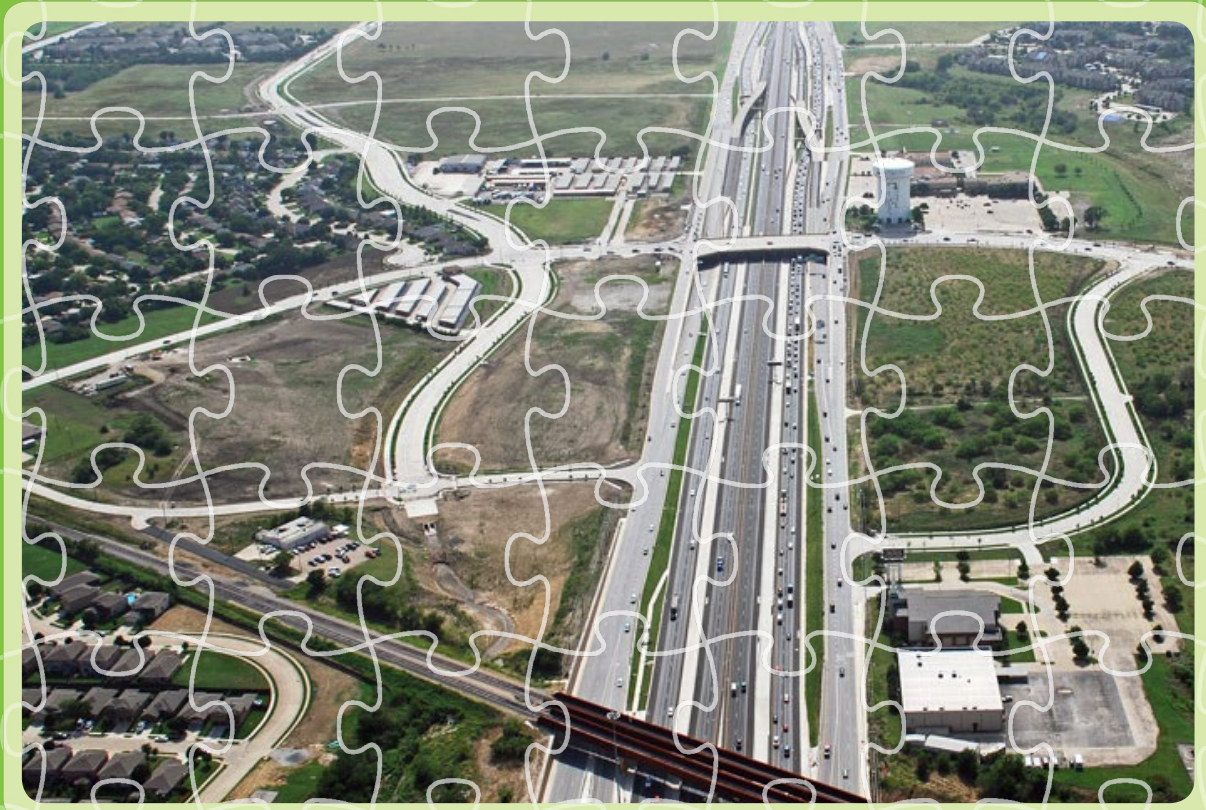


DONALD J. WILLS
SENIOR PASTOR

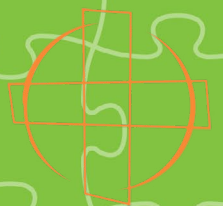
MARCH
2019

COMMUNITY

IT'S TIME



ADULT CONNECT
CLASS CURRICULUM



The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

A Note From Our Pastor

Dear FBC family and friends,

We find the concept of community throughout Scripture. Through the passages in this study, we will not only see the concept of community, but we will also learn what we as followers of Christ should model. Paul writes in [Romans 8:29](#) about the fact that every follower of Christ is predestined to be conformed to His image. In the second lesson of this study, "Measure of Community," Paul gives us specifics about what this image is and how we should measure our lives against Christ's standard. As we study these lessons, may the words of Scripture and its teaching jump off the pages and flow through our hearing to the depths of our hearts, so that we become more like Christ. Do not let them simply be words on a page or an unheeded discourse from a Bible study teacher, but may they be applied in our lives. To be a community which follows Christ, we must mirror our Savior for the purpose of seeing new followers come into our community here at FBCFW.

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God's Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

Let me challenge you as followers of Christ to find others outside of our community here at FBCFW and invite them to join us. We can have knowledge of who we are in Christ and how to mirror Him by being conformed to His image, but we have to go beyond head knowledge and put into practice what we know. Luke 19:10 tells us that Christ came to seek and to save that which is lost. To be fully conformed to His image means that we must point people into a loving relationship with Him. Make it a practice each week to extend the love and grace of Christ with someone who needs to know that there is somebody who cares. Let them know that we at FBCFW care!

Blessings,
Pastor Don



Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively

Introduce

Day 1: Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Instruct

Day 2: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

Day 3: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

Inspire

Day 4: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Incorporate

Day 5: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

Day 6: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

Day 7: Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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March 3, 2019

**WHAT IS
YOUR
MOTIVATION?**

FINISH

*The Motivation
of the Community*

Ephesians 3:14-21

Focal Verse:

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love.”

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Ephesians 3:17

Introduce

After diligently saving his hard-earned allowance from the chores that he had done for over a year, a young boy entered into a local department store in search of the perfect gift for his mother. In his mind, he had already picked out the perfect present, so he headed straight to the aisle where all the cookie jars were kept. To his delight, the store had many different kinds from which he could choose—even more than he had imagined.

Beginning his search for the perfect jar, he started at the far end of the aisle. As he came to the first jar on the top of the shelf, he gently picked up the top and then tried to set it carefully back in place, but the lid clanked and banged as he did. He then went to the next jar and attempted to do the same thing; again, the lid clanked and rattled as he placed



it back on top of the cookie jar. The boy began systematically to go down the aisle and test every cookie jar by removing the lid and replacing it as softly as he could.

After a while, a sales associate noticed the boy methodically examining every cookie jar, so she walked closer in order to gain a more-intimate grasp of the situation. As she approached, she pleasantly asked, “May I help you?” Looking up at her while yet still testing another cookie jar, the boy politely explained, “Yes, ma’am. I’m looking for a birthday present for my mother. She likes cookie jars, but don’t you have any that don’t make noise when you put the lid back on top?” Smiling, the sales associate inquired, “Why do you want one that doesn’t make any noise?” The boy once again stopped, looked her squarely in the eyes, and straight-forwardly replied, “My mother may like the cookie jar, but I like the cookies inside.” Chuckling, she asked, “Are you certain this cookie jar is primarily for her birthday?”

Although this young boy desired to buy his mother a gift, he was ultimately motivated to save his money and buy something that greatly benefited himself as well. When we examine the nature of our own motives apart from Christ, we will often find that we do or say things that have a personal benefit for us. Perhaps, in some cases, we are motivated to do things that we enjoy or because we seek to overcome a personal

Introduce

challenge. At other times, we may do or say things because society places tremendous pressure on us to conform to their pattern. On the other hand, our motives may stem from the fact that we seek to do things based on the prospect of receiving a reward or even avoiding a negative consequence or punishment.

From time to time, however, people may seem to have “unselfish” motives and do things apart from Christ which benefit others because it makes them feel good or it gives them a good name or reputation. As followers of Christ, our motivation for what we do, what we say, and how we think should be to glorify Christ and bring honor to His name because we love Him. In Ephesians 3:14-21, Paul offers a prayer for the Ephesians that they might “be strengthened with might through [the Holy] Spirit” and that they might “know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.” Christ was motivated by His love for us to don flesh and become a man so that He could die in our place on the cross and extend eternal life to us. What great motivation His love should give us in everything we do! At times, ministry, service, and doing the right thing can become hard—especially in light of the general selfishness of mankind—but we can’t succumb to that temptation. Instead, our surrender to Christ and service to Him should be motivationally based on our love for Him because we owe Him our very lives!

Key
Question

What should motivate us as a member of the church?

Ephesians 3:14-16

SURRENDERED TO HIS LORDSHIP:

For the second time in this letter (see [1:15-23](#)), Paul breaks into a spontaneous prayer for the Ephesians. In the typical posture of humility before One who is sovereign, Paul **bows his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ** (v. 14). The reason why Paul offers this prayer is that the Ephesians would continue in the Lord faithfully and receive strength for the ministry to which He has graciously given them to undertake. In [3:1-13](#), Paul has already explained that God has called us in ministry to share the gospel to all nations so that they might know Christ, have a relationship with Him, and participate in His eternal inheritance. Although none of us deserves such an inheritance, God through Christ has graciously united us in His body for the express purpose of honoring Him through our worship and service.

For this reason, Paul prays on behalf of **the whole family in heaven and earth** which has received the name of **the Father**. The term **family** here in this context, therefore, applies to everyone who has a relationship with Him and is a member of His body, the church (v. 15). Moreover, the way that Paul constructs this phrase in Greek shows that we belong to **the Father** and have been given His name by virtue of accepting the salvation offered through His Son. At birth, our parents give us a first and middle name, but we also receive their surname which identifies us as belonging to them. Just as we reflect upon our earthly parents when we receive their surname, so do we also represent our **Father** in heaven by the way that we live, by the character we display, and by the attitude that we bear. Those of us who bear the name of the Lord must be careful about how we act, what we say, and what we think so that it reflects positively upon Him!

CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH
STATE OF TEXAS
City of Austin Registration District

STATE OF TEXAS CERTIFICATE OF BIRTH BIRTH NUMBER

1. Child's Name: First: JOHN, Middle: DAVID, Last: DOE 2. Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 3. Sex: 4. Place of Birth - County: 5. City or Town (if outside city limits, give precinct no.): 6. Time of Birth: 7. Marital Status: Single, Twin, Triplet, etc. 8. If Rural Birth, Both 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.

9. Place of Birth: Clinic / Doctor's Office Licensed Birthing Center Hospital 10. Name of Hospital or Birthing Center, with, if not institution, Give Street Address: 11. Home Birth - Planned to deliver at home? Yes No Other (Specify):

12. Announcer's Name, NPI, and Mailing Address: 13. Certifier I certify that this child was born alive at the place and time and on the date as stated.

14. M F O DM MM Other (Specify): 15. Member Facility Administrator / Designer Other (Specify): Signature and Title: Date Signed:

16. Mother's Name Prior to First Marriage: First: Middle: Last: 17. Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 18. Birthplace (State, Territory or Foreign Country):

19a. Residence - State: 19b. County: 19c. City, Town or Location: 19d. Street Address or Rural Location:

20. TEXAS 21. Inside City Limits: 22. Mailing Address: 23. Same As Residence, or:

24. Father's Name: First: Middle: Last: 25. Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): 26. Birthplace (State, Territory or Foreign Country):

27. Local File Number: 28. Date Received by Local Registrar: 29. Signature of Local Registrar:

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DATE ISSUED: Registrar of Vital Statistics: Rogues Moseena

THE STATE OF TEXAS

In what ways do we represent our heavenly Father by bearing His name?

Question # 1

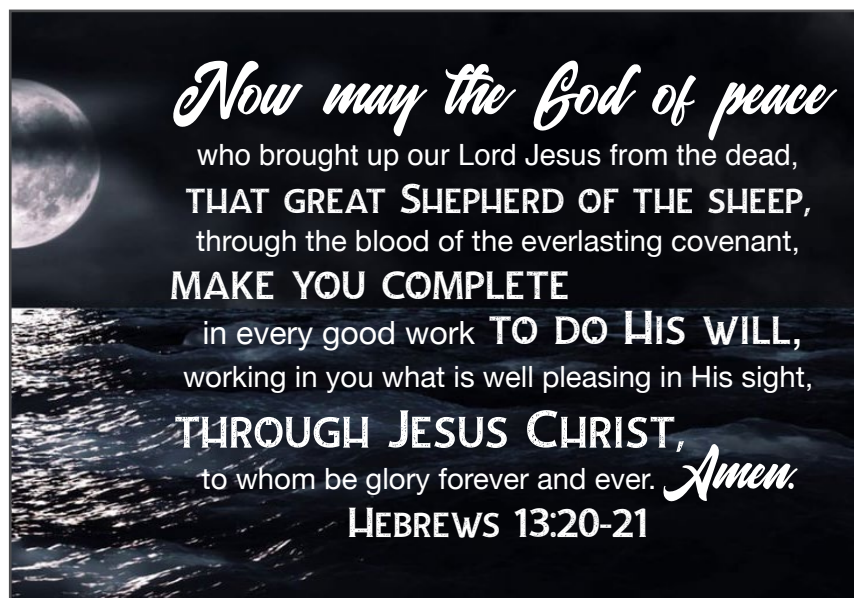
Instruct

Not only does the surname show to whom we belong, but it also identifies that we all belong to the same family. In other words, being **named** by the Lord indicates that we all have the same heavenly **Father** who loves us, provides for us, sustains us, and equips us. By giving us His name, God unites us into one body and calls us to one purpose ([Eph 4:1-6](#)). Therefore, we must be careful not to compete against one another as in sibling rivalry, but that we work together to minister as our **Father** has called us. We have the natural tendency as humans to compete with one another, but in Christ we must overcome that temptation and exalt the Lord while building community. No one is more important than any other part, but God wants to use us all equally albeit it with distinctive and diverse gifts. Therefore, let us remember that just as we have been given salvation by the same **Father** through Jesus Christ that we have also been called by the same **Father** to accomplish His unique purpose; let us surrender to Him as our Lord so that He may guide us and use us to accomplish extraordinary things here in Fort Worth and around the world.

How can we combat the tendency to compete against others in the church for notoriety or even to get our way with personal preferences?

Question
2

In verse 16, Paul arrives at the content of his prayer in which he asks God to **grant** the Ephesians **to be strengthened with might through** the Holy **Spirit in the inner man**. From this verse, we first see that God provides abundant resources for the task to which He has called us **according to the riches of His glory**. God will certainly provide us



with the material and monetary resources we need to accomplish His will, but here in this context it's not focused on physical resources. Instead, God generously gives us knowledge of Him, wisdom, grace, and **love** in abundance so that we might be thoroughly equipped for every good work ([2 Tim 3:16-17](#)). In [Ephesians 1:18-19](#), Paul has already prayed that they "may

know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believed, according to the working of His mighty power.” When we place these two prayers together, we see that the most-valuable thing that God could ever give us is knowledge and wisdom of His character and our purpose in Him.

