

## Voice Activate – ‘Build up’

*A Devotional Thought*

Even though I switched to an iPhone about 4 years ago, only recently have I been using Siri to do texting and searches for me.

It’s cool: I speak and something happens.

- I came across a Facebook post that said ‘The Kingdom of God is voice activated. Speak faith (Mk 11:23-24)!!’ This is something that has been on my heart for several weeks to share with you, and then
- I’d like to share a brief pastoral devotional that God has given me for you today.
- I’d revise that Facebook post to say, ‘The Kingdom of God is voice activated. Buildup, don’t tear down.’



Let me first give you the **context of one verse**. Paul desired the Christians in Ephesus to be **more mature**. Paul had a remarkable ministry in Ephesus:

- He told people about Jesus for **two years**.
- He placed his hands on people, and they were **filled with the Spirit**, Acts 19:6.
- He ‘**spoke persuasively** about the kingdom of God,’ Acts 19:8.
- God **worked miracles** through him, even his handkerchiefs and aprons would heal people, Acts 19:11-12.
- The people even **burned expensive books** of their magic, Acts 19:19.
- **Idol-makers were afraid** of losing their business, Acts 19:23-41.

*Despite* all this, they were **still baby Christians** who needed to learn how to live as children of God.

- They were **prone to factions** and bringing **disrepute** to the gospel by their actions and speech.
- He wrote, ‘Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Ep 4:3 NIV).’

‘Make every effort’ sounds important. They **had to learn that** ‘**Their church family is more important than their personal opinion.**’

Unity and peace can only come through the Holy Spirit.

Paul instructs them **how to be more mature** ...

- Recognize, we are all one in Christ, vv. 4-6.
- The God-given leaders were a gift to '**build up**' the body of Christ, vv. 11-13.
- Be sexually pure, vv. 17-20.
- Put on Jesus like you would clothing, vv. 22-24.
- Don't get angry, v. 26.
- Don't steal, v. 28.

**Then he writes** in verse 29. 'Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen (Ep 4:29 NIV).'

- If you have ever been on the receiving end of gossip, you know **the sting of innuendos and falsehoods** – *unwholesome* talk.
- If what was said about you *is true*, you know **the embarrassment** of public exposure.

As a pastor, I am the roast of many a Sunday meal, but over the years my skin has become rather tough – so it's not as tasty as it once was.

I believe **this message** is more *preventative* than reactionary. We are in a much better situation now than 14 years ago; our DNA has completely changed. I want you to know that '**Our church family is more important than our personal opinions.**'

- **Jesus** said, 'What you say flows from what is in your heart (Lk 6:45 NLT).'
- **James** says the tongue is like a fire that can get out of control (Ja 3:6).
- Solomon said, 'The tongue has the power of life and death (Pro 18:21).'
- Life and death are **huge words**. Imagine your tongue as a knife or AR-15, destroying someone. Or imagine it as a medical defibrillator that resuscitates someone.

Personally, I have been trying to curb a negative outlook. It is not easy. I hear so many negative stories and situations that my views have darkened; my filter needed cleaning.

- Let me remind you that **criticism is the lowest** form of conversation.
- On the other hand, **transparent self-disclosure** is the highest form of conversation, *especially* our conversations with God.

Paul says, 'Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths (Ep 4: 29 NIV).'

- The great thing about **being an adult** is that we do not have to say out loud every thought that runs through our head.

- We can **pause and self-correct** what comes out; we can filter our words so that only 'What is helpful for building others up according to their needs' comes out.
- We just got a new refrigerator. The water from the old one was broken for 13 years. When it broke, no matter if we put in a new filter, it looked bad and tasted funny.

Before responding to anyone with negative words, ask yourself '*will this build up or tear down?*' Put a fresh filter over your mouth to clean up unwholesome talk into building up talk. Active your voice to build up.

It's interesting that Paul says we are to build them up 'according to **their needs.**'

**Psychologists** say we gossip because of ...

- We need to be **accepted relationally** – to engage in social transactions. However, gossip undermines trust.
- We need to **share information** - to be seen as a source.
- We desire for **status and power** - to cut some down to build ourselves up.
- We need for **entertainment** – it's fun to ignite some drama.
- We need to **police** the group – to be right in our judgment.

But we are to *only speak* what is **helpful to the other person, 'their needs.'** Wow.

The final clause is interesting: 'That it may benefit those who listen (Ep 4:29 NIV).' Some translations use the word 'encourage,' but it literally says, '*grace*' – so that our words will extend grace.

- Our words are to be an **extension of God's grace.**
- Also, *who else is listening?* It is plural. *Are children learning to disrespect others because of your speech?*

Friends let's build each other up with our conversation.

Let's voice activate the Holy Spirit to release life instead of death.

'Our church family is more important than our personal opinions.'