

(Now this is not to say that we can't ever respectfully discuss difficult situations and character issues that need to be changed with someone. That's a sometimes necessary part of living life with family and friends and is entirely different than mean words that tear others up.)

Well, it would be logical that if unwholesome talk can destroy, then the opposite of this should be true; wholesome words can build others up, and that's precisely what this verse in Ephesians tells us.

It's one of the conundrums of life that it's such an easy thing for ugly words to effortlessly roll off of our tongues; it seems to be much harder work to cultivate the soil of a person's life with seeds of praise and encouragement. Perhaps we're embarrassed or afraid we'll be perceived as just trying to gain their favor.

To be sure, kind words need to be sincere. Insincerity rings falsely with, well, insincerity. Maybe part of the problem is that building another person up with **words that benefit** requires us to be observant. We have to take our focus off of ourselves long enough to study a person and recognize his or her strengths. Once we see the laudable characteristic, we must then give life to the thought and speak the words to that person. It can actually feel a little uncomfortable at first, and it's tempting to take the easy way out and think "I'll tell her the next time I see her." But then you've missed a chance to **build someone up**. The "next time" may not lend itself so well to what you want to say.

Although I still may be able to hear the faint echoes of harsh words in my head, the shout of a "**word aptly spoken**" by people who have built into my life drowns out the other words. I've been encouraged by several someones to reach for goals I thought were beyond my grasp, to dream dreams, and to make a difference by relying on the power of God working in my life. That's what we need to be doing for others.

Application: On this **Good Friday**, we will focus on encouraging and building others up with our words. Be on the alert for someone that you can sincerely speak words of kindness to today. And let's not make this just a one-day event, but rather a lifelong habit.

Prayer: Jesus, may we follow your example of speaking **words of life** and blessing to others. Stop our tongues when harsh words want to leap out of our mouths. Amen.