As a parent, we certainly provide for our children physically, but the most-valuable service we can offer is to teach them intangible principles which will shape and guide their lives by helping them make wise choices and enabling them to respond proactively to any situation they may face. We would do a disservice to them if we never taught them to use wisdom and logic, thereby leaving them inadequately equipped to deal with issues as they arise in life. Instead, we should teach our children to depend upon the Lord and seek Him daily so that they might be equipped to deal with life! In the same way, God desires much more to equip us and prepare us for what He has in store for us in both life and ministry. Consequently, this advice doesn't only apply to a relationship between a parent and child; it applies to every one of us! Therefore, Paul prays for the Ephesians **to be strengthened** by seeking the Lord and allowing Him to equip them with His **love** and knowledge, so that they can minister effectively to others.

In what ways specifically has God “strengthened” or equipped us to do the work of ministry?

Question
3

Too many Christians abandon their responsibility to participate in ministry because they don't feel equipped or believe that they don't have the skills or knowledge to do

an effective job. This attitude shows a lack of trust in the Lord! Through this prayer, we learn that God will **grant** the strength to do the job to which He has called us. Indeed, He will give us the financial resources that we need, but more importantly He will give us knowledge and wisdom through Scripture along with guidance from the Holy **Spirit** who helps us to recall and apply



His Word when we surrender to Him ([John 14:26](#)). Although it doesn't take money to

Instruct

cross the street and share the gospel with a neighbor per se, it does take time and commitment to know God's Word so that we might be used by Him to deliver this message of hope. It also requires trust to allow the Holy **Spirit** to guide us about how and when to share and know that He will fulfill His promise to give us wisdom in time of need. Like Paul, we should intercede for fellow believers through daily prayer to **be strengthened** and equipped by the Lord for ministry!

When was the last time you prayed for other members in this church to be empowered and equipped for ministry? Why should we make that a daily routine in our prayer?

Question
4

Moreover, Paul prays that we would **be strengthened with might**. The word translated **might** more aptly means "empowerment" or "ability." Here, therefore, Paul prays that the Ephesians might have the ability to know God better and more fully so that they can be more effective in ministry. Ministry starts with knowing God which should be the priority of the church! God gives us the ability to know Him through Scripture where He has plainly revealed Himself, but He also provides the opportunity for mentors within the church to use their gifts and experiences to teach others more fully (see [2 Cor 1:3-11](#); [Eph 4:11-12](#)). As long as the experiences, teachings, and the lives of the mentors are



consistent with Scripture, we can have visible models to emulate and help us mature in our walk with Christ. As a result, Paul can write elsewhere, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Cor 11:1). We need mentors in the church who will invest in the lives of others, encourage them to remain faithful in everything, hold one another accountable, and serve

diligently together regardless of the circumstances that life may bring. Biblically, the older, more mature believers are exhorted to mentor the younger, but in reality we all need a mentor who will be there for us and hold us accountable in both the good and the bad times ([Titus 2](#)). Although mentorship does heavily involve giving advice,

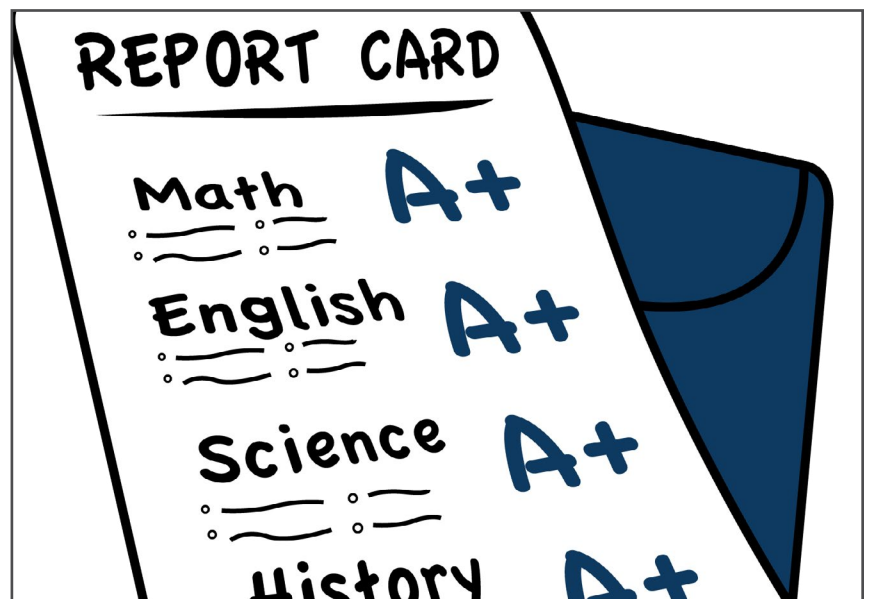
extending encouragement, and helping others to learn from our past experiences, it also entails going through life together hand in hand. Most people, in fact, learn more from a model—not just someone who instructs verbally or offers advice. Walking through life and participating in ministry together is much more powerful when both are in the trenches together! Let us commit to living as a community which knows Christ above all, but which also knows each other intimately so that we can grow together in our effective service of the Lord.

In what ways have you been mentored in the past? How can you use your experiences to mentor others now?

Question
5

The location for which Paul prays for strength is the **inner man**. Although Paul rarely uses this expression ([Rom 7:22](#); [2 Cor 4:16](#)), it symbolically refers to the innermost thoughts of a person. As we mature in Christ, God conforms our thoughts and desires to His ([Prov 3:5-6](#); [Rom 12:1-2](#); [Col 3:5-6](#)). When He continues to conform our thoughts and desires to His, we become intrinsically motivated in both our pursuit of

a relationship with Him and our desire to serve Him in ministry. We are not motivated by an external reward or blessing that we may receive, but we are motivated by our **love** for Christ and we serve Him faithfully because it's the right thing to do. God will certainly bless us just as He promised, but this should not be our primary motivation because our actions



often become dependent upon our situations and circumstances. Instead, we should be intrinsically motivated by our **love** for Christ to respond in accordance with His character regardless of the external situation or circumstance that we may face. In a perfect world, we wouldn't have to "bribe" children, or even adults for that matter, with external rewards to do what is right because they should be intrinsically motivated. Growing up, I can remember getting a dollar for every A that I brought home on my report card at the end of the year. Ideally, the motivation for obtaining good grades should have been because I enjoyed learning and it would help me later in

Instruct

life to have a successful career. Because I truly enjoyed school, I never really cared much about the dollar as long as I had fun learning in class. Until Ms. Brown's sixth grade math, I always got A's, but in her class I got my first and last B until college because I didn't enjoy the class nor did I appreciate her teaching style. True intrinsic motivation, however, would have overcome those circumstances and persisted in learning despite any disdain I had for the teacher or her class. In Christ, we can't let external rewards or circumstances dissuade us from doing what's right and dictate how we act. Instead, we need to pray for ourselves and others **to be strengthened** to maintain a path of righteousness in the Lord so that we can effectively accomplish the ministry to which He has called us!

Why is it important to be intrinsically motivated to do ministry rather than dependent upon external rewards or circumstances?

Question
6

Ephesians 3:17-19

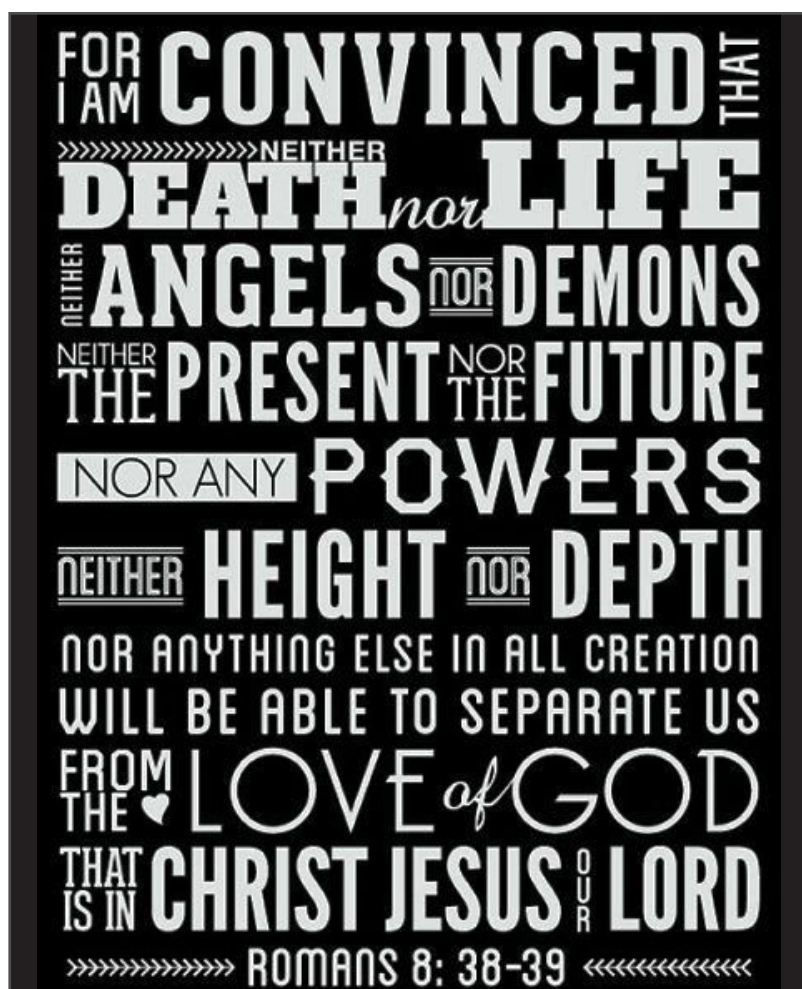
MOTIVATED BY HIS LOVE:

As Paul continues, he prays that **Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith** and that they may be **rooted and grounded in love** (v. 17). In other words, he prays that they might display two primary characteristics of Christ in their lives: faithfulness and **love**. Because Paul is writing to the Ephesian believers, they have already been indwelt by Christ's presence through the Holy Spirit from the moment of their salvation. When Paul prays that **Christ may dwell in their hearts**, therefore, he is praying that their faithfulness to Christ might be visible to others. He isn't praying that the Holy Spirit would take up residence in their lives—for He already has—but he is praying that they will fully surrender to Him and allow Him to work in their lives! In contrast to the secular world around us, we need to exhibit faithfulness to Christ and His calling in every area of our lives. We shouldn't compartmentalize and surrender only some areas into His control, but we need to submit in everything! When we surrender control and faithfully follow the Lord in complete obedience, we will show great **love** to Him.

Why is it important to surrender control to the Spirit and be faithful in every area of our lives?

Question
7

As a result, their faithfulness to Christ then primarily becomes expressed through their **love** for both God and others as the basis (i.e. **rooted and grounded**) for their life and ministry. Thus, **love** is not only the basis for what we do, but it's who we have become in Christ; it's the center of our transformed character and being. As a result, our motivation for ministry then becomes the pursuit to comprehend the magnitude (i.e. **the width, length, depth, and height**) of Christ's **love** for us (i.e. **all the saints**). In reality, it is an impossible task to know this type of **love** fully because it **passes knowledge** (v. 19). We can only begin to understand how much



love God showed us through His Son! The result of attempting to understand such great **love** is that we **may be filled with all the fullness of God**. In other words, we have become conduits for sharing God's **love** to others because He has lavished so much **love** upon us. Although none of us deserves God's **love**, we should show it to others to the extent He has graciously and mercifully shown it to us (see [Eph 5:2](#)). As the recipients of such magnificent **love**, we should exhibit that same type of unconditional **love** for others in the community and the secular world around us. Following in the footsteps of Christ, **love** compels us to act ([2 Cor 5:14](#)); **love** isn't merely an emotion or a verbal declaration, but it's an action through which we demonstrate the extent of our **love** for others. Through His incarnation ([John 3:16](#)), crucifixion ([Rom 5:8](#)), and resurrection ([Zeph 3:17-20](#)), Jesus demonstrated God's great **love** for us and He also calls us to demonstrate that same **love** to others—whether fellow believers ([John 13:35](#)), our neighbors ([Mark 12:31](#)), or our "enemies" ([Matt 5:44](#)). Although God hates sin and will judge those who reject His offer of salvation ([Isa 59:2](#)), He loves us unconditionally and desires a relationship with every one of us ([1 Tim 2:4](#)). In the same way, we shouldn't condone or celebrate sin nor should we condemn others, but we should **love** others unconditionally and seek to introduce them into a

Instruct

relationship with our Savior so that they too might have hope and begin to understand the magnitude of His **love**.

In what ways have others shown you the love of Christ? How can you show others that same love?

Question
8

When we are **rooted and grounded in the love** of Christ, we show it and want to share it with others. If we **love** something or someone, we want to share it with



others. We want them to find the same joy and satisfaction that we have. A few weeks ago as I sat in the doctor's office waiting for my appointment, a father of a newborn baby girl came and started to speak to the receptionist, recounting the details of the birth. In the course of the conversation, the receptionist asked if he had any pictures. To

which he exclaimed, "Of course! What kind of father would I be if I didn't?" Because he loved his daughter and other children, this father didn't hesitate to share it with others. He wanted others to know how proud he was as a father and how much he loved his children. Similarly, we must share our **love** for Christ with others. We shouldn't hoard His **love** and keep it to ourselves, but we should boldly and unashamedly declare it to others.

Ephesians 3:20-21

INDEBTED TO HIS LIBERALITY (GENEROSITY) :

Finally, Paul concludes his prayer by proclaiming how much more God will **do** through us **exceedingly and abundantly above all that we ask or think** (v. 20). When we fully surrender to His Spirit (i.e. **the power that works in us**), He will work liberally or generously through us to accomplish His will. We tend to limit God working through us when we fail to surrender completely to Him or we look at things solely from a human perspective. When we see things from a human perspective, we tend to evaluate

them primarily by what we can do ourselves, rather than letting God accomplish the impossible through us. God can do so much more than what we **ask or think** because He is not limited by our finite mind or our finite power as human beings. Because the Holy Spirit lives within us, we have the ability to do things which we would never consider possible based on our own knowledge or wisdom; we have the **power** of God which gives us strength and ability (see v. 16)! In speaking with “a certain ruler” concerning salvation, Jesus reminds him, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God” ([Luke 18:27](#)). Just as with salvation, the same applies to us when we have a relationship with Christ; He can do that which is seemingly impossible through us if only we would allow Him. Let us not be a hindrance to God by seeing things from a human perspective, but let us allow Him to work freely through us as He desires. When we allow God to work through us, He will receive all the honor and **glory** because others will know it is something only God could have done—not something that we could have done on our own! For this reason, Paul ends his prayer on a note of praise where he gives **glory** to **Christ Jesus** for that which He has accomplished and will accomplish **in the church** throughout the **generations** (v. 21).

