

Teamwork Values from Ephesians 4

Ephesians 4:25-32



Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. 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. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

In this passage there are seven key instructions based on the body metaphor Paul outlines in 4:16. These are the behaviours or habits we put off or put on as we seek unity with others and maturity collectively as the body of Christ (Vs 22-24).

1. **Honest and open communication** (Vs 25)

As brothers and sisters serving together and as members of one body we are called to put aside pretence, false talk and actions and to be truthful, honest and open with each other. Clear honest communication is the basis of all healthy relationships and high trust environment.

2. **Responsible management of emotions** (Vs 26-27)

Today we would call this emotional intelligence. We are invited here to understand what is happening within us and to choose to responsibly regulate it. This means neither allowing anger to drive us to an outburst, or repressing it into resentment, but responsibly owning it ourselves and communicating about it to others with care and thought.

3. **Industry and generosity** (Vs 28)

We live in a time where people often have a sense of entitlement. An "I deserve" mentality. Paul insists people need to work not only for their own good but so that they may be able to be generous and caring toward others who are in need.

4. **Intentional encouragement** (Vs 29)

There is a need for intentionality around our speech. We are not to be careless with words, but to think about the needs of others and to build them up intentionally. Paul indicates this has a 'flow on' effect, people who listen to these interactions benefit from the thought that has gone into intentional encouragement.

5. **Conscious Spiritual responsiveness** (Vs 30)

We are invited here to be open and responsive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, to act, to speak, to pray and to respond the way God the Holy Spirit seeks to guide us. We are not to resist the prompting of the Spirit but to be active in responding.

6. **Active putting off of the evil that results from undisciplined speech or out of control emotions** (Vs 31)

We have already be alerted in Vs 26-27 to the ease of which bitterness and malice take root. We are instructed here not to nurse evil or let it settle within us but to actively put it off (Vs 24) or to repent of it.

7. **Gracious kindness and forgiveness of others** (Vs 32)

Finally we are called to replace 'self-centered' evil with God's grace flowing through us in kindness, compassion and forgiveness. The word for forgiveness here is related to grace.

We end up with 7 challenges that call us to move toward working effectively together:

- From pretence to open communication
- From lack of emotional management to responsible disclosure
- From a sense of entitlement to industry and generosity
- From careless criticism to intentional encouragement
- From inner resistance to spiritual responsiveness to God the Holy Spirit
- From holding on to evil to actively repenting of it in our lives and behaviour
- From a self-centred to a grace-centred relationship with others