

A Study On Ephesians
“A Letter of Unity”
Facilitated by Pastor Larry D. Weaver

Ephesians Chapter 4

Introduction: When a person joins an organization, he obligates himself to live and act in accordance with the standards of the group. He accepts its aims, objectives, and standards as his own. A citizen is obligated to abide by the laws of his country. An employee is obligated to work according the rules, standards, and purposes of his company. Members of service clubs obligate themselves to promote the goals of the club and to abide by its standards. When someone joins an athletic team he is obligated to play as the coach orders and according to the rules of the sport. Human society could not operate without such obligation. We have a natural desire to be accepted and to belong, and many people will go to almost any lengths to qualify for acceptance in a fraternal order, social club, athletic team, or other group. Many people will also go to great lengths to keep from being rejected by a group. Sometimes in the church such loyalties to standards and fear of ostracism do not operate with the same force. Too many Christians are glad to have the spiritual security, blessings, and promises of the gospel but have too little sense of responsibility in conforming to its standards and obeying its commands. In the first three chapters of Ephesians Paul has set forth the believer's position with all the blessings, honors, and privileges of being a child of God. In the next three chapters he gives the consequent obligations and requirements of being His child, in order to live out salvation in accordance with the Father's will and to His glory. The first three chapters set forth truth about the believer's POSITION in Christ, and the last three call for the believer's PRACTICE in Christ. The first three chapters deal with DOCTRINE and the last three deal with DUTY.

When we received Christ as Savior we became citizens of His kingdom and members of His family. Along with those blessings and privileges we also received obligations. The Lord expects us to act like the new persons we have become in Jesus Christ. He expects His standards to become our standards, His purposes our purposes, His desires our desires, His nature our nature. The Christian life is simply the process of becoming what you are. God expects conformity within the church, the Body of Christ. It is not a forced legalistic conformity to external rules and regulations, but a willing inner conformity to the holiness, love, and will of our heavenly Father, who wants His children to honor Him as their Father. Paul says in **Phil. 1:27 NASB** “**Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that**

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whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

Paul begin chapter 4 in **Eph. 4:1 - 6** appealing to believers to walk worthy of their high position in Jesus Christ. In describing that walk he discusses its **call**, its **characteristics**, and its **cause**.

Eph. 4:1 “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,”

Eph. 4:1 NLT “Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.”

- The words **therefore** in **Eph. 4:1** marks the transition from **positional to practical truth, from doctrine to duty, or from principle to practice**. Right practice must always be based on right principle. It is impossible to have a Christian life-style without knowing the realities of the life that Christ has provided. Right doctrine is essential to right living. It is impossible to live a faithful Christian life without knowing biblical doctrine. Doctrine simply means teaching, and there is no way that even the most sincere believer can live a life pleasing to God without knowing what God Himself is like and knowing the sort of life God wants us to live. Those who set biblical theology aside also set aside sound Christian living. Later in this letter in **Eph. 4:23 – 24** Paul prays that the Ephesians would **“... be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”** It is only when in the spirit of our minds we grasp the righteousness and holiness of God’s truth and we as God’s people are renewed. Also in his well-known words to Timothy, in **2 Tim. 3:16 - 17** Paul declares that **“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”** What he teaches is, it is impossible to do good works without knowledge of the Word of God. This is why Paul says, **“Therefore”** because everything he is about to say hinges on what he has already said about our **POSITION IN CHRIST** in the previous verses.

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- In the **a-portion** of **verse 1** before giving his appeal, Paul once again like in **Eph. 3:1** refers to himself as “**the prisoner of the Lord.**” By mentioning his imprisonment he gently reminds his readers that he knows the worthy Christian walk can be costly and that he has paid a considerable cost himself because of his obedience to the Lord. He therefore would not ask them to walk in a way in which he had not himself walked or pay a price that he himself was not been willing to pay. His present physical circumstance seemed extremely negative from a human perspective, but Paul wanted his readers to know that this did not change his commitment to or his confidence in **the Lord**. The apostle was not seeking sympathy or using his Roman confinement as a means for shaming the Ephesians into compliance with his request. He was reminding them again of his own complete submission to Christ, his being **the prisoner of the Lord** whether he was in jail or not. Paul had the ability to see everything in the light of how it affected Christ.
- In the **b-portion** of **verse 1** Paul made no apology for pleading with people to do what he knew was right which is to **walk worthy of their calling**. He says, “**I ... entreat you.**” The word **entreat** from **parakaleō** means to **call to one’s side, with the idea of wanting to help or be helped**. It implies intense feeling or strong desire. In this context it is not simply a request but **a plea, an imploring or begging**. Paul was not giving suggestions to the Ephesians but divine standards, standards apart from which they could not live in a way that fittingly corresponded to their being children of God. Paul never exhorted on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. He could not rest until all those given into his spiritual care walked **in a manner worthy of the calling with which** they had **been called**. Christians should not resent pastor’s entreating them in the faith as Paul did those to whom he ministered. A pastor who approaches his ministry with detachment or indifference is not worthy of the office. Loving concern for the spiritual welfare of others is costly, and apart from God’s strength it is frustrating and demoralizing. Not only pastors but every believer should have a loving concern to entreat, implore, beg, and plead with others to respond in obedience to the gospel. Like Paul, they should have a passion to **entreat** their fellow believers **to walk in a manner worthy of their calling**—to be everything the Lord desires of them.
- The words **walk** from **peripateo** is frequently used in the New Testament and refers to daily conduct, day-by-day living, and it is the theme of the last three chapters of Ephesians. The

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word **worthy** from **axios** has the root meaning of balancing the scales... meaning what is on one side of the scale should be equal in weight to what is on the other side. By extension, the word came to be applied to anything that was expected to correspond to something else. A person **worthy** of his pay was one whose day's work corresponded to his day's wages. The believer who **walks in a manner worthy of the calling with which he has been called** is one whose daily living corresponds to his high position as a child of God and fellow heir with Jesus Christ. His **practical living** matches his **spiritual position**. **“The calling with which you have been called”** is the sovereign, saving calling of God. That is why our **calling** is a **high calling**, a **heavenly calling**, and a **holy calling**. And that is why the faithful, responsive Christian is determined to **walk worthy** of their calling in Christ Jesus.