In what ways do we sometimes limit God from working in our lives? In what ways have you seen God do the impossible through you?

Question
9

In the introduction, we met a young boy who wanted to give his mother a nice birthday present, but was ultimately motivated to buy something that would benefit him more than it would her. As believers, however, we must be motivated by the unselfish love of Christ who not only desires a relationship with us, but who also wants to equip us and use us in His service. God demonstrates His love to us by involving us in His work to extend the gospel into all the world. Consequently, we have no excuse for not actively serving the Lord because He has given us the ability, equipped us for success, and strengthened to face any situation. He graciously gives us strength and the ability to accomplish the tasks to which He has called us. Indeed, He is not stingy, but gives us even more than we ask or think.

Therefore, let us commit to pray for one another that God will strengthen us and use us miraculously in the ministry in which He has called us. God has not called a few of us to serve, but every one of us who has a relationship with Him. We must trust the Lord and make ourselves available to be used by Him. This will require commitment and sacrifice, but we have a higher calling and purpose which must be fulfilled even more than the ordinary, everyday activities that seem to consume our time. As a result, let us see ourselves from the perspective of Christ and allow Him to accomplish extraordinary things through us that only He can do, so that He may be glorified and the world can see Him working in our lives!

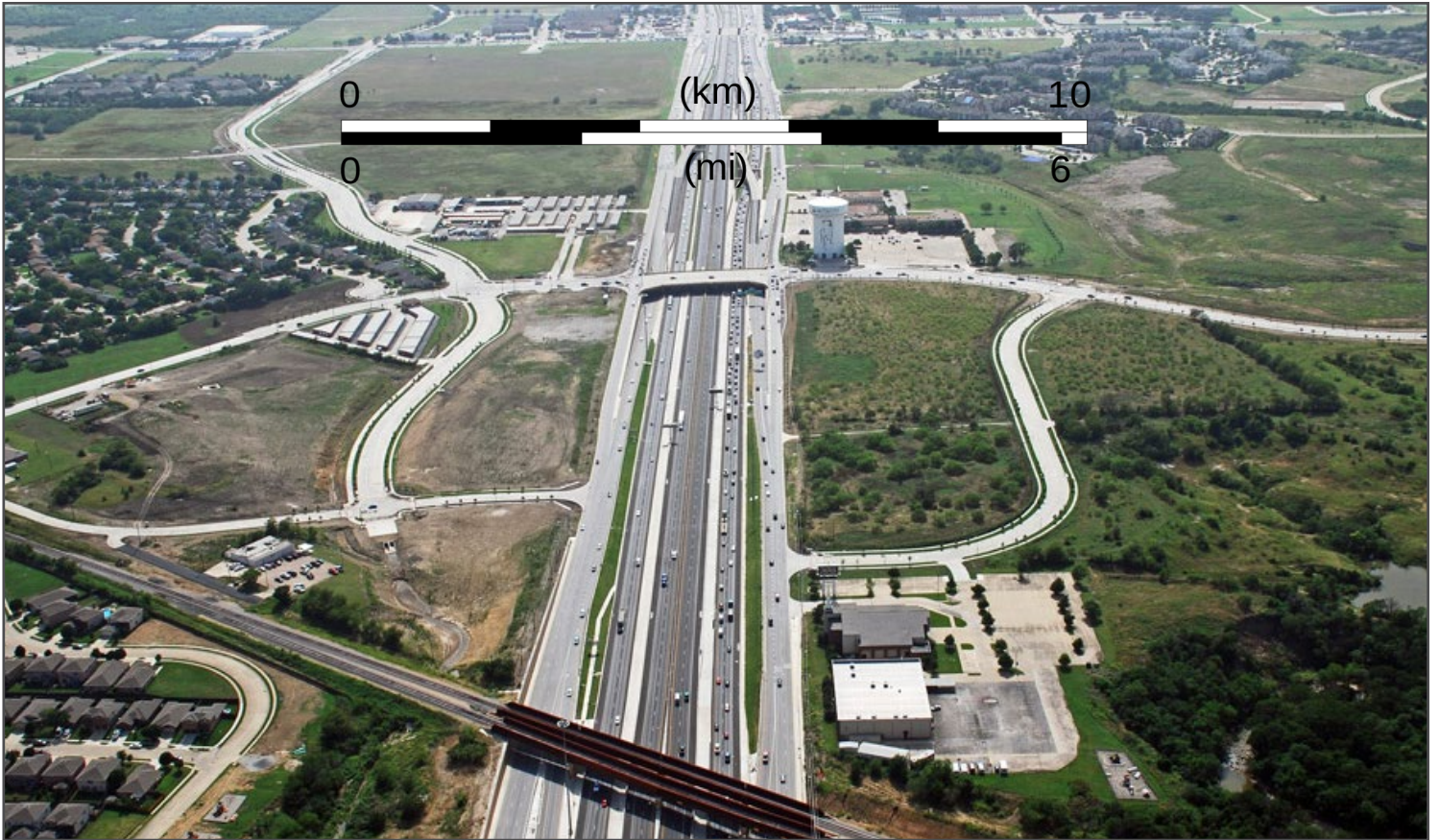
Incorporate

In what ways specifically has God strengthened us to do the work of ministry in the church?

In what ways can we show the love of Christ to the secular community around us?

If others see Christ doing the impossible through us as a church, what effect will have on the secular community around us?

March 10, 2019



The Measure of the Community

Ephesians 4:1-10

Focal Verse:

"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift."

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Ephesians 4:7

Introduce

Years ago, almost every small town in the United States that served as a county seat of government had a courthouse with a clock tower that had a symphony of bells which chimed in chorus at the top of every hour like an old grandfather clock. In one particular town, the courthouse sat on a quaint little square that had one of the best diners in town. Every day, the foreman from the largest factory in town would go to eat lunch in the square at 12:30 sharp. Upon leaving the diner at the stroke of 1:00 pm, the foreman would remove his pocket watch and set it by the bells which loudly chimed from the courthouse to announce the time. Day in and day out, the foreman never failed in his duty to check the accuracy of his watch by the clock tower downtown.



One day as the foreman exited the diner on the square, the man who set the timing apparatus that controlled the chimes on the clock tower sat on the steps of the courthouse relaxing. As the foreman passed, he went through his usual routine of checking his watch by the chimes. Suddenly, the one who programmed the clock blurted out, "I've noticed you from my office window that you set your watch by the chimes every day without fail. Where do you go that you must be so precise with your time?" Without fail, the foreman replied that he worked for the largest factory in town and he was responsible for sounding the whistle precisely at 5:00 pm that heralded the end of the work day. With a startled look, the man quickly responded, "But I set the clock tower and chimes according to your whistle at the factory!"

When we want to measure something accurately, we cannot use other imperfect human standards; instead, we must use the only perfect standard to have ever lived. In this fictional story, neither person could have known precisely the correct time because they based their calculations off of each other; therefore, if one were wrong, the other was wrong too and didn't even know it! In the church, we can't afford to be wrong; we must look to the perfect standard by which we can measure our progress accurately. Scripture reveals the perfect standard by which we should measure our lives: Jesus

Introduce

Christ who perfectly lived according to the standards God had set.

In the church, we shouldn't use the world as our standard to judge our progress; if we do, we will have an imperfect standard which will misdirect us and cause us to evaluate our lives and progress improperly. We should only compare ourselves to Christ to see if we're living worthy of our calling by which He has called us in Him. As His body, we must walk in the measure of Christ collectively to accomplish that to which He has called us. Let us, therefore, strive to walk in Christ daily, measuring ourselves against His perfect example. Knowing that none of us is perfect, let us collectively work together to hold one another accountable to the standard of Christ and encourage each other to live consistently according to the pattern that He set for us!

Key
Question

How do we as individuals and collectively as a church measure up to Christ?

Ephesians 4:1-2

WALK WORTHY OF OUR CALLING:

After praying for the Ephesians “to be strengthened” and “rooted and grounded in love,” Paul reminds them of the current circumstances which he faces as a **prisoner of the Lord** (v. 1). As he pens this letter, he sits incarcerated under house arrest in the Roman capital awaiting trial under the emperor to judge his fate for the skirmish in Jerusalem because the Jews thought he had dishonored the temple by allowing Gentiles to enter ([Acts 21:17-22:29](#)). He doesn’t make this declaration about his imprisonment to garner pity from them, but he appeals to his situation to show how God has strengthened him and equipped him to endure even the most challenging crises. Instead of focusing on his circumstances, however, Paul focused on **the Lord** and the ministry to which He had called him. He never once complained that he had wrongly been imprisoned, he never sought sympathy from others, and he never saw himself as an unfortunate victim whom everyone mistreated. On the contrary, he pointed others to Christ who worked miraculously through Him!

In what ways does God help us to overcome our circumstances to worship and serve Him?

Question
1

Today, many people become distracted by their circumstances and seek pity from others because they see themselves as victims. Yet, as believers, God has given us the strength and ability to overcome if we surrender to Him and rely upon His Spirit to guide us. Rather than seeing ourselves as *victims*, we should see ourselves as *victors* in the Lord who will sustain us and fulfill His promises to us. When natural disasters strike and obliterate towns, the citizens typically band together and defiantly declare that they will rebuild regardless of the cost. They don’t focus on the devastation around them, but they look forward



to the ultimate goal which is sometimes years down the road. If the people looked at the bare foundations of homes and businesses strewn with piles of rubble, they could easily become overwhelmed—not knowing where and how to begin such a vast project. Certainly, people may feel despair and hopelessness at times, but they must learn to look beyond their immediate circumstances to see the bigger picture; they must learn to overcome in the Lord.

Regardless of what may happen to us in life, we must rely upon God and allow Him to guide us step by step through the good days and the bad. At times, Paul himself even faced despair from uncertain circumstances in life. In fact, he once declared to the Corinthians, “For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life” (2 Cor 1:8). On the contrary, he turned his despair into victory because he trusted in the Lord and understood the mission and ministry to which God had called him ([2 Cor 1:9-11](#)). Because Christ has already given us victory in Him, we have nothing to fear and we can focus on serving Him one day at a time. Lest we wrongly think that trials and tribulations provide the main source of distraction, we must realize that we oftentimes become distracted all the more when things are going well in our lives! When things are going well, we tend to live independently; we make choices based on our desires and in favor of things that we enjoy. We sometimes exclude God and relegate Him to an afterthought. Whether in good or bad times, however, we must remain focused on the Lord, worship Him through our praise and service, and remember our calling to share the gospel to all the world.

In what ways can we keep our circumstances, whether good or bad, from affecting our participation in ministry?

Question
2

Having reminded them about how the Lord has helped him to overcome his circumstances, Paul now encourages the Ephesians **to walk worthy of the calling by which they were called**. As we know from the rest of Scripture, our **calling** is to represent Christ as His people whom He has redeemed, but also to declare the salvation and redemption that He offers to the rest of the world. For example, elsewhere Paul states that we have become ambassadors of Christ who have been given the “ministry of reconciliation” whereby we plead with others to be saved or

“reconciled to God” through Christ ([2 Cor 5:18-21](#)). When we think of walking **worthy** of **our calling**, therefore, we typically picture living holy lives above reproach so that we bring honor to our Savior. Certainly, as Paul has already highlighted in [Ephesians 1:4](#), walking **worthy** constitutes living “holy and without blame before Him,” but in this current context he also gives five characteristics that identify specific ways in which we are **to**



**Now then, we are
ambassadors for Christ, as
though God were pleading
through us: we implore
you on Christ’s behalf, be
reconciled to God.
2 Corinthians 5:20**

walk worthy of our calling: humility, **gentleness**, patience, **bearing with one another in love**, and **unity**.

First, Paul explains that we should **walk with all lowliness and gentleness** (v. 2). The phrase translated **all lowliness** is better translated as “complete humility.” The term **lowliness** can give the impression that we ought to exercise false humility and see ourselves as worthless or incapable, but in actuality it means that we should have the right perspective about our value, position, or abilities to be used within the church to glorify the Lord. As a result, we shouldn’t think too highly of ourselves nor should we think too lowly, but instead we must see ourselves through the eyes of Christ (see [Rom 12:3](#)). When we practice humility, we see should ourselves as dependent upon Christ. When we depend upon Christ, He will supplement our weaknesses and enhance our strengths to accomplish extraordinary things through us even beyond “that which we ask or think” ([Eph 3:20](#)). By exercising “complete humility,” we will make ourselves available to be used by the Lord and allow Him to speak through us to communicate the gospel through which we ourselves have been saved and transformed.

In addition, humility enables us to work together in a community because we can see how all the parts fit together to accomplish one goal. If we have false humility and see ourselves as ignorant, worthless, or ill-equipped, however, we become like a missing piece in a puzzle because we don’t see value in our service to the Lord. Thus, we place undue burden upon others to do what God has clearly called us to do and we force them to pick up the slack because we refuse to serve. On the other hand, the opposite occurs when we regard ourselves too highly; we don’t see the value of participating with others and striving together to achieve a common goal. To borrow a common

Instruct

phrase, we tell others in the community, “I’ve got this,” implying that we don’t need their help. God, however, never designed us to function in isolation, but He created us all to become a valuable and indispensable part of a community that works together. Therefore, it becomes imperative that we understand exactly how God wants to use us in this community so that we may be able to accomplish that to which He has called us.

In what ways do we need to exercise humility in our calling?

Question
3

Next, Paul urges the Ephesians **to walk** with **gentleness** or meekness. In a believer’s life, **gentleness** is characterized by extending care or compassion to others, especially those within the community. Jesus displayed concern and care for others by meeting their physical needs, by bearing their burdens, by teaching them how to live and setting an example to follow, by extending forgiveness through His sacrifice, and by correcting them when they erred. By pairing humility and **gentleness** together as one idea in the way that he constructs this Greek sentence, Paul most likely has this latter idea in mind: we should exercise **gentleness** in the way that we work with others in the community, especially when we offer correction based upon Scripture. When we have the right perspective in Christ and live **with all** humility, we will speak the truth in love and gently correct others when they err.

