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*Hey small group leaders! We began a NEW series called “Real Talk” this week! Relationships are beautiful AND complicated, aren’t they? Whether it’s friendship, family, or community, navigating them isn’t always easy. In this series, we’re having honest, biblical conversations about what matters most. When Jesus is at the center of our relationships, everything begins to change. We’ll explore real talk about how to build stronger, healthier connections that reflect God’s heart and His design for us!*

*Thank you for shepherding a group of people to Love God, Love Others, and Live Sent!*

NEED A RESOURCE, HAVE A QUESTION, OR WANT TO HAVE A CONVERSATION?  
Let us know how we can help! Contact your groups director or [discipleship@rockbridge.cc](mailto:discipleship@rockbridge.cc)

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*“It is with the tongue that we bless others—and destroy them.  
May we always use it as an instrument of grace.”  
[Dietrich Bonhoeffer]*

**LEADER RESOURCES ||** **Leader Note** *We do our best to equip, empower, and encourage you to shepherd your group well. Access a resource by clicking on the underlined title and share them with your group!*

- **Passage Summary**
  - Paul is calling us to speak to one another in a new [gospel] way and to stop speaking to one another like the world does. Instead of tearing one another down with our words, we are to build each other up. We can grieve the Holy Spirit working in our relationships by the way we choose to speak to one another.
- **Ephesians Ch. 4 Commentary & Living Worthy of the Call**
  - Use the commentary and short video for background and encouragement. These would be good resources to share before you gather.
- **Giving Grace With Your Words**
  - This would be a good resource to share with your group after you gather.

**ENGAGE & CONNECT ||** **Leader Note** *The goal for the icebreaker is to prepare your group for the conversation ahead by connecting with one another’s hearts and building joy together.*

If your words had a superpower—like making people dance, telling the truth, or turning things pink—what would it be and how would you use it?

**BEGIN WITH PRAYER ||** **Leader Note** *Begin your time together thanking God for his presence and praying His word back to Him. Ask a few people to pray, taking a posture of humility and dependence!*

Spend a moment praying this passage, beginning your time together in humility and gratitude!

*“For I want very much to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, to be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine.”  
[Romans 1:11-12]*

**BIG IDEA || Leader Note** Read this aloud so your group knows the theme of today's reading and discussion.

We open the door to God's gospel power in our relationships when we choose to build one another up with our words.

**PASSAGE & DISCUSSION || Leader Note** Have people read aloud the passage as instructed. Your role is to FACILITATE, so keep your group moving along, encourage people to share, and look for opportunities to point out the grace and glory of God! Here are two reminders: 1) Every question does not have to be answered ... go where the Spirit leads! 2) Answers do not have to be read aloud ... they're for guidance!

Have someone read aloud Ephesians 4:20-32. Have another person read it again, possibly in a different translation.

1. In the sermon we heard, *"The way we think about ourselves is built on the foundation of what we have heard said about us."* What has someone said about you that caused a negative way of thinking about yourself? *This is a good opportunity to go first!*
2. What are Christians called to "put off" and "put on"? *Christians are called to put off the old self, corrupted by deceitful desires and put on the new self, created in God's likeness in righteousness, purity, and truth. This begins in the mind and results in changed behavior, especially in how we relate to others.*
3. What does the passage say about the Holy Spirit's involvement in our relationships? *The way we speak can grieve the Holy Spirit. Since the Spirit seals believers for redemption, careless or destructive speech can hinder God's relational work. Our words can align with or oppose God's transforming power.*
4. Why is it necessary for us to unlearn old patterns of communication? What is God inviting you to "unlearn" in this season? *This is a good opportunity to go first!*
5. How does this passage challenge the cultural norm of speaking your mind without restraint? *It calls believers to restraint, purpose, and grace in speech. Unlike the world's model of venting or self-expression, Gospel communication seeks to edify and reflect Christ, not dominate or injure.*
6. In the sermon we heard, *"When we choose to build someone up, we open the door for God's grace to work in the relationship."* What does it mean that our words can either open the door to God's grace or grieve the Spirit? *Words are spiritually powerful. Encouraging, grace-filled speech invites the Spirit's presence and builds up others, while harsh or careless words can block relational healing and hinder spiritual growth.*
7. How can we practice speaking "to the new self" in someone else? *Answers will vary: affirm their identity in Christ, encourage their growth, and point out where God's work is evident—even in weakness. It means calling out potential, not just correcting flaws.*
8. In what area(s) are you still operating from "old self" speech patterns—sarcasm, avoidance, manipulation, anger, etc.? *We all carry default tendencies. Identifying these helps us invite the Spirit to transform not just our words but our heart motives behind them.*
9. How can we build each other up with Gospel-centered speech, making our words more life-giving and less reactive? *Through intentional encouragement, truth-telling with love, and shared accountability. We can shape a culture where it's normal to call out Christlike growth and speak truth gently. Practices such as pausing before speaking, confession and grace moments, or simply asking, "Is this helpful?" before sharing, would help us*

10. How can we confront toxic communication patterns if they show up in our small group? *Answers will vary: committing to mutual care over comfort, speaking directly but gently, and remembering we're members of one body. We can confront in love with the goal of restoring, not condemning.*

**STEP OF OBEDIENCE || Leader Note** *This is an opportunity for people to put into practice what the Spirit is inviting them to do and live in obedience to God for the sake of love! You can encourage your group to be accountable to one another and use these to follow up with one another throughout the week.*

Gospel transformation isn't just theological—it's relational and verbal. *The way we speak has real spiritual consequences:* we grieve the Spirit OR invite His grace into our relationships. Christlike communication is truth-filled, grace-saturated, and thoughtful. *As you consider your next step, here are two questions to reflect on:* 1) Am I more likely to avoid truth or deliver it without grace? 2) What would change in my relationships if I truly believed my words carry Gospel power?

*Give your group a few moments to reflect on their answers to the questions above. Then have your group answer the question aloud. Feel free to separate into smaller groups of 3-4 for this question. The possible next steps of faith below are not for discussion, but simply a resource for your group members.*

### Possible Next Steps of Faith

1. Ask God to highlight one person this week to intentionally encourage with words that speak to their "new self." Then do it, either through a text or hand-written card.
2. Write out Ephesians 4:29 or Proverbs 18:21 (or a similar verse) and meditate on it daily. Let it recalibrate how you speak to others.

**PRAYER FOCUS || Leader Note** *We want to commit to praying for OTHERS as a unified church who is dependent upon God for everything. Be intentional about saving at least 5-10 minutes for prayer at the end of your gathering each week to pray together. Pray for one another as well as the prompts below!*

### Speaking Life & Gospel Power

- Take a moment to reflect on this: when we choose to speak life, encouragement, and truth into one another, we open the door for God's gospel power to work in our relationships. The Holy Spirit uses our words to strengthen faith, restore hope, and knit hearts together in love.
- As we pray, let's ask God to help us be intentional with our words—using them to build up, not tear down. Let's invite Him to teach us how to speak with grace, truth, and love, so that our relationships reflect the transforming power of the Gospel.