Questions: Am I more concerned about being seen as a Christian or actually living like Christ?

Transition: Paul moves from the call to the characteristics of the worthy walk.

Eph. 4:2 - 3 “...with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Eph. 4:2 – 3 NLT “Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. 3 Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.”

- Here, Paul presents five essential characteristics that form the foundation of **walking worthy of the calling** we have received in the Lord.
- The first characteristics he shares is **humility** which is the foundational and is a genuine exercise that leads to the exercise of those that follow. Paul says we are to walk worthy **with all humility**. The word **humility** comes from a compound word that literally means **to think or judge with lowliness**, and to **have a lowliness of mind**. The very concept of **humility** was so foreign and repulsive to the Romans and Greeks way of thinking that they had no term to describe it because to them humility was a disgraceful weakness. But **humility** is the most foundational Christian virtue. We cannot even begin to please God without humility, just as our Lord Himself could not have pleased His Father had He not

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willingly **Phil. 2:7 - 8** says, “**emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and ... humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**” Yet **humility** is terribly elusive, because if focused on too much it will turn into pride, its very opposite. Humility is a virtue to be highly sought but never claimed, because once claimed it is forfeited. Although humility is at the heart of Christian character, no virtue is more foreign to the world’s ways. The world exalts pride, not humility.

- Next the text speaks of **gentleness**. Humility always produces **gentleness**, or meekness. Meekness is one of the surest signs of true humility. You cannot possess meekness without humility, and you cannot possess meekness with pride. Because pride and humility are mutually exclusive, so are pride and meekness, or **gentleness**. Many dictionaries define meekness in terms such as “timid,” or “a deficiency in courage or spirit”; but that is far from the biblical meaning. The word **gentleness** here translated from **praotēs** refers to that which is **mild-spirited** and **self-controlled**, the opposite of vindictiveness and vengeance. Meekness is power under control. Biblical meekness, or **gentleness**, is power under the control of God. Jesus used the adjective form in giving the third beatitude in **Matt. 5:5** saying, “**Blessed are the gentle.**” Then to describe His own character in **Matt. 11:29** He says, “**For I am gentle.**” **Gentleness** is one of the fruits of the Spirit found in **Gal. 5:23** and should characterize every child of God.
- A third attitude that characterizes the Christian’s worthy walk is **patience**, which also is an outgrowth of **humility** and **gentleness**. The word **patience** from **makrothumia** literally means **long-tempered**, and is sometimes translated **longsuffering**. The **patient person endures** negative circumstances and never gives in to them. The **patient saint** accepts God’s plan for everything, without questioning or grumbling. He or she does not complain when their calling seems less glamorous than someone else’s or when the Lord sends them to a place that is dangerous or difficult. They remember that God the Son left His heavenly home of love, holiness, and glory to come to earth and be hated, rejected, spat upon, and crucified—without once returning evil for evil or complaining to His Father. He patiently endured until He accomplished His task on earth and was called back home to heaven.
- A fourth characteristic element of the worthy Christian walk is **forbearance (tolerance) to one another in love**. Peter in **1 Pet. 4:8** tells us that such “**love covers a multitude**

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of sins.” It throws a blanket over the sins of others, not to justify or excuse them but to keep the sins from becoming any more known than necessary. **Prov. 10:12** says, **“Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all transgressions.”** **Forbearing** love takes abuse from others while continuing to love them. **Forbearing love** could only be **agapē love**, because only **agapē love** gives continuously and unconditionally. **Erōs love** is essentially self-love, because it cares for others only because of what it can get from them. It is the love that takes and never gives. **Philia love** is primarily reciprocal love, love that gives as long as it receives. But **agapē love** is unqualified and unselfish love, love that willingly gives whether it receives in return or not. It is unbeatable benevolence, invincible goodness—love that goes out even to enemies and prays for its persecutors. **Read Matt. 5:43 - 44.** That is why the **forbearance** of which Paul speaks of here could only be expressed **in agapē love**.

- In **Eph. 4:3** Paul reveals the ultimate outcome of **humility, gentleness, patience, and forbearance** is **“being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”** The word **diligent** from **spoudazō** basically means to **make haste**, and from that come the meanings of **zeal** and **diligence**. One commentator describes it as a **holy zeal** that demands **full dedication**. Paul used the word in **2 Tim. 2:15** telling Timothy, **“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.”** What Paul teaches here is preservation of the **unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace** should be the **diligent** and constant concern of every believer. Paul is not speaking of organizational unity, such as that promoted in many denominations and in the ecumenical movement. Here he is speaking of the inner and universal **unity of the Spirit** by which every true believer is bound to every other true believer. As Paul makes clear, this is **the unity of the Spirit** working in the lives of believers. It does not come from the outside but the inside, and is manifested through the inner qualities of **humility, gentleness, patience, and forbearing love**. Spiritual **unity** is not, and cannot be, created by the church. It is already created by the Holy **Spirit**. **Read 1 Cor. 12:13, 20** It is this very **unity of the Spirit** for which Jesus so earnestly prayed in the Upper Room shortly before His betrayal and arrest. **John 17:11, 21–23** The church’s responsibility, through the lives of individual

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believers, is **to preserve the unity** by faithfully walking in a manner worthy of God's calling and manifesting Christ to the world by oneness in Him.

- Finally note that the **bond** that preserves **unity** is **peace**, which is the spiritual belt that surrounds and binds God's holy people together. It is the **bond** that Paul described in **Phil. 2:2** as “**being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.**” Humility gives birth to gentleness, gentleness gives birth to patience, patience gives birth to forbearing love, and all four of those characteristics **preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**. These virtues and the supernatural **unity** to which they testify are probably the most powerful testimony the church can have, because they are in such contrast to the attitudes and the disunity of the world. No program or method, no matter how carefully planned and executed, can open the door to the gospel in the way individual believers can do when they are genuinely **humble, meek, patient, forbearing in love, and demonstrate peaceful unity in the Holy Spirit**.

Questions: 1) What would happen in my church, family, or relationships if I consistently practiced Ephesians 4:2–3? 2) Am I asking other people to change while refusing to allow God to change me? 3) Which is hardest for me: humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance, or pursuing peace? Why?

Transition: Paul moves from the call and characteristics of the worthy walk, to the cause of the worthy walk.