Gentleness does not mean that we ignore sin or change our convictions to match



Let your gentleness
be known to all men.
The Lord is at hand.
Philippians 4:5

the world, but rather we should hold fast to the truth and never compromise. As a community, therefore, we ought to be a place where people can find restoration and forgiveness. If they can’t find compassion which leads to restoration in the church, where else will they find it in the secular world? Not only should we forgive others, but we should point them

to Christ who offers complete restoration and forgiveness. We shouldn’t argue aimlessly with others nor should we try to convict others of their sin, but rather we should gently

point them to Scripture and allow God to do the work of restoration in them. For this reason, Paul writes in 2 Timothy 2:24-25, “And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth.” Consequently, **gentleness** means that we care enough about others to tell them the truth based on Scripture even if no one else will.

In what ways should we exercise gentleness in the church when seeking to restore wayward individuals?

Question
4

Second, Paul implores us to exercise patience (i.e. **longsuffering**) by **bearing with one another in love**. When we **love** others in the community, we will exhibit patience and we will put aside our personal preferences for the benefit of the community as a whole ([Phil 2:1-4](#)). We live in an instant world where we expect immediate results; if we don't receive satisfaction immediately, then we become impatient and disgruntled. Just take a moment to look at the world around us and we'll see the propensity for impatience! Because we have come to expect immediate results, we often lack patience as we grow and mature together as a community. Although the result of salvation and the transition from death to life is immediate, it takes a lifetime to mature and become more like Christ. Just as we would want others to have patience with us, we should bear with **one another in love** as we mature spiritually. For those of us who have children, we must exercise great patience in educating and preparing them for their adult lives. At points, we may even wonder if any of our instruction is sinking in based on the choices that they make. Yet, no matter what they may do, we still **love** them and attempt to show patience in guiding them according to biblical truth.

Just as parents **love** their children and show patience to them, we must **love** others in the community and bear with them patiently as they grow. No matter how old or young we are, we are continually growing and maturing in the Lord; thus, we will never arrive at perfection or complete maturity until Christ calls us home.



Instruct

As a community, therefore, we should encourage and remind one another of our **calling** in Christ Jesus, so that we remain focused on Him. We should pray daily for each other and ask the Lord to conform us to His image and use us for His glory according to His purpose. Moreover, we should patiently exhort each other with the Word of God, so that we can learn to apply and have a more abundant life in Him. To learn from Scripture and conform our lives to His requires consistency and patience in which we must strive together as His body because we **love** Him and we **love** one another.

In what ways should we practice patience in the church?

Question
5

In addition, we should also bear with **one another in love** by putting aside our personal preferences for the benefit of the community. Hence, we won't look at things in accordance with what we want, but we will see things in terms of how they glorify Christ and how they build His community. A few years ago, our children's choirs performed a musical titled "Unselfie: Selfless in a Selfie World." This truly captures where our world is today. People have become so self-absorbed that they have lost sight of the community at large. Selfies, that is taking pictures of yourself, scream "it's all about me." We become the center of attention and nothing or no one else matters. In the church, however, we should never draw attention to ourselves; we should never seek to get our way no matter what it may cost; we shouldn't sacrifice unity and engage in arguments for the sake of personal preferences. Rather, we should elevate Christ and display His **love** to others. When we look to the interests of others and treat them as our own, we will live in unity and express the **love** of Christ, so that we all mature together and **walk worthy of our calling**.

In what ways have personal preferences become a contentious debate in the church?
How can we avoid such debates and bear with one another in love?

Question
6

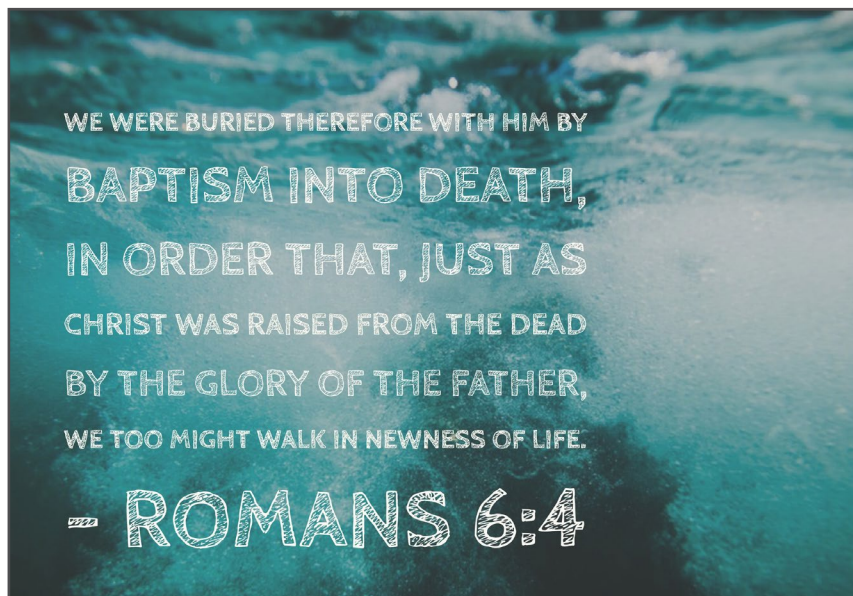
Ephesians 4:3-6

WALK TOGETHER COLLECTIVELY:

Finally, we **walk worthy of our calling** by **endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace** (v. 3). In Christ, we have all been united by a single, shared

experience. As sinners, we all needed a Savior and only **One** person could fulfill that role. We don't have different paths to salvation—one for the Jews and another for Gentiles—but we have **one** gospel in Christ Jesus whereby we can have eternal life through His death and resurrection ([Eph 2:11-18](#)). As a result, we have been united into **one body and Spirit**, being **called in one hope of our calling** (v. 4). Thus, Christ has **called** both Jew and Gentile **in one hope** through the power of the gospel which saves. For this reason, Paul can exclaim, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Rom 1:16).

To emphasize how the gospel unites us into **one** people in Christ, Paul explains that we have **one Lord, one faith, and one baptism** (v. 5). Again, these three phrases remind us of the singularity of the gospel: salvation comes only through the sacrifice of **one** person (**Lord**) in only **one** way (**faith**) not through works or righteousness. **Baptism**, therefore, reminds us of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection and it also symbolizes our participation in His sacrifice whereby we have died to our old way of life and have been raised to walk in newness of life, patterning our lives after our Savior ([Rom 6:3-10](#)). Consequently, we



owe our physical existence and spiritual inheritance in Christ to the **One** true and living **God and Father** who created the universe and is **above all, through all**, and whose Spirit lives **in all** who believe (v. 6).

Because we all have the same heavenly **Father** and Savior, we should have the same purpose and goal when we surrender to Him. We can never achieve **unity** based on our own strength and power, especially when we view things from our own human perspectives and elevate our preferences above His will. For this reason, God has sent His **Spirit** to indwell our hearts and unite us together **in the bond of peace** (v. 3). When we allow the **Spirit** to guide our thoughts and actions, He will produce **unity** in the **body**. Although the world may often seem to live in isolation, people seek a place to belong and be loved; they desire others to walk through life with them. Fortunately, we serve a God who understands our desire to be part of a community which He innately

Instruct

created within us. As a result, He has placed us in a local body of believers where we can be loved and show love to others, where we can be encouraged and encourage others, when we can be comforted and offer comfort to others, and where we can serve together to make a positive impact on others around us. Let us, therefore, be united in the **Spirit** to serve our Lord and Savior faithfully in this local body in which He has placed us.

In what ways does the Holy Spirit unify us in the church?

Question
7

Ephesians 4:7-10

WALK IN THE MEASURE OF CHRIST :

Although Christ united us for one purpose, we all have different roles and responsibilities in His **body**. In fact, the **grace** which He has **given us** refers in this context to the different spiritual gifts He bestowed upon us (v. 7). He expects us to be unified in our service to Him by utilizing our distinctive gifts to glorify Him and extend His kingdom into the world around us. Paul further explains that we ought to use these gifts of grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. Just as Christ sacrificially died for us on the cross, we also ought to serve Him sacrificially. The measure of how we serve isn't defined by others, but it's defined by Christ Himself! We live in a world of convenience; unless it's easy or doesn't require much effort, many won't attempt or participate in it. Unfortunately, many people treat ministry in this manner; they relegate service to something which requires little sacrifice, little commitment, and little effort. If we are honest with ourselves, when did we truly sacrifice (not just financially) to participate in a ministry to share the gospel?

In what ways do you truly serve the Lord sacrificially?

Question
8

Imagine if Christ made the same excuses that we do! We often fill our lives with activities and things which seem important to us, but in reality have little eternal value. Perhaps, today, time has more value than finances. Christ has called us to make sacrifices and **measure** our service **according to** His **gift!** For example, academics are important, but are they more important than teaching our children and others about

the hope found in Christ alone? Commitment to sports teams is important, but we have allowed them to fill our time and dictate how we serve the Lord. We schedule our worship and service around sports! Certainly, our jobs are important to provide for our families, but our hectic schedules in the pursuit of more abundant finances can cost valuable time with family worship and devotion—especially, spending time with children to train them in the Lord. As Christians, we must decide what’s most important: our time, education, extracurricular activities, jobs or knowing Christ and dedicating ourselves to His service so that we may know Him better and can introduce others into a relationship with Him.

To serve Christ more effectively, what are some areas in which God may be asking you to make sacrifices?

Question
9

In-Depth Information



In verses 8-10, Paul quotes [Psalm 68:18](#) to explain the sacrifice that Christ made on our behalf. In verse 9, the phrase **descending into the lower parts of the earth** refers to the incarnation where Christ became flesh with the express purpose of dying for our sins. Consequently, **ascending** refers to Jesus’ ascension to heaven after His resurrection where He continues to oversee creation and also specifically guides His people in service. Thus, to continue His ministry here on earth, Christ gave each one of His people a spiritual gift which we should use for His glory and service. Therefore, just as Christ gave Himself as a gift to us, we give ourselves as a gift to Him through our service in the church. (We will discuss this more next week.)

In the introduction, we met the foreman from a large factory and the man who controlled the time on the courthouse clock tower. Because they used each other as the standard, they had no perfect standard which to follow—they had no way of knowing the right time. As Christians, we have a perfect standard which to follow and He set the example of how we ought to relate to our heavenly Father and with one another. He has bid us to walk in humility and gentleness just as He did. Just as He patiently loves us as we mature, we ought to be patient with others and bear with them in love as they mature in the Lord. Finally, just as Jesus submitted to the will of the heavenly Father, we also ought to submit to His will and be unified as one body which seeks to glorify Him by serving and sharing the gospel.

More importantly, we should measure our progress and success against the standard that Christ set by sacrificially giving His life for ours. We can't look at other human beings to judge our progress because they are imperfect examples. We can only look to Christ! Let us, therefore, sacrificially give of ourselves to Christ, so that He may be glorified and His kingdom may be proclaimed. In fact, Paul reminds us, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom 12:1). Even though we could never out-give Christ or hope to measure up to His sacrificial gift, we must give ourselves fully unto Him and surrender every area of our lives into His complete control. Through this local body, therefore, we must dedicate ourselves to serve Him sacrificially and continually progress each day to become more like Him in every way.

Incorporate

Use this time to pray and ask God to help you evaluate your walk. How effectively are you walking worthy of your calling in Christ?

In what ways can we walk together more effectively as a community (church)? What part do you have in walking together in this community?

How effective are we as a community at sacrificially serving the Lord?

March 17, 2019



The Ministry of the Community

Ephesians 4:11-16

Focal Verse:

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers."

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Ephesians 4:11

Introduce

Some of us may have experienced working on an assembly line to mass produce products of various kinds in order to satisfy the seemingly insatiable demand for these goods in our face-paced society. In 1913, for example, Henry Ford first introduced the automated assembly line in the automotive industry to mass produce his Model-T and make his product more accessible throughout the United States. As the unassembled Model-T moved down the assembly line, each station had a specific task designated to it along with specific tools and skills required to do the job properly. As the most-basic



components of the Model-T's chassis continued down the line, skilled workers at each station would add a specific part in order from the side panels on the body, to the doors, the engine, the hood, and finally the accessories like the headlights, bumpers, and mirrors until the entire vehicle was completely assembled and drivable. Imagine, however, what would happen if some of the stations on the assembly line did not work together to do their job or were even missing altogether. If even one station failed to perform its job, it would slow down the entire process and the factory wouldn't produce as many cars and, in the worst-case scenario, the line would produce an inferior product fraught with problems. If one station were missing for some reason, it would also put a tremendous strain upon the resources of the rest of the line in order to compensate and pick up the slack for the missing portion.

The other stations may do an "adequate" job, but the product would likely not be as good as when all the stations worked cohesively because the workers on the other parts of the line couldn't focus on the primary task which had been designated to them! Instead, they would need to cover for the missing component, perhaps making them mentally and physically fatigued. Moreover, it would place quite a strain on human resources because the other sections of the line must cover an area for which they weren't specifically trained, thereby exacerbating frustration and complaining. On the contrary, every part of the line must perform its specific task at all cost in order for it

Introduce

to function in the way it was designed!

The church is similar to an assembly line in that God has endowed each member with a specific gift and tasked them with a specific function or ministry within the community. Therefore, we must all work together to achieve one goal whereby we glorify the Lord and grow together in maturity as His people! If one member fails to use the spiritual gift which God has graciously given him or her, then it will put a tremendous burden upon the rest of the community to compensate.

Although it won't thwart God's sovereign plan for the community, it does in some ways hinder the church from functioning in the way God designed it. God has given us everything we need for ministry! He has equipped us with the specific tools and skills to accomplish the ministry to which He has called us. In addition, God has also called specific individuals in the church to teach and equip the entire body for the work of ministry. Pastors, teachers, and evangelists, for instance, participate in ministry, but the entire church together engages in the work of ministry. Therefore, let each one of us commit to working together to accomplish the ministry to which Jesus Christ has called us as His local body right here in Fort Worth.

Key
Question

How has God gifted you to serve in FBCFW?

