



Shepherd's Path

A Shepherd's Personal Devotions

Raising Your Parents Series, Lesson 9

Lesson Title: Talking Openly With Your Parents

Take Home Point: Communicate well with your parents. Listen well – talk openly.

Warm-Up:

Last year as we were enjoying a Thanksgiving Day dinner at the house of my wife's parents, there was quite a bit of good-natured ribbing going on between the siblings, my wife included. After a bit, my mother-in-law leaned over to me and teased, "You aren't saying much." I responded in kind and said, "Well, I find that I rarely get into trouble with what I DON'T say!" As the old saying goes, "God gave us two ears and one tongue because we should listen twice as much as we talk." And it's not just what we do or don't say. Honesty and openness are essential to good listening and talking, but how we say something is every bit as important as what we say. It's a lesson I need to keep learning over and over.

Read: Ephesians 4:29-32, Exodus 20:12

Observation (What happened?):

What should be the goal in everything we say?

Who is grieved by our inappropriate talk, bitterness, rage, and anger?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

What does it mean to grieve the Holy Spirit?

How does listening and talking openly indicate respect and honor to your parents?

Insight:

Isn't it interesting that Paul includes negative heart attitudes – bitterness, rage, anger, malice – as he writes about how we are to speak? Of course, it's not too surprising, considering that Jesus himself said *"...out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks."* (Matthew 12:34, NIV) "Kind and compassionate" should be the constant watchwords of our speech; and not just our speech. Our heart condition also determines how well we listen. If we harbor these negative attitudes in our heart, how likely will we be able to listen openly, without bias or a judgmental perspective? It is also interesting that Paul does not say to get rid of your negative attitudes when speaking with the person who makes you angry. No, he doesn't make exceptions. "Get rid of **ALL** of it." Why? Because anger, bitterness, etc. affect all of our relationships, not just the ones in which there is a problem. If something angers you at work and you don't deal with it in your heart, it will affect your communications at home. Guaranteed. That's where forgiveness comes in. Forgiveness is a lifestyle you choose, not a singular action when you are wronged, just like it is with God through Jesus Christ. Think about that.

Application (What does it mean to me?):

How do you get rid of bitterness, rage, and anger? How do you forgive others just as you are forgiven by God?

What are you doing to teach the children in your care to listen carefully and talk openly?