Eph. 4:4 – 6 “There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”

Eph. 4:4 – 6 NLT “For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. 5 There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.”

- Everything that relates to salvation, the church, and the kingdom of God is based on the **concept of unity**, as reflected in Paul's use of seven **one's** in these three verses. The cause, or basis, of outward oneness is inner oneness. Practical oneness is based on

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spiritual oneness. To emphasize the unity of the Spirit, Paul recites the features of oneness that are relevant to our doctrine and life. Paul does not develop the particular areas of oneness, but simply lists them: **body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, and God and Father**. His focus is on the **oneness** of those and every other aspect of God's nature, plan, and work as a basis for our commitment to live as one. It is obvious that **verse 4** centers on **the Holy Spirit**, **verse 5** on **the Son**, and **verse 6** on **the Father**.

- The church is **one body**, united by **one Spirit**, called to **one hope**, worshipping **one Lord**, trusting with one faith, identified by **one baptism**, submitting to **one God** and Father. When we fail to keep the unity of the Spirit, we deny our oneness.

Eph. 4:4 “There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;”

- There is only **one body** of believers, the church, which is composed of every saint who has trusted or will trust in Christ as Savior and Lord. There is no denominational, geographical, ethnic, or racial body. There is no Gentile, Jewish, male, female, slave, or freeman body. There is only Christ's **body**, and the unity of that **body** is the heart of the book of Ephesians. Obviously there is but **one Spirit**, the Holy Spirit of God, who is possessed by every believer and who is therefore the inner unifying force in the **body**.
- If all Christians were walking in obedience to and in the power of the Holy Spirit, first our doctrine and then our relationships would be purified and unified. The spiritual unity that already exists would be practically manifested in complete harmony among the people of God. Believers are also unified in the **one hope** of their **calling**. Our calling to salvation is ultimately a calling to Christlike eternal perfection and glory. In Christ we have different gifts, different ministries, different places of service, but only **one ... calling**, the calling to **Eph. 1:4** says to “**be holy and blameless before Him.**” It is the Spirit who has placed us in the one Body and who guarantees our future glory.

Eph. 4:5 “... one Lord, one faith, one baptism,”

- Just as there is **one body and one Spirit** obviously, there is but **one Lord, one faith, one baptism**. “... **one Lord** here speaks of Jesus Christ our Savior. **Acts 4:12** says, “**There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that**

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has been given among men, by which we must be saved.” / Rom. 10:12 “For the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him.”

- Consequently there can only be **one faith**. Paul is not referring here to the act of faith by which a person is saved or the continuing faith that produces right living, but rather **the body of doctrine revealed in the New Testament**. Our **one faith** is the content of the revealed Word of God. God’s Word contains many truths, but its individual truths are but harmonious facets of His **one truth**, which is our **one faith**.
- There is **one baptism** among believers by which all believers are placed into the Body by the Holy Spirit which is **spiritual baptism**. **One baptism** here may refer to water baptism, the outward symbol of the inward reality, or it may refer to a believer’s identification with Christ and His death. It seems unlikely that this refers to the latter, Spirit baptism, because it is in the triad of elements that pertain to Christ, the second Person of the Trinity. Also nothing in the broader context in **Eph. 4:1–16** suggests that this is the Spirit’s baptism. If it refers to water baptism, then the idea is that by this single act believers demonstrate their spiritual unity. Water baptism was extremely important in the early church, not as a means of salvation or special blessing but as a testimony of identity with and unity in Jesus Christ. Believers were not baptized in the name of a local church, a prominent evangelist, a leading elder, or even an apostle, but in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Those who by **one Lord** are in **one faith** testify to that unity in **one baptism**.

Eph. 4:6 “... one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”

- The basic doctrine of Judaism has always been, **“The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!”** based on **Deut. 6:4**, and God’s oneness is just as foundational to Christianity. **Read 1 Cor. 8:4 - 6; Eph. 4:3 – 6**. Yet the New Testament also reveals the more complete truth that the **one God** is in three Persons—**Father, Son, and Holy Spirit** **Read Matt. 28:19; John 6:27; 20:28; Acts 5:3 – 4** **God the Father** is often used in Scripture as the most comprehensive and inclusive divine title, though it is clear from many New Testament texts that He is never separated in nature or power from the Son or the Holy Spirit. Paul’s point here is not to separate the Persons of the Godhead but to note their unique roles and yet focus on their

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unity in relation to each other and in relation to the church—manifested in the several different aspects mentioned in these three verses. Our **one God and Father**, along with the Son and the Holy Spirit, **is over all and through all and in all**. That comprehensive statement points to the glorious, divine, eternal unity that the Father gives believers by His Spirit and through the Son. We are God created, God loved, God saved, God Fathered, God controlled, God sustained, God filled, and God blessed. We are one people under one sovereign **over all**, omnipotent **through all**, and omnipresent **in all** God.

Questions: 1) Am I contributing to Christian unity—or contributing to Christian division? 2) If we have one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism, what should that say about how we treat one another? 3) If God has given us so many reasons to be ONE, why do Christians sometimes allow relatively small differences to keep us APART? 4) If we truly believe there is ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL, how can we justify allowing pride, prejudice, preferences, or personal differences to destroy the unity God desires among His children?

Read: Eph. 4:7 – 11 – Christ’s Gifts to His Church

Transition: In these verses it reveals the essence of the gospel is not in what men should do for God but in what He has done for men. The New Testament, like the Old, contains many commands and requirements, many standards to be met and obligations to be fulfilled. But important as those things are, they are not the heart of Christianity. They are simply what God calls and enables us to do for His glory in response to what He has done for us through our Lord Jesus Christ. Every New Testament book teaches what Christ has done for believers, and every New Testament exhortation is built on that foundation of God’s gracious provision through the Savior. God gave the supreme gift of grace and His children are to respond to it in faithful obedience. **Read Eph. 2:10**

In Eph. 2:7 Paul begins this series of verses by referring to what God has done for those who have trusted in His Son. The worthy Christian walk he has just described in **verses 1 - 6** is now to be carried out through the ministry of the gift He has given us. In **Eph. 4:7 – 11** the apostle first assures us that **every believer has been individually gifted**; then **he**

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shows us how Christ obtained the right to give gifts; and finally he mentions some of the specially gifted through whom the Lord blesses the whole church.