Ephesians 4:11-12

EQUIP EVERYONE FOR MINISTRY:

In [Ephesians 4:7-10](#), Paul uses [Psalm 68:18](#) to explain how Christ “gave gifts to men” upon His ascension to heaven after His resurrection where He is seated at the right hand of the Father to oversee His people. Before He ascended to the Father, Christ specifically called the church to continue the ministry which He Himself had begun on earth, so He provided His people with all the resources they would need to do their job successfully ([John 14:12-14](#)). He has graciously given each member of the community a spiritual gift to allow them to grow together in maturity and to reach the secular world with the gospel. Verses 11-12, then, offer a detailed explanation of some of the gifts which the Lord has given and the purposes for which they are to be used in the church. Although this is not a comprehensive list of spiritual gifts, it does give a general idea of how the Lord has gifted the church to do **ministry** and how all the parts fit together in one purpose (see also [Eph 2:19-22](#), [Romans 12:4-8](#), and [1 Cor 12:1-31](#)).

Before examining each of the gifts individually, we must first understand their purpose in the church collectively. Although God has called some individuals into full-time vocational ministry, He has called *everyone* in the church who has a relationship with Him to do **the work of ministry**! It becomes clear when we read this passage carefully that God has gifted certain individuals to equip and train the membership (i.e. **the saints**) to undertake **the work of ministry**, but that all **the saints** should serve in the community as God gifts them. Because we live in a service-oriented society focused on the rights and benefits of the consumer, we tend to see this attitude infiltrate the church where people often gather for what they can receive rather than how they can serve. God never designed the church to function in this way! On the contrary, He has called everyone to serve and be actively involved in **ministry** as He leads.

What gift have you been given?



Instruct

When everyone in **the body** actively ministers, the scope and reach of the gospel can penetrate much further into the secular community as Christ intended.

Why do some not participate in the ministry of the body? How can we seek to involve them?

Question
1

God doesn't leave any member ill-equipped or unprepared **for ministry**, so no one has an excuse not to participate. Instead, God has invested leadership with the knowledge and wisdom to train others as well as with the foresight to keep **the saints** focused and on the same page to maximize the body's effectiveness. Not only do the leaders train others, but they also participate in **the work of ministry** along with their fellow **saints**. As servant-leaders, they set a visible example for others to follow and walk with them hand-in-hand through the triumphs and trials to show them the right way. In fact, the most-effective way to equip others is to minister with them side-by-side where they can see an example and ask questions as they arise. Think back to the teacher or mentor who influenced you the most. The one(s) that you remember and respect the most probably taught you by spending time with you and guiding you step-by-step rather than simply barking instructions or telling you to read a book on your own.

How can you invest in the lives of others in this community to equip them for ministry and life?

Question
2

Next, Paul explains that **the work of ministry** is for the purpose of **edifying the body of Christ**. The word translated **edifying** comes from the Greek which means to build a structure (i.e. a house) and comes from the same word in [Ephesians 2:21](#) where Paul notes "the whole *building* [i.e. church], being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord." For this reason, Christ has given the church spiritual gifts which will help **the body** grow! Thus, edification means that we must work together to build community by proclaiming the



gospel of Jesus Christ. Based on the type of gifts mentioned and the immediate context of the passage, we can identify two primary ways in which the church grows. First, the church grows together in maturity by teaching sound doctrine from Scripture, so that we may know Christ better and walk in conformity with His example (see [Eph 4:14-16](#) which we will discuss later in this lesson). Second, the church grows by proclaiming the gospel and seeing people accept Christ as their Savior (i.e. apostles and evangelists). Having identified the two purposes for which Christ has gifted the church as the **equipping of the saints for the work of ministry** and the **edifying of the body** for both spiritual and numerical growth (i.e. adding new believers to the kingdom), we can examine each of the gifts individually. First, Paul notes that Christ **Himself gave some to be apostles** in the church (v. 11). To understand this gift, we must differentiate between the technical office of apostle within Scripture and the more generic meaning of apostle as a gift of service in the church. Technically, no one can hold the office of apostle today because no one can meet the requirements of having been discipled by Jesus during His earthly ministry nor of having been witnesses to the resurrected Jesus when He appeared physically to His disciples ([Acts 1:1-3; 1 Cor 9:1-2](#)). Paul, for example, can identify himself as an apostle because He physically saw the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus who converted him from a persecutor of the early church to one who served the Lord Jesus Christ and became persecuted himself for the sake of the gospel ([Acts 9:1-9; 1 Cor 15:8-9](#)).

In verse 11, however, Paul is not talking about the office of the apostle, but he is referring to a more general gift in which people can spread the gospel and plant churches. In more modern terms,

we would identify **apostles** as “church planters.” The term apostle literally means one who announces or proclaims a message from a superior and enacts the orders that he has given. Biblically, the **apostles** did missionary work to start churches in unreached areas and helped the church to grow theologically through discipleship ([Rom 15:20-24](#)). In addition, they assisted the church to develop a structure and leadership so that it would become self-sustaining.



Instruct

We may still ask ourselves then how do “**apostles**” function in the church today. When we realize the call to reach every person with the gospel, those with this gift will look for innovative ways to minister to unreached and untargeted areas of the secular community for the specific purpose of linking these groups to the local church. Those with such innovative ideas about how to reach the community should work closely with the pastoral staff to develop a plan and secure the resources (both human and financial) needed to do **the work of ministry**. When we work together collectively, we can always accomplish more than individually; therefore, we don’t use this gift in isolation to do **ministry** on our own, but we work together as a church for the most effective results. Moreover, those with this gift ought to take others with them on the journey not just for encouragement and aid, but also to mentor them to continue the **work** and teach them how to look for ways to share the gospel innovatively and connect all people with the church through the gospel.

What innovative ministry could you begin to proclaim the gospel and connect people with the church?

Question
3

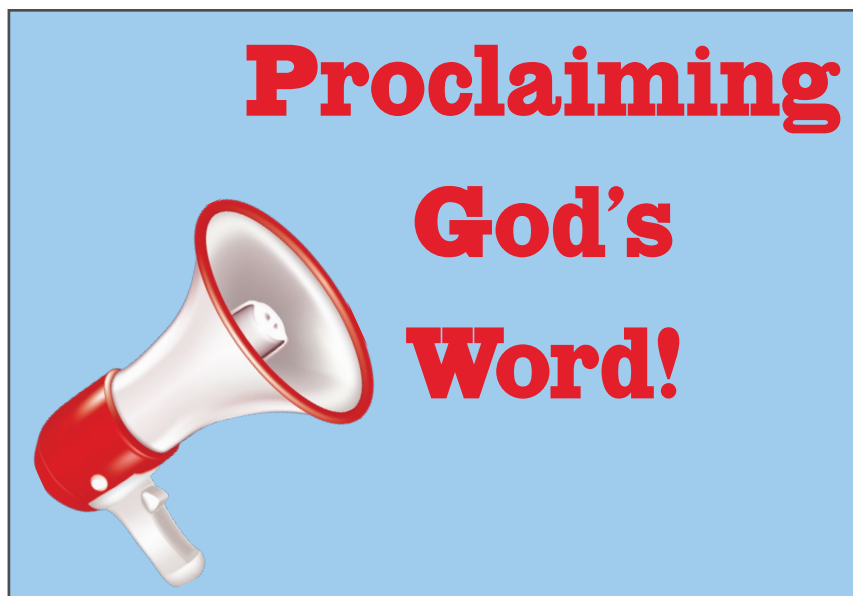
Second, Paul reminds us that God has called **some** as **prophets**. Like the term **apostles**, we must not understand this in the Old Testament sense where God called them to an office to communicate new aspects of His divine revelation to people. With the coming of Christ and the conclusion of the New Testament, God has fully revealed what He desires mankind to know about His character, His plan, and our responsibility. We no longer need **prophets** in the sense of providing “new” revelation from God because we have His complete revelation in the form of Scripture. Therefore, any so-called prophet who has a “new” revelation from the Lord, especially if it contradicts Scripture, does not speak on His behalf and should be considered a false prophet ([Deut 18:19-22](#); [Matt 7:15-20](#)).

On the other hand, the gift of prophecy does exist today when a person rightly handles the Word of God to explain and convey its meaning to the church, so that they can use Scripture and apply it in their lives as God intended ([2 Tim 2:15-18](#)). For this reason, **prophets** do not have authority on their own, but their credibility and authority come from what God has already written and communicated in His Word. For instance, Peter writes, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private

interpretation for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” In one sense, therefore, this curriculum is a form of prophecy because it communicates God’s message to His people based solely upon His authoritative and inerrant Word as inspired by the Holy Spirit. Although this curriculum

isn’t on par with Scripture, we believe it to be God’s Word which He has given to us to communicate so we can grow together in maturity as believers.

Furthermore, we tend to think of prophecy as primarily predicting the future according to what will happen in the last days at the end of time. Although it does have a such predictive element to it at times, God primarily spoke through His **prophets** to comment on current events and patterns to warn of impending judgment that would occur lest they turn from their sins and amend their ways by seeking forgiveness from Him. Today, for example, **prophets** would look at the pattern of decay in the family by highlighting God’s plan to show how and where the modern family falls short. Thus, they will take God’s Word and explain what a family should look like, how it should function, and how it should imitate Christ. Then, based on Scripture, they would encourage those families who seek God daily to remain strong and focused, but they would lovingly warn those families who do not seek God and abide by His standards to turn or face impending judgment.



In what ways do we see prophecy used in the church today based on the proper understanding of this gift?

Question
4

Third, Christ has called **some** as **evangelists**. Unfortunately, many in the modern church have come to believe that if they don’t have the gift of evangelism then they aren’t required to share the gospel. This couldn’t be further from the truth! On the contrary, God has called and equipped everyone who is a believer to share the gospel. **Evangelists**, however, have a special calling in which God has gifted them to help equip others to share the gospel more effectively. Usually, **evangelists** are extroverts

Instruct

who have little trouble starting a conversation and never meet a stranger so to speak; they can boldly steer any conversation to include the topic of the gospel. Those with the gift of evangelism should seek others whom they can encourage and mentor to share the gospel. They can walk with them and be an example to demonstrate how God works through them. Lest we forget, the Holy Spirit guides and uses **evangelists** just as He uses introverts to share the gospel with others. Therefore, let us learn from one another and be mutually encouraged.

Who in our church do you know has the gift of evangelism? What can you learn from them?

Question
5

Finally, Paul reminds us that God gave **some** as **pastors and teachers**. In the Greek, the pronoun **some** links both nouns in this phrase together, so some have taken it to mean a pastor who's gifted in teaching. Whether we should take them together or as two separate gifts doesn't really matter; however, for the sake of this lesson, we will focus on the reason why **pastors** should also be capable of teaching. The term translated **pastors** comes from the word "shepherd" as an indication that God has placed them in a position of responsibility to care for His flock ([John 21:17](#)). To shepherd or lead God's flock well, a pastor must communicate and explain Scripture clearly, so that people can take it and apply it in their lives. For this reason, he must use discernment to know when to encourage the church when they do well, when to rebuke them gently when they go astray, and how to exhort them to remain focused on Christ. Like a shepherd who protects his flock, a pastor will figuratively protect the church from heresy or error by pointing them to Scripture and helping them to develop the tools and knowledge in the Spirit to distinguish truth from deception.

In what biblical ways does a pastor shepherd the congregation in which God has placed him?

Question
6

Ephesians 4:13-15

ENCOURAGE EVERYONE TO MATURE:

When the church actively and appropriately uses the gifts that Christ has given us with guidance from the Spirit, it will lead directly to the spiritual maturation of the body. In fact, it produces four distinct results: 1) **unity** of the body, 2) maturity of the

believer, 3) stability in the community, and 4) accountability to the Savior. First, these gifts collectively lead to **unity of the faith** and **knowledge of the Son of God** (v. 13). Disagreements over opinions and preferences seem to be a staple of human society and often manifest themselves in the church because people have a self-centered focus rather than a Christ-centered one. When we properly handle Scripture by allowing the Holy Spirit to guide our interpretation according to the original context in which God inspired it to be written, we will not have division or conflict over petty differences ([Phil 3:15](#)). This doesn't mean that we should compromise the truth and ignore sin. It does mean, however, that we have a standard by which we can know exactly what truth is through the **knowledge of the Son of God**.



How will using our spiritual gifts to communicate and teach Scripture correctly produce unity in the church?

Question # 7

Second, we can rightly judge our progress toward maturity in our walk because we have the **knowledge** of the standard of truth in Christ. Through Scripture, God has given us a plan and example to follow as we strive for maturity by allowing the Spirit to conform our lives to match the standard Christ has set. When Paul describes the community as **a perfect man**, he simply means one which is mature or complete in Christ. Thus, we **measure** our lives against **the stature of the fullness of Christ**—that is the perfect standard by which He lived His human life here on earth. When we judge our lives based on Christ's standards, He will reveal areas of imperfection which we should pray for strength and wisdom to overcome through the Spirit. As we grow daily, Christ will continually conform our desires, our perspectives, our actions, and our thoughts to His. As individuals pursue maturity, so does **the body** grow together as each member becomes more Christ-like and this will have a tremendous impact on the

Instruct

secular community as they see the principles of Christ demonstrated with consistency and unity.

How do the spiritual gifts listed in verse 11 help believers to mature?

Question
8

Third, proper education in Scripture helps to protect the church against being deceived by doctrinal errors or false teaching. Paul compares it to **children** who are gullible and must mature from against being deceived and tricked because they want to follow the crowd or they want to try something new and exciting regardless of the consequences (v. 14). In the same way, the church can fall victim to the latest fads and cultural trends, unless **the body** is grounded in Scripture! Something may sound as if it contains truth, but in actuality it still leads to destruction because it is contrary to God's Word. Therefore, as a community, we must carefully differentiate truth from falsity by continuing to study Scripture daily. Just as fads and secular beliefs change constantly with the shifting winds of culture, Paul warns the church against being **tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine** by **trickery** and **cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting**. For this reason, God has gifted people in the body to equip and teach the church to evaluate truth and reject false teaching!

In what ways have we seen cultural fads and beliefs which are not doctrinally sound infiltrate the church?

Question
9

Finally, we ought to speak **the truth in love**, so that the community **may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ** (v. 15). In this context, we should lovingly correct those in the community and point them to **the truth** in Scripture when



we see them following incorrect teaching or acting immaturely. For the community to **grow** in maturity as **Christ** guides and has commanded, we must point others to Scripture and allow Him

to do the work of conviction and restoration. We can't resolve someone's problems or correct their errant beliefs on our own, but we know Someone who can! God has given us the tools in His Word to point people in the right direction as His messengers, but He is the One who does the work when we speak the **truth in love**. As a result, we must be equipped to speak **the truth** by studying Scripture daily, committing it to memory, and applying it in our own lives.

