issue. The Holy Spirit, who seals us as God's people, is grieved when we allow unresolved hurt, resentment, and conflict to persist.

"Do not grieve" (30) (λυπέω, *lupeō*; present, active, imperative) - do not make sorrowful; cause grief, to offend. What grieves Him? Look at what Paul has already said to "put off" and what he repeats in v.31.

"Holy Spirit of God" (30) (πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, *pneuma to hagion*) - the third person of the triune God.

"By whom you were sealed" (30) (σφραγίζω, *sphragizō*) - to seal; for security; to confirm, authenticate.

"Day of redemption" (30) (ἀπολύτρωσις, *apolutrōsis*) - redemption, deliverance; procured by payment. The Day is coming when Christ will return and deliver us completely from this place of suffering.

ARG: David described the heavy feeling he felt from God's Spirit when before finally confessing his sin.

Psalm 32:3-5 (ESV) ³ For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. ⁵ I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Confession is good for the soul and for healing the body and relationships with others!

James 5:16 (NLT) Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

ILL: Iphone with a cracked screen. You can still make calls, but communication is distorted. Until you admit it's broken and get it repaired, it won't be restored. Confession is the first step in the repair.

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APP: Ask yourself: What broke the communication? Was it a cutting comment, a cold shoulder, or years of silent bitterness? Until we admit what's broken, we can't begin to restore it. Confess it to God—and if needed, to the person. Honesty is where healing begins. You don't have to fix it all at once, but you do have to face it.

2. By repenting of what blocks it.

EXP: (31) Paul lists six destructive attitudes and behaviors that block restoration. These must be actively removed—repented of and surrendered—if reconciliation is to happen.

“Let ... be put away” (31) (αἵρω, *airō*; aorist, passive, imperative) - to bear away, carry off; to remove. The passive imperative shows that we can't remove these sinful attitudes (bitterness, wrath, anger, etc.) in our own strength. Instead, we must yield to the Spirit, letting Him do the work in us and through us.

“All” (31) (πᾶς, *pas*) - each, every, any, all, the whole, everything.

“Bitterness” (31) (πικρία, *pikria*) - bitter gall; metaphor for bitterness, bitter hatred.

“Wrath” (31) (θυμός, *thumos*) - passion, angry, heat, anger forthwith boiling up; fierceness, indignation

“Anger” (31) (ὀργή, *orgē*) - movement or agitation of the soul, but especially anger; temper.

“Clamor” (31) (κραυγή, *kraugē*) - a crying, outcry, clamour; chaos, tumult. Clamor is loud, divisive, uncontrolled. It demands to be heard, not to understand or restore, but to assert and dominate.

“Slander” (31) (βλασφημία, *blasphēmia*) - slander, detraction, speech injurious, to another's good name.

“Malice” (31) (κακία, *kakia*) - malice, ill-will, desire to injure; root means evil. Done with an intent to harm.

ARG: Repentance precedes “refreshing” from the Lord.

Acts 3:19-20 (ESV) ¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord

Repentance means to put away, “get rid of... strip off,” our old sinful nature.

Colossians 3:8-9 (NLT) ⁸ But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. ⁹ Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds.

ILL: Bitterness is like drinking poison and hoping the other person dies. You carry it around thinking it protects you, but it's actually destroying you—and everyone around you.

APP: Paul doesn't say, “Remove all bitterness yourself.” He says, “Let it be put away from you.” That means we have to stop clinging to it and start cooperating with the Spirit. We repent, not by overpowering sin in our own strength, but by surrendering it to the One who can put it out of our hearts.

Ask the Holy Spirit to expose what's blocking restoration in your relationships. Ask: “Which of these six sins have I let take root in my heart or home?” Name it. Confess it. Then ask for the Spirit's power to lay it down. What do you need to lay down today? Bitterness? Anger? Slander? Repent, and ask for cleansing.