Eph. 4:7 “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.”

Eph. 4:7 NLT “However, he has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ.”

- It is important to note that the term **but**, with which this verse begins, is used here as an adversative rather than as a simple conjunction. It could be translated “**in spite of that**” or “**on the other hand,**” contrasting the previous subject matter with what is about to be said. This interpretation of **but** brings together the emphasis of **unity** that has been the echoing theme of **Eph. 4:3 - 6** with the parallel emphasis of diversity, which is the theme of **Eph. 4:7–11**. The word “**But**” here sets the stage for individuals when it says “**each one**” over the backdrop of “**all**” used in **Eph. 4:6** with regard to **unity** in the Body of Christ. The reading of **but** as adversative is strengthened by the emphatic use of **each one**. What this begins to reveal is **unity is not uniformity** and is perfectly consistent with **diversity of gifts**. God’s gracious relation to “**all**” is also a personal relation to “**each one**” and a personal ministry through **each one**. Here Paul moves from **the unity of believers** to **the uniqueness of believers**.
- He says, “**But to each one of us grace was given...**” **Grace** here is a single-word definition of the gospel. The **gospel is the good news of God’s grace** to sinful mankind. The nature of grace is giving, and the Bible tells us much more about giving than getting, because God’s nature is to give. **God is a God of grace** because He is a God who freely gives. It has nothing to do with anything we have done or have failed to do; it can only be received. God is gracious because of who He is, not because of who or what we are. His **grace** is therefore **unmerited, unearned, undeserved**. It depends entirely on the One who gives it, not on those who receive it. **Grace** is God’s self-motivated, self-generated, and a sovereign act and choice of His giving. God’s **grace** has another dimension that places it still further above every other kind of giving. The greatest gift of grace is self. **Grace** is therefore **God’s Self-donation, His Self-giving**. He not only gives blessings to men, He gives Himself. Infinitely more important and precious than any blessing God

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gives us is that gift of Himself. The incomprehensible and staggering truth of the gospel is that the holy God of the universe has given Himself to sinful mankind! God grants us His salvation, His kingdom, His inheritance, His Spirit, His throne, His wisdom, His love, His power, His peace, His glory, and every other “spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ based on **Eph. 1:3**. But far more than all of those blessings, He blesses us with His personal presence. God owes nothing to sinful men except judgment for their sin. He does not owe men the smallest blessing or favor. Yet in **His grace** He has given us the blessing of all blessings, the immeasurable blessing of an intimate shared life with Him.

- To those who receive His **grace** God will continue to show His **grace** toward us throughout the ages to come. The **grace** in which we stand not only saves but enables, and that is the sense of the term here. Paul makes it clear that **grace was given** to every believer. In the original Greek text there was a definite article **hē** translated **the** indicating that this is **the grace**, that is, **the grace unique to Christ**. The term for **grace** is **charis** and signifies that what is given is **the enabling power** that makes the special gifts function to the glory of God.
- In the **b-portion** of **verse 7** the distinction of **grace** is made clear by the rest of Paul's statement, when it says, “**according to the measure of Christ's gift.**” **Enabling grace** is measured out to be consistent with what is necessary for the operation of **Christ's gift**. The term **gift** from the word **dōrea** does not focus on the undeservedness of the gift, but on the freeness of the gift. Note here not only is each believer's **gift is free**, but each believer's **gift is unique**. The words “**The measure**” or specific portion given is by sovereign design from the Head of the church Jesus Himself. The Lord has measured out the exact proportion of each believer's gift. The exact proportion of **enabling grace** on the part of God is linked with the exact proportion of **enacting faith** on the part of each believer; and God is the source of both. The sum of this is that God gives both **the grace** and **the faith** to energize whatever gift He gives to the full intent of His purpose.
- In light of the truth just stated it is clear that since they are sovereignly given, no gifts should be sought; that since they are essential elements in God's plan, no gifts should be unused; and that since they come from the Lord, no gifts should be exalted. We each have a **gift** that is measured out to us—with certain distinct capabilities, parameters, and

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purposes. Each of us is given a specific **gift** singular through which we are to minister in Christ's name. **Read 1 Pet. 4:10 In Romans 12** Paul gives a more detailed explanation of spiritual gifts. But note that we are gifted according to **His plan, His purpose, and His measure**. We have no more to do with determining our gift than we did with determining what color of skin, hair, or eyes we would be born with. God is the source of **electing grace, equipping grace, and enabling grace**.

- Also note that a believer's single **gift** will may not be restricted to only one category of giftedness. An individual gift may include a number of specific areas of giftedness, in a limitless variety of combinations. Someone with a major gift of **administration** may also have something of the gifts of **helps** and of **teaching**. Believers' gifts are like snowflakes and fingerprints—each one is completely distinct from all others. Some teachers may emphasize knowledge, some instruction, some mercy, and others exhortation. From the palette of gift colors the Holy Spirit uses the brush of His sovereign design to paint the mixture of each believer so that no two are like. Therefore, not to use our gift is an insult to God's wisdom, a rebuff of His love and grace, and a loss to His church. We did not **determine our gift, deserve it, or earn it**. But we all have a gift from the Lord, and if we do not use it, **His work is weakened and His heart is grieved**. The intent of the text before us is to reveal the **balanced relationship** between **the oneness of believers** and **their individuality which contributes to that oneness**.

Question: 1) Am I using what Christ has given me, or am I waiting for God to give me something different? 2) If Christ has given EVERY believer grace according to His own measure, what would happen if we stopped comparing our gifts, started appreciating our gifts, and began faithfully using our gifts?

Eph. 4:8 - 10 “Therefore it says, “When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.” 9 (Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)”

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Eph. 4:8 - 10 NLT “That is why the Scriptures say, “When he ascended to the heights, he led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to his people.” 9 Notice that it says “he ascended.” This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world. 10 And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.”