Why is it important to have intimate relationships with people in the community so we can speak the truth in love?

Question
10

Ephesians 4:16

ENGAGE IN MINISTRY MUTUALLY:

In the last verse of this section, Paul emphasizes the need for unified service **in the body** where **each part does its share** to aid in **growth** and edification (v. 16). Truly, this verse functions as a summary and connects everything that Paul has already said in this passage, but it also provides a beautiful illustration of how God joins and knits His people together into one **body** which grows and matures under His watchful eye. We need each other! We cannot live life alone and Christ has **knit** us into this local family to provide that connection we so desperately need. Many people attempt to go through life alone and at times they feel miserable and lonely, but we don't have to! In the local church, we can find strength, encouragement, help, and guidance when we need it. Yet, even more importantly, we find other believers who share a common cause because of our Savior who gave us eternal life through His sacrifice. Therefore, let us work together, united for a common cause to share the gospel to all the world by connecting people with the local church where they can be mentored and grow in maturity together with us.

What is your role (part) in this local body that God has asked you to do? How effectively are you serving in that role?

Question
11

At some point in our lives, most of us have probably heard a symphony performed by an orchestra. When done well, an orchestra gives life and richness to music through the sound of the various instruments working together in harmony. Yet, with such a large variety of instruments, it can become a great challenge to produce a pleasing, unified sound—especially if all the instruments aren't cohesive and don't harmonize. Although each of these instruments play different parts with different rhythms, they are nonetheless playing the same musical score in the same key. In fact, the score was designed in such a way that all the parts, though different, would work together to produce one song.

However, a song will not be pleasing or even recognizable if all the musicians don't see the bigger picture of the entire score and how the parts fit together. If they decide to play at different speeds or in a different key, for example, they would produce an atrocious and unrecognizable sound—nothing but a bunch of noise! Despite the different roles and parts in the musical score, each of the groups has a single purpose and needs someone to keep them together and on track. For this reason, the conductor sets the tempo and establishes the mood. If the instrumentalists do not watch the conductor and follow his lead, though, the orchestra will never perform a song in unison and with purpose.

Similarly, the church functions in much the same way as an orchestra. As believers, we should all figuratively play one piece of music to glorify God and introduce others into a relationship with Him through the gospel. Like the orchestra, we have different roles for the purpose of helping the community to be healthy and grow properly; therefore, we must all have the same vision and the same sense of purpose. Moreover, we have a perfect conductor in Jesus whom we must follow; we should seek to imitate Him and mature in Him living worthy of the calling by which He has called us.

At the same time, God has placed human leadership in the church to help the body remain focused on the task at hand. We must work together in every way to accomplish God's will to which He has called His people. In the church, just as in the orchestra if instruments are missing, the music and the work are not as richly developed as they could be when everyone is participating and doing his or her part. Let us ask ourselves how we are contributing to the symphony of God's people by offering our praise and service to Him through cohesive and unified ministry.

Incorporate

For what purposes has Christ given spiritual gifts to the church? How do you see these gifts used in FBCFW today?

In what ways does the enemy use heretical or errant doctrine to attack the church? How can we mature together to avoid falling into such a trap?

Why is it important that everyone in the church engage in ministry? How can we lovingly encourage those who aren't serving to join and do their part?

March 24, 2019

TRANSFORMATION



The Metamorphosis of the Community

Ephesians 4:17-24

Focal Verse:

“And that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”

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Ephesians 4:24

Introduce

Several years ago while completing my Masters in Theology at seminary, I worked in the computer lab in the library to assist students. One particular day, a young lady approached the desk wearing a bright pink jacket, but as she drew closer I noticed that it had the Playboy bunny insignia woven across the front. I began to wonder if she had noticed it when she purchased the jacket or even if she knew for what the symbol stood, so I struck up a conversation with her. I began by asking if she had ever noticed the bunny displayed prominently on her jacket. To which she responded plainly, "Yeah." Pursuing the matter further in order to help her understand the gravity of wearing such an outfit, I then inquired whether she knew what the symbol stood for and the type of product that the company's namesake produced. Surprisingly, she stated, "Yeah." So, I continued, "If you know the type of product the company peddles, why do you wear the jacket at all?" Once again, she matter-of-factly declared, "Because I like it and it looks good on me." Although she may not explicitly endorse the product advertised on her jacket, the world cannot distinguish that fact because people primarily focus on outward appearance. To the world, just by wearing this jacket, this young woman accepts the lifestyle reflected by the insignia of this bunny whether she actually does or not. As followers of Christ, He calls us to differentiate ourselves from the world in the way that we live and think. The world ought to see a stark difference in the way that we behave from the way that they do; there should be no doubt at all to whom we belong because they should see Christ's mind, attitude, and behavior reflected in us. However, some Christians live as this young woman who proudly wore this pink jacket because she liked it and it looked good on her. Sometimes they behave and think like the world simply because it feels good to them and they enjoy it! Many times, unfortunately, these types of "Christians" become indistinguishable from the secular world—and this should never happen! For this reason, Paul tells the believers in Ephesus not to "walk" in the sinful ways in which they formerly lived and the secular



Introduce

world still does. Instead, they are to remove the “former conduct” of their “old man” and emulate Christ by putting on His character “in true righteousness and holiness.” As a community of believers, we must display the metamorphosis or change which Christ has undertaken in us to the world around us. Therefore, we must exercise caution in how we live, so that our behavior reflects honorably upon Christ and the world can see the “new” person into whom He has made us!

Key
Question

In what ways have you seen Christ personally change your attitude, character, and behavior since you began a relationship with Him?

Ephesians 4:17-19

DO NOT WALK AS IF UNAWARE:

Having described how the church should come together in unity to grow toward maturity in Christ, Paul warns against returning to their formerly sinful lifestyle. With authority from **the Lord**, Paul emphatically, but solemnly, declares that they **should no longer walk as the rest** of the secular world (i.e. **Gentiles**) which does not have a relationship with Christ (v. 17). Instead, they as believers should behave, think, and respond with holiness and righteousness rather than live by the sinful pattern of this world. A clear distinction, therefore, must exist between us as believers and the rest of the world, so that others may see the transformation that Christ has brought about in our lives. Although none of us can live in perfection and we all will still make mistakes at times, we should strive to seek the Lord and allow Him to guide us toward maturity by asking Him to help us learn from our mistakes and to rely upon Him for strength to overcome our weaknesses.

In what ways do some believers live according to the pattern of this world?

Question
1

After reminding us to **walk** in the righteousness of Christ, Paul describes the folly of the world which continues blissfully unaware down a path of destruction because of their deliberate sinful choices. First, we see that **the Gentiles walk in the futility of**

their mind. The word **futility** connotes “worthlessness, meaningless, or emptiness.” In this sense, the choices that they make may seem to promise contentment and enjoyment, but, in reality, they leave one feeling empty and unsatisfied in the end. How many of us have ever anticipated a premier for a movie, a memorable television show, a championship game in sports, or any other event only to arrive at the end to feel void and disappointed because it didn’t meet our expectations. Most likely, every



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one of us at some point in our lives has felt this way. Even if these events did meet our expectations, the exhilaration and joy eventually waned and we began to search for something else to take its place. As a result, we entered a never-ending cycle of **futility** when we seek satisfaction in human terms apart from Christ.

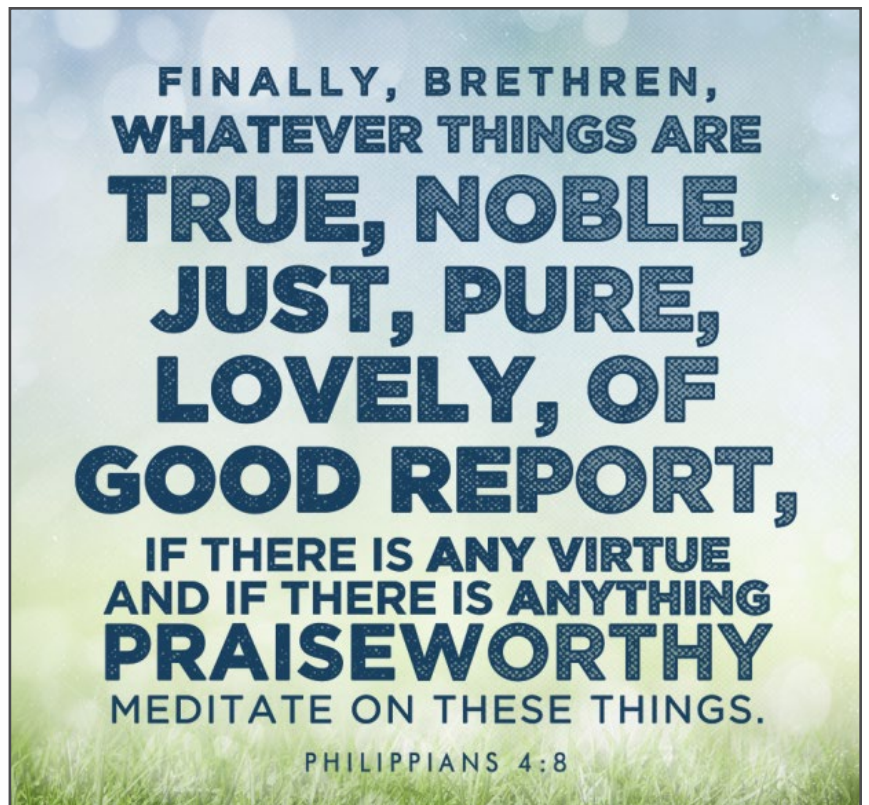
Moreover, the **Gentiles** have meaningless and empty lives because they have no one to guard their minds and guide their actions since they have **alienated** themselves **from the life of God** (v. 18). Formerly, the Ephesians too were “aliens . . . and strangers from the covenants of promise . . . without God in the world” ([Eph 2:12](#)); but now, they have been renewed and transformed by the blood of Christ to reject their former lifestyle and live in righteousness. Thus, the **Gentiles** remain dead in their “trespasses and sin” whereas the Ephesians “have been made alive,” so we as believers must not act like an unbeliever. Apart from Christ, the **Gentiles** have **alienated** themselves from God in two ways: 1) they have closed their minds and rejected the truth and 2) they have no moral compass or conscience, leading them to participate in all types of immorality. First, Paul explains how the **Gentiles** have been **darkened** in their **understanding** which means that they have set their minds against the truth and rejected it. In more modern terms, they have selective hearing and only believe that which fits their worldview; to anything else they will not listen. Elsewhere, Paul shows how they “exchanged the truth of God for a lie” which led them to engage in explicit sin and immorality ([Rom 1:25-26](#)). Although Paul notes that they live in **ignorance**, it is not because they haven’t heard or don’t know the truth, but it’s because they have chosen to reject it altogether. Hence, the phrase **blindness of their heart** carries with it the Old Testament idea of hardening one’s **heart** against God and His truth. For example, the people in Jeremiah 18:12 exclaim, “And they said, “That is hopeless! So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart” (see also [Rom 2:5](#)).

In what ways does the society around us exhibit a darkened mind by rejecting the truth?

Question
2

Paul, therefore, isn’t saying that the world ignorantly or blindly stumbles down a path of destruction, but that they willfully reject the truth and participate in sin because they love **darkness** more than light ([John 3:19-21](#)). As believers, we too have a choice: will we allow the Holy Spirit to control our thoughts or will we allow the world to have

the greatest influence on them? We must exercise great care in the thoughts that we entertain—whether it's conversations we have, movies or television we watch, jokes we hear, books we read, or social media posts and websites that we visit. When we dwell on particular thoughts posed by the secular world, we will eventually act upon them! We can't expect to surround ourselves with impure thoughts and expect to have pure actions. It doesn't work that way! We need the Holy Spirit to guard



our minds and help us to have thoughts that honor the Lord.

Second, they have no moral compass or conscience and participate in all types of immorality because they have willfully chosen to reject the truth. Paul describes the **Gentiles** as **being past feeling**, whereby they **have given themselves over to lewdness, uncleanness, and greediness** (v. 19). The phrase translated **being past feeling** signifies that they no longer feel shame or remorse over their sin; in a sense, they no longer have a conscience to guide them and they slide deeper into their sinful lifestyle. To put it into perspective, Jeremiah asks, “Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush” ([Jer 6:15](#)). The more we engage in an activity the more it becomes a routine and we do it without even thinking. The same happens when we sin habitually. When we repeatedly sin, it becomes easier to engage in something sinful because our conscience begins to overlook it and regard it as normal. As believers, however, we should always allow the Spirit to guide our choices and activities, so that we can avoid the pitfall of becoming stuck in the routine of sin.

In what ways do we see a lack of shame or remorse in our society over sinfulness?

Question
3

Instruct

Because they have no moral compass to guide them, the **Gentiles** readily participate in sin. The three words that Paul lists here cover every area of sin and truly overlap with one another. We often equate **lewdness** with sexual immorality of which it certainly includes, but the Greek word refers to any sin in which one exhibits no inhibition. This can include drunkenness, vulgar or abusive speech, sexual innuendo, unbridled anger, and much more. The second area Paul mentions is actually much broader in scope: **uncleanness**. It refers to any impure or sinful thought or action and can include unclean thoughts such as lust, revenge, or bitterness with reference to being unforgiving—to name only a few. Finally, the word translated **greediness** comes from the Greek word to covet. At the heart of **greediness** or covetousness is self-centeredness; therefore, anything which involves acting sinfully based upon self-centered motives falls into this category.

Ephesians 4:20-21

WALK WITH UNDERSTANDING:

Paul transitions to this next section by contrasting the **darkened understanding** of the world with what the Ephesian believers **have learned in Christ** (v. 20). They have **learned not** to conduct themselves according to the desires of the flesh which lead to **lewdness, uncleanness, and greediness**. In other words, they have learned to live with the understanding of **the truth in Jesus** which instructs us to live with honor, integrity, self-control, and selflessness. Literally, the Greek used by Paul states, “**But**



you have not learned Christ this way!”