3. By seeking what builds it.

EXP: (32) Now Paul exhorts us to seek the Christlike virtues that rebuild broken relationships: kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness. Forgiveness isn't just about confessing and repenting. Christlike forgiveness seeks to build a new foundation for the relationship. Christlike forgiveness is possible because God in Christ forgave you. That's the gospel: He didn't wait for us to deserve it. He offered it freely.

“Be kind” (32) (χρηστός, *chrēstos*; present, middle, imperative) - kind, pleasant, easy, benevolent, gracious. The middle voice stresses intentional, voluntary participation—you're not just being acted upon; you're choosing to be kind and forgive, actively “putting on” your new identity in Christ.

“Tenderhearted” (32) (εὐσπλαγχνος, *eusplagchnos*) - Lit., “having strong bowels;” compassionate, tender hearted; sympathetic.

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“Forgiving” (32) (χαρίζομαι, *charizomai*; present, middle, participle) - gracious, granting forgiveness, to pardon.

“As God in Christ forgave you” (32) - The power to forgive others is in the forgiveness we have received from God the Father in Christ Jesus. “To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you” (C.S. Lewis).

ARG: **Having confessed and repented (“put off”), “put on” Christlike forgiveness.**

Colossians 3:12-13 (ESV) Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Seeking forgiveness

The offender must ask for forgiveness: Six “magic” words: “I was wrong. Please forgive me.”

- Be willing to admit, “I was wrong.”
- Be willing to say, “I am sorry.”
- Be willing to repent.
- Be willing to ask for forgiveness.

Granting forgiveness ... is not:

- Repression or pretending it didn’t happen - Conditional - Forgetting (God can do this, but we can’t. But we can let go with His help.). - Impossible - An automatic cure for the hurt

Granting forgiveness ... is:

- obedience (Eph 4:32) (Matt. 18:21-22) Peter: “How many times, seven? Jesus: Seventy-seven times.
- an attitude of letting go of resentment and my right to get even, or to ever bring it up again.
- an action that must be expressed by word and deed - a choice to set the offender free from the debt
- the beginning of the healing process that leads to oneness

ILL: In North Carolina, we know what it’s like when a hurricane hits—rivers swell, roads vanish, and bridges get washed away. And when a bridge is gone, it doesn’t matter how close the two sides were—there’s no way across. Before a new bridge can be built, the old debris, broken supports, shattered concrete—everything has to go. Then, and only then, can a new foundation be poured and the rebuilding begin.

That’s what forgiveness is like. It doesn’t instantly rebuild the relationship. It doesn’t erase all the pain or make everything the way it was. But it removes the wreckage, clears the way, and lays the foundation for restoration. Forgiveness says: “I won’t let the past block the possibility of a future.” It’s not the bridge—but it’s the beginning.

APP: What bridge have you refused to even start rebuilding? Maybe the hurt is real, the damage deep. But what if forgiveness isn’t about going back—it’s about making a new way forward? Who do you need to forgive? Who have you been keeping at a distance because the bridge has never been rebuilt? Maybe it’s a spouse, parent, child, friend, someone in this church. What if today, you stopped waiting for them to deserve it, and instead give what God gave you in Christ Jesus: forgiveness?

CONCLUSION: The cross of Christ is the ultimate picture of forgiveness. On that cross, Jesus didn’t just make restoration possible—He made it personal. He looked at the people who betrayed Him, abandoned Him, mocked Him, and crucified Him—and He said, “Father, forgive them.” And He says the same to you.

If you’ve received that forgiveness—if you’ve experienced the grace of God in Christ—then you are now empowered to extend that grace to others. You can restore what’s broken with Christlike forgiveness by (1) confessing what broke it, (2) repenting of what blocks it, and by (3) seeking what builds it. Forgiveness restores what sin broke. It removes the wreckage, lays the foundation, and makes room for healing. Not only in our families and friendships, but in the church, the body of Christ.

So church, who do you need to forgive? Who do you need to ask for forgiveness from? Don’t wait for the perfect moment. Don’t wait until it feels easy. Start today. Take that first step. And let the gospel do what only it can do: rebuild what was broken. Let’s pray.