- Paul here is set to delineate some of the gifts Christ has given, but before mentioning specific gifts bestowed on the whole church, he uses **Psalm 68:18** as a comparison passage to show how Christ received the right to bestow those gifts. The obvious differences between both the Hebrew and Greek (being the Septuagint) Old Testament texts of **Psalm 68:18** and Paul’s citation of it suggest that he is probably making only a general reference to the passage for the sake of analogy or similarity, rather than specifically identifying it as a direct prediction of Christ. **Psalm 68** is a victory hymn composed by David to celebrate God’s conquest of the Jebusite city and the triumphant ascent of God which was represented by the Ark of the Covenant taken up to Mount Zion. Note here that after a king won such a victory he would bring home the spoils and enemy prisoners to parade before his people. An Israelite king would take his entourage through the holy city of Jerusalem and up Mount Zion. Another feature of the victory parade, however, would be the display of the king’s own soldiers who had been freed after being held prisoner by the enemy. These were often referred to as recaptured captives—prisoners who had been taken prisoner again, so to speak, by their own king and given freedom.
- The phrase **when He ascended on high** depicts a triumphant Christ returning from battle on earth back into the glory of the heavenly city with the trophies of His great victory. Note here in His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus Christ conquered Satan, sin, and death, and by that great victory He **led captive a host of captives**, who once were prisoners of the enemy but now are returned to God and the people with whom they belong. The picture here is vivid in its demonstration that God has yet-unsaved people who belong to Him, though they are naturally in Satan’s grasp and would remain there had not Christ by His death and resurrection made provision to lead them out and into the captivity of His kingdom into which they had been called by His sovereign election **Eph. 1:4** says, “**before**

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the foundation of the world.” Compare **Acts 18:10**, where the Lord tells Paul to stay in Corinth and preach because there were people in that city who belonged to Him, but were not yet saved from the bondage and king of darkness.

- In the **c-portion** of **verse 8** it reveals upon arriving in heaven, **He gave gifts to men**. Paul here uses yet another term **domata** for **gifts** to express the comprehensiveness of this gracious provision. Like a triumphant conqueror distributing the spoils to his subjects, so Christ takes the trophies He has won and distributes them in His kingdom. After His ascension came all the gifts empowered by the Holy Spirit. **Read John 7:39; 14:12; Acts 2:33** When the Savior was exalted on high, He sent the Spirit, and with the coming of the Spirit also came His gifts to the church. Before Paul identifies the gifts he has in mind, he first gives a brief parenthetical explanation of the analogy he has just used.
- In explaining the application of the Old Testament passage in **Psalms 68**, Paul says in **Eph. 4:9**, **“Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth?”** The **He** in the text of whom Paul is speaking is the One in who will fill all things, Jesus Christ, which **Eph. 1:23** says, **“...who fills all in all.”** The word **ascended** in the **verse 9** refers to Jesus’ ascension from earth to heaven. He **ascended** from earth to heaven to forever reign with His Father. **Read Acts 1:9 – 11** Paul is quick to explain that the expression **He ascended** cannot **mean** anything **except that He ... also descended**. If, as seems clear, **ascended** refers to our Lord’s being taken up to heaven, then **descended** must refer to His coming down from heaven to earth. The captain of our salvation was **first lowered** and **then exalted**.
- This truth is repeated in proper chronological sequence in **Eph. 4:10** when it says, **“He who descended is Himself also He who ascended.”** The depth of Christ’s descent in incarnation is said to be **into the lower parts of the earth**. This reference is presented to provide a striking contrast in terms of His ascent **far above all the heavens**, emphasizing the extreme range of our Lord’s condescension and exaltation. The intent of the phrase in this letter is not to point to a specific place, but to refer to the depth of the incarnation. Paul’s point in **Eph. 4:8 - 10** is to explain that Jesus’ paying the infinite price of coming to earth and suffering death on our behalf qualified Him to be exalted

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above all the heavens that is, to the throne of God, in order that He might rightfully have the authority to give gifts to His saints. By that victory He gained the right to rule His church and to give gifts to His church, **that He might fill all things**. His filling **all things** primarily has to do with His glorious **divine presence** and **power** expressed in universal sovereignty. **He fills** the entire universe with blessing, particularly His church, as the next verse illustrates.

Question: 1) Am I more interested in receiving a gift from Christ—or in serving Christ with the gift He has already given me? 2) If Christ was willing to descend to the lowest place to accomplish our salvation, what should we be willing to do to serve Him and build up His body?

Eph. 4:11 “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,”

Eph. 4:11 NLT “Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers.”

- After his parenthetical analogy in **Eph. 4:9 - 10** from **Psalm 68:18**, Paul continues his explanation of spiritual gifts. Christ not only gives gifts to individual believers but also to the entire Body. To each believer He gives special gifts of divine enablement, and to the church overall He gives specially gifted leaders, “some **as apostles, ... prophets, ... evangelists, and ... pastors and teachers.**”
- The first thing the verse points out is “**He gave**” emphasizing the sovereign choice and authority given to Christ because of His perfect fulfillment of the Father’s will. Not only **apostles** and **prophets**, but also **evangelists, ... pastors and teachers** are divinely called and placed. In **1 Cor. 12:28**, Paul says, “**God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers.**” That statement adds weight not only to the idea of divine calling but also to the chronological significance “**first, ... second, ... third**” in the giving of these gifted leaders to the church. The first of the gifted men in the New Testament church were the **apostles**, of whom Jesus Christ Himself is foremost. The basic meaning of **apostle** from the word **apostolos** is simply that of **one sent on a mission**. In its primary and most technical sense **apostle** is used in the New Testament

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only of the twelve, including Matthias, who replaced Judas, and of Paul, who was uniquely set apart as **apostle** to the Gentiles. The qualifications for that apostleship were having been chosen directly by Christ and having witnessed the resurrected Christ. Paul was the last to meet those qualifications. The term **apostle** is also used in a more general sense of other men in the early church, such as Barnabas in **Acts 14:4**, Silas and Timothy in **1 Thess. 2:6**, and a few other outstanding leaders in **Rom. 16:7**; **2 Cor. 8:23**; **Phil. 2:25**. Then there were the false apostles spoken of in **2 Cor. 11:13** which no doubt speaks of a class of counterfeit apostles, since the others were limited to thirteen and were well known. The true **apostles** in the second group were called “**messengers**” based on the word used **apostoloi** whereas the thirteen were **apostles** of Jesus Christ. **Read 2 Cor. 8:23, Gal. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1**