Everything in which the Gentile world advocates or participates contradicts how Christ lived and what He taught. The sermons and parables with which Jesus taught criticized and rejected this type of lifestyle. Not only did Jesus teach against this type of lifestyle, but He lived in a way that consistently reflected the holiness of His teaching. Thus, Paul explains that the Ephesians **have**

learned Christ by His example; they didn’t see this type of behavior in the way Jesus

lived, so they should not practice these things amongst themselves either.

In what ways have you learned from Christ since you began a relationship with Him?

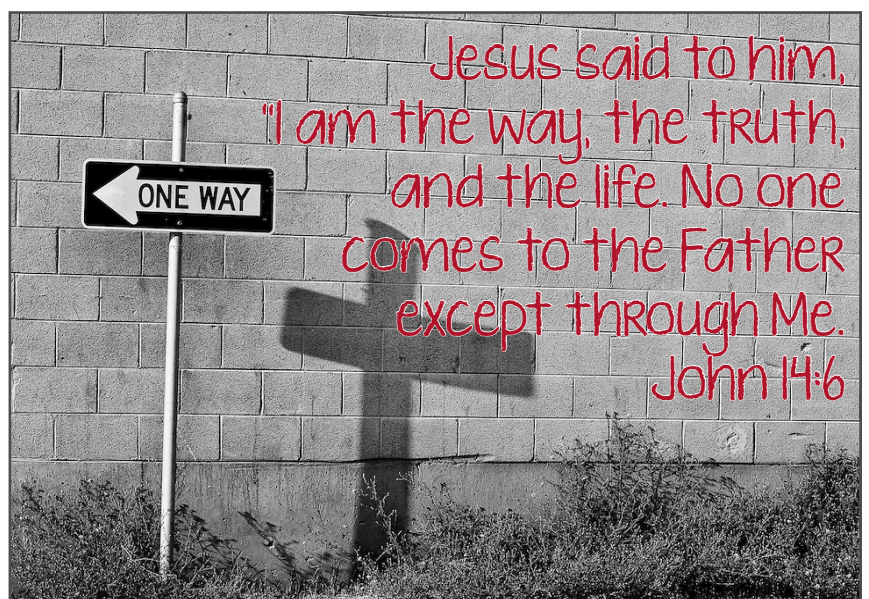
Question
4

Paul underscores the idea that they must live as Christ because they **have heard Him** and **have been taught by Him** (v. 21). The phrase **if indeed** may cause some confusion in English if we don't understand the force of the Greek behind it. In English, it has the meaning of "since" and expresses certainty, not doubt, that the Ephesians had a life-changing relationship with Jesus. Thus, when Paul says that they **have heard Him**, he means that they have responded to Jesus' call to repent and surrendered their lives to Him. Notice that Paul doesn't say that they **have heard about Him**, but they **heard Him** speak directly! Think of this phrase in terms of a parent who has given a child some particular instruction. If the child persists in his behavior or ignores the instruction, the parent may exclaim, "Did you *hear* me?!" Underlying this question, however, lies the implication that the child should have responded in obedience. Similarly, Christ Himself has extended the invitation to us to have a relationship with Him; to receive eternal life, we must accept (i.e. hear) His invitation in obedience to His command—which the Ephesians had already done!

Not only does Christ invite us to have a relationship with Him, but He has also **taught** us how to live by giving clear instruction in Scripture. He didn't leave us as helpless infants to navigate life alone, but He has given us the tools and principles which we can use to live an abundant life. Therefore, Paul declares that **the truth is in Jesus**. Because

the Word that Jesus has given us through His teaching **is truth**, we ought to use it as the standard by which we should live and by which we should judge our progress toward spiritual maturity. Just as Scripture is truth, so also is Jesus Himself! He perfectly embodies the right way to live and He provides a flawless and sinless example for us to emulate. In this way, when we

have heard Jesus and responded to His call, His teaching and His presence in our lives



Instruct

through the Holy Spirit whom He sent enables us to become more like Him. Hence, our ultimate goal in life should be to become more like Christ.

In what ways has Jesus shaped your understanding to become more like His?

Question
5

Ephesians 4:22-24

REMOVE ANY UNCLEANNESS:

Because we have a relationship with Christ and know **truth** in Him, we must remove old, sinful habits and activities from our lives and participate in those which are honorable and right. Paul commands the Ephesians to **put off** the **former conduct** of their **old man** which leads to corruption and **lusts** (v. 22). Instead, they must **put on** their **new man** in Christ which produces genuine **righteousness and holiness** (v. 24). Living in a sinful, broken world, we still have the propensity to sin because it feels so natural and seems to promise joy and satisfaction, but alas it's only **deceitful** because it ultimately leads to destruction. As a new creation in Christ, however, we must systematically overcome our old, sinful lifestyle by dying to our selfish ways and surrendering our will and desires into the complete control of the Holy Spirit. This is no easy task and apart from Christ it is impossible. Yet, with Christ, we can overcome the desires of the flesh and live in **righteousness**.

At some point in life, we all have bought a brand-new pair of dress shoes because our old ones began looking dingy and worn. Likely, instead of throwing our old shoes away,



we leave them in our closet right beside the new pair. When we look at the shoes, we can visibly see the difference. The old pair is faded with scuff marks along the sides and on top; the soles are so worn they nearly have no tread left at all and the laces create a puff of smoke when we tie them. The new shoes, however, shine brilliantly in the light without any scuff marks;

they are perfect from the tip of the sole to the top. Although we know which pair we should wear, it becomes a hotly debated topic in our mind because we remember how comfortable the old pair felt. We had already broken them in and they felt so good on our feet, so we would often find ourselves wearing the old pair rather than the new! In the same way, we tend to participate in sin because it feels so natural and comfortable. Because the society in which we live is saturated in sin, it also makes it seem normal when everyone is doing it as well. Although we know that we shouldn't participate in our **old** lifestyle, we keep it around and put it on anyway instead of putting on the attitude and actions of Christ. At times, it just feels so good to slip back into our **former** lives and participate in those **old** habits, but this should never be! To help us understand how to remove the **old man**, Paul bids us to **be renewed in the spirit of our mind** (v. 23). Temptation begins in the **mind** when we dwell upon unholy thoughts and sin comes to fruition when we act upon them. To avoid succumbing to temptation and participating in sin, however, we can take some practical steps to safeguard our minds.

First, we must honestly evaluate our strengths and weaknesses. If we don't, we can very easily find ourselves in a tempting situation whereby we give in to sin. We can't have an erroneous view about what we find tempting because it will fool us into

thinking that we have the power to abstain from sin. Second, we must remove ourselves from tempting situations when at all possible.

This may mean that we can't hang around certain people or groups, watch certain movies or television programs, or visit certain places.

It may also mean that we have an accountability partner who knows the passwords to our computer

and phone and has free access to view the devices at any time. Instead of thinking that we are strong enough on our own to overcome sin, we should try to avoid those situations altogether lest we find the **old man** rearing his ugly head.

Although we must always be on guard, sometimes things arise or happen beyond our control, so we must have a plan to deal with them and not be surprised. When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, He had a plan based on Scripture and

But each one is tempted
when he is drawn away
by his own desires and
enticed. Then, when
desire has conceived, it
gives birth to sin; and sin,
when it is full-grown,
brings forth death.
James 1:14-15



Instruct

executed it flawlessly, never once sinning. We must follow Jesus' example and have a plan based on Scripture and executed by the Holy Spirit for when temptation comes. As we have already mentioned in this lesson, part of that plan should be to guard against what we put into our minds. We shouldn't dwell on corruption and **deceitful lusts** which only lead to broken promises, but we should focus on the Lord and the victory and life we have already been given. Let us be committed to living the changed lives to which Christ has called us; let us take off everything that is dishonorable and sinful and wear **righteousness and holiness**, so that Christ may be glorified by our lives and others may see Him in us.

In what other ways can we guard our minds so that we don't participate in sin?

Question
6

Every night before bed, most of us come home and remove the clothes which we had worn during the day and put on fresh pajamas to go to sleep. Depending upon what we had done that day, where we had eaten lunch, or what type of job we do, our clothes probably had become soiled in some way. Some of us, if we are less tidy than others, may leave our clothes lying on the floor, draped over the back of a chair or on a door knob, or perhaps lying in a jumbled pile on top of the dresser. When we rise in the morning to begin our daily routine, most of us take off our pajamas, take a shower, and put on clean clothes rather than clothes that we wore the day before.

Wearing dirty clothes is culturally unacceptable—no matter how many times one does it. If we are unwilling to wear the same clothes that we had worn the previous day, then why do we wear our soiled and sinful lives as a Christian when we are told to take off the old man and put on the new man in Christ? The mindset of the culture has unfortunately manifested itself in many ways in the church today. This should never be the case! Christ has changed us and called us to live in righteousness and holiness. Our entire community must be unified in the pursuit of becoming more like our Savior. We need to speak the truth in love by reminding each other to guard our minds and hearts by reading Scripture and surrendering to the leadership of the Spirit. Although we must not have a critical and condemning spirit, we must not be afraid to challenge each other to follow Scripture and live by God's principles. Therefore, let us all be distinct from the culture by putting on Christ and refraining from our old, sinful habits, so that others may see the change He has produced in us and we can be effective witnesses for His glory.

Incorporate

In what ways has the church become like the society around us? Why is it important that we be distinctively different from society?

How does Christ provide an example for the church to follow?

What steps can we take as a church to live a renewed life to show the world our changed character in Christ?

Journal: Document God's Work

March 31, 2019



The Mindset of the Community

Ephesians 4:25-32

Focal Verse:

“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

Ephesians 4:29

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Introduce

Recently, I saw a re-run of *The Andy Griffith Show* titled “The Jinx” (January 29, 1962) which reminded me about the consequences that our words and actions can have upon others—especially when consistently uttered in a negative way. The show opens with Deputy Sheriff Barney Fife playing a game of checkers with Floyd Lawson, the town’s barber. After making a careless move and losing the game, Barney blames a man by the name of Henry Bennett for standing too close and jinxing him. As the debate about Henry’s role as a jinx ensues, the rest of those watching the game in the barbershop begin to mock



him and blame him for all their problems—eventually labeling him as the town jinx. The ribbing continues throughout the episode as various unfortunate accidents occur, including the sinking of Sheriff Andy Taylor’s boat during a fishing tournament, for which the townspeople constantly blame Henry.

Eventually, word spreads throughout the entire town and all the citizens have fun at Henry’s expense. They constantly blame him for their problems, they poke fun at him, and they participate in superstitious rituals to ward off any affects from his jinx when he is present. By the end of the episode, Henry had lost hope and became so discouraged that he planned to leave the town in which he had always lived. Upon learning of Henry’s plan to move, Andy confronted the men who began circulating the idea that he was a jinx. Although they always intended their words as a joke and admittedly never intended to hurt Henry, their thoughtless and negative words had taken a toll upon him.

Andy, however, had a plan to rectify the situation by getting the entire town to fix the church raffle so that Henry could win. In fact, every person agreed to have the same number, but to let Henry speak and claim the prize. As luck would have it, however, Henry errantly pulled out the hat size rather than the correct number and he began to see himself as a jinx. Yet, Andy helped him to see how much the people really loved him and how much they wanted to stay because they had agreed to let him win the raffle.

Introduce

Although we may recite that old adage “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me,” we must realize that our words do have an effect on others; they do have power and they do have consequences.

As a community, we must ensure our words edify and build the body of Christ; we can't let deceit, anger, or corrupt speech enter the picture at all. This doesn't mean that we can't correct errors or that we can't offer constructive criticism to help someone mature in Christ. It means that we must do it in the right way! Let us not complain, gossip, or tear down with our speech, but let us encourage others and spur them to grow together with us in Christ. When we have a positive attitude, speak the truth in love, and build the community upon the wisdom of Christ, we will be able to function properly as His ambassadors who will demonstrate the right character, mindset, and attitude in serving our Lord and Savior.

Key
Question

How does our choice of words influence or affect others?

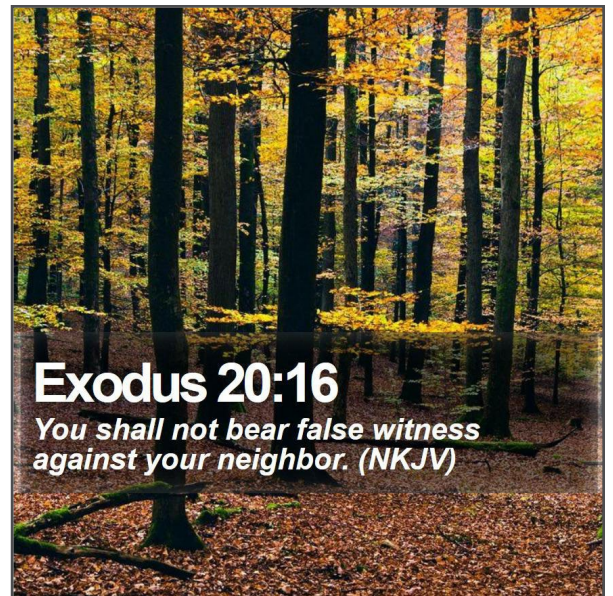
Ephesians 4:25-29

ACT MORALLY IN EVERY SITUATION:

In order to live with impeccable character and act morally in every situation, we must have the proper mindset in Christ. In [Ephesians 4:17-24](#), we learned that our relationship with Christ produces a change in our habits and character in which we “put off” or reject our former sinful lifestyle and “put on” the “righteousness and holiness” of Christ. We accomplish this metamorphosis by having a “renewed mind” in which we allow Christ to guard our minds and direct our paths. In [Ephesians 4:25-32](#), Paul further demonstrates this mindset that we ought to have in Christ by specifically addressing five areas: 1) *proclaiming* truth, 2) *properly* resolving anger, 3) *participating* in purposeful work, 4) *positive* speech, and 5) *practicing* forgiveness.

The most-prominent characteristic of a “renewed mind” should be that we **speak truth** to others. As Paul has already noted, “speaking the truth in love” ([Eph 4:15](#)) produces maturity in the community because it reflects the character of Christ who Himself “is truth” ([Eph 4:21](#)). In verse 25, Paul gives the scriptural mandate to put **away lying**. Obviously, this command bears a striking resemblance to the ninth commandment ([Exod 20:16](#)), but the phrase “**let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor**” actually comes from [Zechariah 8:16](#). In the context of Zechariah, the prophet describes how the restored remnant of Israel ought to behave after their return from exile in Babylon.