- Then the office of **Prophets** who were also appointed by God as specially gifted leaders, and differ from those believers who have the gift of prophecy based on **1 Cor. 12:10**. Not all such believers could be called **prophets**. It seems that **the office of prophet** was exclusively for work within a local congregation, whereas that of apostleship was a much broader ministry, not confined to any area, as implied in the word **apostolos** meaning “**one who is sent on a mission.**” The prophets sometimes spoke revelation from God and sometimes simply expounded revelation already given, where they are connected with teachers. They always spoke for God but did not always give a newly revealed message from God. The prophets were second to the apostles. Another distinction between the two offices may have been that the **apostolic message** was more general and doctrinal, whereas that of the **prophets** was more personal and practical.
- Paul then speaks of **evangelists, pastors and teachers** who are placed also in God’s plan for the advancement of the kingdom. **Evangelists** are **those who proclaim good news**. The specific term **evangelist** is used in this text in **Ephesians** and in **Acts 21:8**, where Philip is called an “**evangelist**”; and in **2 Tim. 4:5**, where Timothy is told to “**do the work of an evangelist.**” But these limited references describe a vital, extensive, and far-reaching ministry, indicated by the use of the verb **euangelizō** which means **to proclaim the good news** and is used some 54 times in the NT. Then the noun **euangelion** is also used 76 times in the NT which means **the good news**. The work of

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the **evangelist** is to preach and explain **the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ** to those **who have not yet believed**. They are proclaimers of salvation by grace through faith in the Son of God. These gifted leaders are uniquely designed and given to the church to reach the lost with the saving gospel, and every church should consider this ministry as high priority.

- Paul then speaks **of pastors and teachers**. The title **pastor** is translated from the Greek word **poimēn** and whose normal meaning is **shepherd**. It emphasizes **the care, protection and leadership of the shepherd of God for the flock**. Then the word **Teachers** from the word **didaskaloi** has to do with the primary function of **pastors**. Though teaching can be identified as a ministry on its own, **pastors and teachers** are best understood as one office of leadership in the church. Often the word **and** from **kai** means **“that is”** or **“in particular,”** making **teachers** in this context explanatory of **pastors**. That meaning cannot be conclusively proven in this text, but the text of **1 Timothy 5:17** clearly puts the two functions together when it says: **“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.”** The office of pastor-teacher is the highest level of local church leadership. Thus it carried a great amount of responsibility. They were charged with the care of leading and feeding, as well as the spiritual guidance, of the entire church. There was no higher court of appeal, and no greater resource for knowing the mind and heart of God with regard to issues in the church.
- All of the gifts that Christ gives to individuals and to the church as a whole are gifts which He Himself perfectly exemplified. If ever there was a preacher it was Christ, if ever there was a teacher, ruler, administrator, servant, helper, or giver it was Christ. He is the perfect illustration and example of every gift, because His gifts to us are gracious gifts of Himself. Therefore, **Eph. 4:11** reminds us that ministry is not primarily about **POSITION**—it is about **PURPOSE**. Christ gives different people different assignments, but every assignment has the same ultimate goal: **building up His Body and advancing His Kingdom**.

Questions: 1) Are we more attracted to ministry titles or ministry responsibilities? 2) Am I using my gifts to serve Christ—or using them to receive recognition from people? 3) Am I willing to serve in a place where I may never receive recognition? 4) If Christ is

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the One who gives ministry gifts, and those gifts are ultimately intended to equip His people, should ministry be about having a **TITLE**—or fulfilling a **RESPONSIBILITY**?

Read Eph. 4:12 – 16

Transition: Ephesians 4:12 – 16 is possibly the most succinct form in God’s plan by which Christ produces church growth. Since the Lord said in **Matt. 16:18**, “**I will build My church**”, it is obvious that the building must be according to His plan. Attempting to build the church by human means only competes with the work of Christ. It is God’s plan for today that gifted evangelists and pastor-teachers **equip, build up, and develop His church** by the general operational procedure set forth in **Eph. 4:12 - 16**. In this passage we are shown the progression, the purpose, and the power of God’s divine pattern for the building and function of His church.

Eph. 4:12 “... for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;”

Eph. 4:12 NLT “Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.”

- In the simplest terms, Paul lays out God’s progressive plan for His church: **EQUIP the saints, EMPOWER them for SERVICE, and EDIFY the BODY.**
- The first task within God’s design is for the **evangelists and pastor-teachers** to be properly **equipping** the **saints**. The **evangelist’s** work is to bring men and women to understanding of the gospel of salvation, to lead them to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and thereby become children in His spiritual family and citizens of His divine kingdom. In the early years the objective was to establish a local church. This begins the equipping. The **pastor-teacher’s** subsequent work, then, is to provide the leadership and spiritual resources to cause believers to be taking on the likeness of their Lord and Savior through continual obedience to His Word and to provide a pattern or example of godliness. **Read 1 Thess. 1:2–7; 1 Pet. 5:3**
- The word **equipping** from **katartismos** basically refers to that which **is fit, is restored to its original condition, or is made complete**. The word was often used as a medical term for **the setting of bones**. The writer of Hebrews used the term in **Heb. 13:20 - 21** in

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his closing prayer: **“Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight.”** The matter here of equipping here is not only a matter of individual equipping, but also collective equipping.

- God has given four basic tools, as it were, for the spiritual **equipping of the saints**. These are spiritual means, because the flesh cannot make anyone perfect. The first and most important is His Word, the Bible. **Read 2 Tim. 3:16 - 17** The first purpose of the **pastor-teacher**, therefore, is to feed himself, to feed his people, and to lead them to feed themselves on the Word of God.
- A second tool of **equipping** is **prayer**, and the **pastor-teacher** is responsible to prepare himself and to lead his people to prepare themselves in prayer. The example of the apostles, who gave themselves continually to teaching the Word and to prayer in **Acts 6:4** indicates that they were committed to this spiritual means for building up believers.
- A third tool of **equipping** is **testing**. These are primary, purging experiences by which the believer is refined to greater holiness. James tells us in **Jam. 1:2 – 4** to **“consider it all joy ... when [we] encounter various trials, knowing that the TESTING of [our] faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result,”** he goes on to say, **“that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”** When we respond to God’s testing in trust and continued obedience, spiritual muscles are strengthened and effective service for Him is broadened.
- A fourth tool is **suffering**. Suffering is also a means of spiritual **equipping**. Peter uses this word near the close of his first letter when he says in **1 Pet. 5:10** **“And after you have SUFFERED for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.”** Knowing and following Christ in the deepest sense **Phil. 3:10** reveals not only involves being raised with Him but also sharing in **“the fellowship of His sufferings.”**
- The sending of tests and suffering are entirely God’s operation, and He gives them to His **saints** according to His loving and sovereign will. But the other two agents of spiritual **equipping**—prayer and knowledge of Scripture—are the tasks of the gifted leaders such

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as evangelist and pastor-teachers. Even the most biblical and efficient of church organizations will not produce spiritual maturity without the leadership of God’s gifted ministers who are continually in prayer and in His Word. The study and teaching of God’s Word takes time. The evangelist or pastor-teacher therefore cannot fulfill their God-given responsibility with the planning and administration of a multitude of programs—no matter how worthy and helpful they are. Again, like the apostles in Jerusalem, **Acts 6:2, 4** explains they cannot “**serve tables**” and also be faithful “**to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.**” The surest road to a church’s spiritual stagnation, to a pastor’s burnout, or to both is for a pastor to become so engulfed in activities and programs that he has too little time for prayer and the Word. It is lack of knowledge of God’s Word and obedience to it, not lack of programs and methods that destroy His people. When they fail it is not because of weak programs but because of weak teaching.

- **Eph. 4:12** “... for the equipping of the saints **for the work of service...**” The second aspect of God’s plan for the operation of His church is **service**. Paul’s language indicates that it is not the gifted leaders who have the most direct responsibility to do the **work of service**. No pastor, or even a large group of pastors, can do everything a church needs to do. No matter how gifted, talented, and dedicated a pastor may be, the work to be done where they are called to minister will always vastly exceed their time and abilities. The pastors purpose in God’s plan is not to try to meet all those needs themselves but to equip the people given into their care to meet those needs. Obviously the leaders share in serving, and many of the congregation share in equipping, but God’s basic design for the church is for the equipping to be done so that the **saints** can serve each other effectively. The entire church is to be aggressively involved in the work of the Lord!
- When gifted **pastor-teachers** are faithful in prayer and in teaching the Word, the people will be properly equipped and rightly motivated to do **the work of service**. From the **saints** who are equipped God raises up elders, deacons, teachers, and every other kind of worker needed for the church to be faithful and productive. Spiritual **service** is the **work** of every Christian, every **saint** of God. **Attendance is a poor substitute for participation in ministry.**

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- The third element and the immediate goal of God’s plan for the operation of His church is it being **built up**. Proper **equipping** by the evangelists and pastor-teachers leading to proper **service** by the congregation results inevitably in the **building up of the body of Christ**. The words **building up** from **oikodomē** literally refers to **the building of a house**, and was used figuratively of any sort of construction. It is the spiritual edification and development of the church of which Paul is speaking here. **The body** is **built up** externally through evangelism as more believers are added, but the emphasis here is on its being **built up** internally as all believers are **nurtured to fruitful service through the Word**. Paul’s exhortation to the Ephesian elders in **Acts 20:32** emphasizes this process when it says, “**I commend you to God and to the word, ... which is able to build you up.**” The maturing of the church is tied to learning of and obedience to the holy revelation of Scripture. Just as newborn babes desire physical milk, **1 Pet. 2:2** teaches so should believers desire the spiritual nourishment of the Word.

Question: 1) Am I more interested in what the church can do for me than in what God can do through me? 2) What would change in our church if every believer understood, “I am not just a church ATTENDEE; I am a Kingdom SERVANT”? 3) Am I being EQUIPPED but never ENGAGING in service?

Eph. 4:13 – 15 “...until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ...”

Eph. 4:13 – 15 NLT “This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won’t be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. 15

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Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.”

- **Eph. 4:13 – 15** reveals the purpose of God’s pattern in the building up of His redeemed people. The building up of the redeemed involves a two-fold ultimate objective, which Paul identifies in **verse 13** as **the unity of the faith** and **the knowledge of the Son of God**. Then in **verses 14 – 15** it reveals out of that flows **spiritual maturity, sound doctrine, and loving testimony**. Here Paul is not describing the final work of Christ on behalf of the church in heaven but of the gifted work of leaders in the church on earth. These results apply to the church in its earthly dimension.
- First in the **verse 13** it reveals the ultimate spiritual target for the church begins with **the unity of the faith**. As in **verse 5**, **faith** does not here refer to the act of belief or of obedience but to the body of Christian truth, to Christian doctrine. **The faith** is the content of the gospel in its most complete form. Disunity in the church comes from doctrinal ignorance and spiritual immaturity. When believers are properly taught, when they faithfully do the work of service, and when the body is thereby built up in spiritual maturity, **unity of the faith** is an inevitable result. Oneness in fellowship is impossible unless it is built on the foundation of commonly believed truth. **Read 1 Cor. 1:10** God’s truth is not fragmented and divided against itself, and when His people are fragmented and divided it simply means they are to that degree apart from His truth, apart from **the faith** of right knowledge and understanding. Only a biblically equipped, faithfully serving, and spiritually maturing church can **attain to the unity the faith**. Any other unity will be on a purely human level and not only will be apart from but in constant conflict with **the unity of the faith**. There can never be unity in the church apart from doctrinal integrity.
- The second result of following God’s pattern for building His church is attaining **the knowledge of the Son of God**. Paul is not talking about salvation knowledge but about the deep **knowledge of Christ**. The word **knowledge** here comes from the word **epignōsis** and speaks of a full knowledge that is correct and accurate through a personal experiential relationship with Christ that comes only from prayer and faithful study of and obedience to God’s Word. Growing in the deeper **knowledge of the Son of God** is a life-long process that will not be complete until we see our Lord face-to-face.

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That is the knowing of which Jesus spoke of in **Jn. 10:27** when He said, **“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them.”** He was not speaking of knowing their identities but of knowing them **intimately**, and that is the way He wants His people also to know Him.