They should speak truth to **members** of their community and live among one another with integrity which they had not done prior to their captivity!



In-Depth Information



The word translated putting away is the same one used in [Eph 4:22](#) where Paul urges them to “put off” their “former conduct.” Thus, in that same line of argument, we as believers should “put off” lying and “put on” truth.

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The way that both Zechariah and Paul construct this sentence emphasizes speaking **truth** rather than the command to refrain from **lying**. The reason for expressing it this way may reside in the fact that we should **speak** God's Word to remind one another of the instruction He has given us as His people. Since God's Word is **truth**, we must abide by its principles and exhort others in the community to do so as well. Therefore, part of speaking **truth** involves offering encouragement as well as correction when we see people in the body sin as defined by Scripture. Whether we offer encouragement or correction, we must remember it should be done "in love!" When we **speak truth**, we must first direct our conversation and praise toward the Lord, so that others may be reminded of His greatness. Second, we **speak truth** by encouraging others rather than constantly complaining and unfairly criticizing them. We shouldn't mislead people by falsely encouraging them and building them up, but we should praise God for how He works in the lives of others in the community and encourage them to remain committed and open to His leadership in their lives.

In what ways can we speak truth to encourage other people?

Question
2

Not only should we encourage others by speaking **truth**, but we should also correct others according to the biblical process when we see them sin. To **speak truth** in loving correction, we need to have discernment from the Holy Spirit who will guide us concerning when and how to **speak** ([Gal 6:1](#)). Sometimes, however, we avoid telling



the **truth** in a necessary situation because we want to avoid conflict or offending another person—so we don't say anything at all. At other times, we may not even think it's our place to say something or we want to avoid creating an uncomfortable situation for ourselves. Yet, if God has given us insight into Scripture and allowed us to become aware of certain

sinful actions in the body, it becomes our duty to speak truth "in love" and handle the

situation in the right way. In the body, we can't ignore sin, but we must **speak truth** in every situation.

This command, however, doesn't give us a license to **speak** carelessly or say whatever we wish or whatever comes to mind. However, we can't remain silent either, but must base our comments squarely upon Scripture "in love." If we see a member of the community engaging in unethical business practices, we ought to **speak truth**; if we see someone gossiping, we should **speak truth**; if we see someone engaging in perverse speech or inappropriate joking, we need to **speak truth**. To **speak truth** effectively, we shouldn't put them on the spot because it will make the situation worse, but rather take them aside in private ([Matt 18:15](#)). If we confront the person in front of others, they tend to become defensive and will reject any sound advice that we have for them. In addition, we need to appeal directly to Scripture in our conversation; in fact, show them directly in God's Word and let Him convict and restore through His **truth**. Above all, we must realize that we're not talking about our preferences, but about things which are sinful and deceitful. We aren't just confronting someone because we don't like the way they are dressed, how they talk, or what they do—we are addressing something that is inherently wrong and sinful as defined in the **truth** of God's Word.

What is the proper way to speak truth when offering correction in love?

Question
3

In addition to proclaiming the truth, we should also properly resolve anger rather than letting it fester, causing bitterness, resentment, and division. Paul entreats them **not to sin** by being **angry** and to deal with their anger properly by **not letting the sun go down on their wrath** (v. 26). Quoting [Psalm 4:4](#), it seems that Paul permits some type of anger when he writes, "**Be angry, and do not sin.**" For this reason, some have read this verse as justification for "righteous anger" against sin, such as when Jesus confronted the money changers



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in the temple ([John 2:13-16](#)). Certainly, Jesus never sinned and acted with “zeal” against those in the temple who had corrupted it through their practices. To argue that this phrase commands us to exercise “righteous anger,” however, misses the entire point Paul is making! He doesn’t command us to **be angry**, but rather he emphasizes the need for properly dealing with anger in the right way and at the right time.

At some point in life, every one of us has become angry or will become angry in the future. When we experience anger, we need to resolve it properly, so that **the devil** will not gain a foothold in our lives (v. 27). The devil gains a foothold when we leave anger unresolved—which Paul will discuss in [verses 31-32](#). Unresolved anger, therefore, leads to **bitterness, malice, clamor**, verbal abuse, slander, and an unwillingness to **forgive**. In the community, anger leads to division, hurt, and dysfunctional relationships which draw the focus from Christ and places it upon individuals. Paul, therefore, offers sound advice. We must deal with our anger immediately before it leads to sin and tears the community apart.

How does anger “give place” to the devil in our lives?

Question
4

Today, most people don’t know how to deal with their anger constructively because they are self-centered and haven’t been taught to communicate effectively. Rather than taking a moment to step aside from the conversation to reason and think how to best resolve the conflict, we allow emotion to govern our actions and, in the heat of battle, we become verbally combative, making the situation worse. Self-centeredness tends to rear its head as we argue because we want our way and we want it now. To resolve conflict, we must never speak in anger with raw emotion, but we must take time to cool down and evaluate the situation. Perhaps, we were in the wrong and need to apologize. If not, we need to choose our words wisely when we respond to the other person and think about the impact that they have upon them. We may not convince them or influence the way they believe, but we must speak our peace and move along—not allowing the conflict to derail our relationship.

Moreover, simply ignoring the problem isn’t an option either because if we continue to bottle up our anger inside it will eventually explode and create an even larger problem. Some, for example, stop communicating or working with a person because we have become **angry**. In church, some people tend to move to another

church if someone or something offends or upsets them. People will come for a few months and then become upset about something and suddenly disappear. Rather than resolving the problem and talking to the person or about the issue that upset them, they will leave without saying a word. They will harbor bitterness and malice in their hearts and take spiritual baggage with them to their next church. Usually, this cycle repeats itself because they never deal with anger. Instead, we ought to seek the Lord in prayer, resolve our differences through Scripture, and be willing to forgive each other in Christ. When we have the mind and perspective of Christ, we can overcome differences and our wounds and hurts will be healed.



What are some appropriate ways that we can deal with anger when it arises?

Question
5

We can offer a few practical tips for resolving anger properly—assuming that we have already spent time in prayer and Scripture. First, have a dialogue with the person who upset you; perhaps, they don't even know they angered you in some way. Second, look at the issue from their perspective before you approach them; this will help you to exercise more compassion. Third, interact face to face if at all possible rather than on the phone or social media; this often disarms people from assuming the worst or misconstruing your intentions when they can see body language and hear tone. Finally, have the discussion one-on-one rather than with friends or in a group if it's prudent to do so (i.e. use good judgment in cases of the opposite gender who is not your spouse); this avoids people from taking sides or feeling ganged up on. When we take these practical steps in addition to having prayed and read Scripture, we may not always amicably resolve a situation, but we won't allow it to become sin and take root in our lives.

A "renewed mind" also leads us to participate in purposeful work. Paul bids the one **who** once **stole** to **steal no longer**, **but** to **labor** to do **good with his hands**, so that

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he **may have something to give to those in need** (v. 28). The emphasis lies not on refraining from stealing, but rather on the command to work and be productive. Probably, most of us have never physically stolen anything or embezzled money from our employer, but likely we have all wasted our employer's time while on the clock. A couple of years ago, I read a statistic that fantasy football cost 17 billion dollars in lost productivity because people managed their teams while at work. Perhaps, we don't play games, but we may use social media, surf the internet, text, or do a number of other things that decrease our productivity. Instead, we ought to honor God by respecting our employers and working diligently for them ([Eph 6:5-7](#)).

In Reference



Barb Darrow, "[Employers Pay the Real Cost of Fantasy Football](#)," *Fortune Magazine* (August 16, 2016).

Not only should we work hard to show respect to our employers, but we should work productively so God can use us to meet needs in the church. Remember that Paul



is speaking to the church here in this context; we shouldn't reward laziness or promote others taking advantage of the system, but help those genuinely in need. This demonstrates the sacrificial thinking of Christ in which He met a need by giving Himself—a need that we had no way of overcoming on our own. If we truly want to imitate Christ, then we should help those with genuine needs in the church as God leads and gives us resources, ability,

and desire. Thus, we should use the resources that God has given us for His glory to make a kingdom impact. When we help those in need in the church, we can move together in unity to pursue maturity in Christ and make an even greater impact on the secular community.

In what ways can we as a church be more productive in the ministry to which Christ has called us?

Question
6

Paul concludes this section with a command to engage in positive speech. He tells them not to **let any corrupt word proceed** from their **mouth**, but to speak **what is good for necessary edification** and will **impart grace to the hearers** (v. 29). The word translated **corrupt** is often used to describe rotten fruit. Frequently, fruit looks undamaged, plump, and succulent on the outside, but sometimes we bite into it only to discover that it's rotten to the core. In the same way, speech may seem harmless and inane, but in the end it is destructive in its results. We tend to regard **corrupt** speech as cursing or using vulgar language—which it does include—but it encompasses so much more. For example, harsh and unfair criticism of others in which we seek to tear them down rather than build them up reflects **corrupt** speech. This type of speech can include intentional character assassination where people say things to hurt others, but it can also include joking or gossiping in which a person is constantly put down—like Henry Bennett in the introduction. We shouldn't give people a false hope or perception, but instead we should say things in a way that **imparts grace**. We should think about how our words affect others before we speak!

In the church, **corrupt** speech most often comes in the form people constantly complaining or being negative. In the Old Testament, the generation whom the Lord rescued from Egypt serves as the best example. Instead of recognizing and thanking God for His guidance and provision, the people complained that they had been brought to the wilderness to die; they lamented not having food and water, but God provided every time and rescued them in miraculous ways. On the contrary, we need to have positive, uplifting speech which tells the truth, but does so in an encouraging and loving way. We need to emphasize the positive by glorifying the Lord and learn to couch negative situations in a way that leads to maturity and growth rather than resentment and isolation. Above all, let us evaluate our speech based on one simple question: Does it glorify the Lord? If we can answer, yes, then our speech will do what God intends by edifying others and **imparting grace**!

In what ways can we combat negative speech or complaints in the church?

Question
7

Ephesians 4:30

ABIDE BY THE SPIRIT ALWAYS:

As followers of Christ, we must abide in **the Holy Spirit by whom we were sealed for the day of redemption** (v. 30). Although we cannot lose our salvation (see [John](#)

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[10:28; 1 John 2:19](#)), it doesn't give us a license to sin and act however we want. On the contrary, when we sin and act unbecoming of our relationship with Christ, it brings sorrow upon **the Holy Spirit**. For this reason, Paul commands us **not to grieve the Holy Spirit** by allowing our former, sinful man to reappear. Instead, we should bring Him joy by "putting on" the character of Christ by giving Him complete control of our lives. We cannot rely on our own strength to do good apart from the **Spirit** because left on our own we have the propensity to return to our old habits. The **Spirit**, however, "helps us in our weaknesses" ([Rom 8:26-30](#)). Let us, therefore, surrender every area of our lives to Him, so that He can conform us to the image of Christ.

How does the Spirit help us to become more like Christ?

Question
8

Ephesians 4:31-32

ADMINISTER FORGIVENESS FREELY:

In these last two verses, Paul offers a summary of the negative vices which we should remove from our lives and the positive traits which we should practice since we have

Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Until seven times?"

Jesus said to him, "I don't tell you until seven times, but, until seventy times seven.

Matthew 18:21-22

been transformed in Christ. Paul has already taught us that we should deal with anger properly, so we shouldn't continue in **bitterness, wrath, anger, or malice** (v. 31). Likewise, we should speak positively rather than carelessly engaging in foolish or bawdy talk (i.e. **clamor**) or slandering others (i.e. **evil speaking**). Paul then contrasts these undesirable traits with the virtues that we should "put on" in Christ. We must exemplify our Savior by being **kind to one another**, compassionate (i.e. **tenderhearted**), and **forgiving** (v. 32). Because of our imperfect human nature, perhaps **forgiving one another**

is the most difficult of these three characteristics to practice. In a community, we will experience conflict and hurt at times, but we must always be ready to forgive **one another** just as **God in Christ forgave** us. Yet, we must also be willing to ask for

forgiveness when we ourselves err.

Being unable to forgive often affects our lives much more than it does the person who has wronged or upset us. Some people go to great lengths to avoid others, altering their lives and schedules to do so. When we harbor **bitterness**, it can cause a myriad of physical problems: stress, overeating, and even the loss of sleep. Moreover, others may even go to great lengths to seek revenge, robbing themselves of true joy and contentment. From these areas, we can see that being unwilling to forgive not only hinders our own spiritual journey, but it also affects the entire community! It creates divisions and cliques by destroying unity; the focus shifts from the Lord to individuals and their self-righteous, self-serving purposes. We can never be an effective community if we are unwilling to forgive! In Christ, therefore, we must be willing to forgive, able to find common ground to resolve issues, and move on, so that we might work together at full strength in order to accomplish the task to which our Savior has called us!

In what ways can harboring bitterness and being unwilling to forgive affect the church?

Question
9

In the introduction, we encountered a scenario where careless words and foolish actions had a devastating impact upon an individual. If Barney Fife and the other townspeople thought about the consequences of their actions and what could transpire, they surely would have amended them. Imagine the difference it would have made if Barney had admitted his mistake instead of blaming it on Henry Bennett. Henry would have never felt isolated from the others in town and he would not have developed an unhealthy self-image in which he saw himself as a jinx. Ultimately, things worked out in this fictional episode, but they could have had a much more disastrous ending—especially in real life. Therefore, we must be careful about how we live and what we say!

Because we live in a community that represents Christ, we must constantly think about how our actions and conversations affect others—not just those within the church, but also those outside. We can't have the mindset that our actions and words only affect us. On the contrary, what we say and what we do can have grave consequences because it does affect others—whether intentionally or unintentionally. If we act irresponsibly or immorally, it can have a profound impact upon the ability of the church to minister and it will, in many cases, make it more difficult to minister to individuals who have been hurt by others in the community. As believers, therefore, we must make sure that we glorify Christ and build His community in everything we do!

Incorporate

In what ways does an individual's actions (whether moral or immoral) affect the entire church? How do these actions affect the secular community around us?

Generally speaking, in what ways have some people or groups in the church today "grieved the Holy Spirit?" How can we help others in the church see Christ and overcome these shortcomings?

In what ways can we as a community show kindness and compassion to one another? How can we show it to the secular community? Why must our kindness to the secular community always be accompanied by sharing the gospel?

Journal: Document God's Work

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