- The third result of following God’s pattern for His church is **spiritual maturity**. The **b-portion** of **verse 13** speaks of a maturity **to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ**. God’s great desire for His church is that every believer, without exception, come to be like His Son, manifesting the character qualities of the One who is the only **measure** of the full-grown, perfect, **mature person**. **Read Rom. 8:29** The church in the world is Jesus Christ in the world, because the church is now the fullness of His incarnate Body in the world. We are to radiate and reflect Christ’s perfections. **1 John 2:6** teaches that as Christians we are therefore called to **“walk in the same manner as He walked”**, and He walked in complete and continual fellowship with and obedience to His Father. As we grow into deeper fellowship with Christ, the process of divine sanctification through His Holy Spirit changes us more and more into His image, from one level of glory to the next. The agent of spiritual maturity, as well as of every other aspect of godly living, is God’s own Spirit—apart from whom the sincerest prayer has no effectiveness and even God’s own Word has no power. **Read John 14:26** It is obvious that believers, all of whom have unredeemed flesh, cannot in this life fully and perfectly attain the **measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ**. But we must and can reach a degree of maturity that pleases and glorifies the Lord. The goal of Paul’s ministry to believers was their maturity. **Read Col. 1:28 – 29**

Eph. 4:14 “As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming...”

Eph. 4:14 NLT “Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won’t be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth.”

- The fourth result of following God’s pattern for His church is **sound doctrine**. The Christian who is properly equipped and mature **verse 14** reveals is **no longer** a child who is **tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of**

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doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming. The word **trickery** from **kubia** is the term from which we get **cube**, and was used of **dice-playing**. Just as today, the dice were often “loaded” or otherwise manipulated by professional gamblers to their own advantage. The term for dice therefore became synonymous with **dishonest trickery** of any sort. Then the word **craftiness** from **panourgia** is a similar term, carrying the idea of **clever manipulation of error made to look like truth**. **Read Luke 20:22 – 26** Finally, the word **scheming** from **methodia** is used later in the letter to refer to **“the schemes of the devil”** in **Eph. 6:11**. No doubt it **has a reference to planned, subtle, systematized error**. Paul’s point is that neither the **trickery of men** nor the **deceitful scheming** of the devil will mislead the spiritually equipped and mature believer. It is spiritual **children**, who are in constant danger of falling prey to every new religious fad or novel interpretation of Scripture that comes along. Having no thorough knowledge of God’s Word, they are **tossed here and there by waves** of popular sentiment and are **carried about by every wind of new doctrine** that seems appealing. Because they are not anchored in God’s truth, they are subject to every sort of counterfeit truth—humanistic, cultic, pagan, demonic, or whatever. The New Testament is replete with warnings against this danger. **Read Rom. 16:17 - 18; Col. 2:4 – 8** Paul here speaks of the immature Christian who is gullible; and in the history of the church no group of believers have fallen into more foolishness in the name of Christianity than has much of the church today. Despite our unprecedented education, sophistication, freedom, and access to God’s Word and sound Christian teaching, it seems that every religious huckster can find a ready hearing and financial support from among God’s people. The number of foolish, misdirected, corrupt, and even heretical leaders to whom many church members willingly give their money and allegiance is astounding and heartbreaking. Just as many families today are dominated by their children, so are many churches. It is tragic when the church’s **children**, the spiritually immature believers who change their views with **every wind of doctrine** and continually fall prey to men’s **trickery** and Satan’s **craftiness** and **deceitful scheming**—are found among its most influential teachers and leaders.

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Eph. 4:15 “... but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ...”

Eph. 4:15 NLT “Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.”

- In **verse 15** we see the fifth and final feature that is primarily a requirement and yet also a result of following God’s pattern for His church will be **in direct opposition to being tossed, carried away, tricked, and deceived by the schemes of Satan**—namely, **speaking the truth in love**, a principle that applies to every aspect of Christian life and ministry. The verb **alētheuō** is translated **speaking the truth** is, which means to **speak, deal, or act truthfully**. Some have translated it “**truthing it**,” while others say it conveys the idea of **walking in a truthful way**. The verb refers to **being true in the widest sense** and is hard to translate into English. What Paul teaches here is authentic, mature believers whose lives are marked by **love** will not be victims of false teaching but will be living authentically and proclaiming the true gospel to a deceived and deceiving world. The work of the church goes full swing, from **evangelism to edification to evangelism**, and so on and on until the Lord returns. The **evangelized are edified**, and they, in turn, **evangelize and edify others**. Make no mistake here the spiritually equipped church, whose members are sound in doctrine and mature in their thinking and living, is a church that will reach out in **love** to proclaim the saving gospel. God does not give us knowledge, understanding, gifts, and maturity to keep but to share. He does not equip us to stagnate but to serve. We are not gifted and edified in order to be complacent and self-satisfied but in order to do the Lord’s work of service in building up and expanding the Body of Christ. The words **in love** used here is **the attitude** in which we evangelize. Paul was an example for such love, as seen in the following testimony. **Read 1 Thess. 2:7 – 12** The skeptical German poet Heinrich Heine said to Christians, “You show me your redeemed life and I might be inclined to believe in your Redeemer.” The authentic life that speaks the gospel with a spirit of loving sacrifice will be eminently convincing. **Speaking the truth in love** seems deceptively easy, but it is extremely difficult. It is possible only for the believer who is thoroughly equipped in sound doctrine and in spiritual maturity. Only the **mature**, the one who is growing up **to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of**

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Christ is consistent in having sufficient wisdom to understand God’s **truth** and effectively present it to others; and only they have the continual humility and grace to present it in **love** and in power. The combination of **truth** and **love** counteracts the two great threats to powerful ministry—**lack of truth** and **lack of compassion**.

- In the **b-portion** of **verse 15** Paul continues and says, “... **we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ.**” This loving, authentic testimony assists believers in growing into the very likeness of Jesus Christ. The phrase **in all aspects** calls for a comprehensive Christlikeness such as that described in **verse 13**. **The head ... Christ** expresses a familiar Pauline analogy indicating Christ’s authority, leadership, and controlling power. He not only is the sovereign Head and the ruling Head but also the organic Head. He is the source of power for all functions. Human beings are declared officially dead when the EKG is flat, signifying brain death. As the brain is the control center of physical life, so the Lord Jesus Christ is the organic source of life and power to His Body, the church. To grow therefore into His likeness is to be completely subject to His controlling power, obedient to His every thought and expression of will. It is to personify Paul’s prayers in **Phil. 1:21** and **Gal. 2:10** where it says, “**For to me, to live is Christ**” and “**It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.**”

Question: 1) What evidence exists in my life that I am becoming more like Jesus? 2) Am I easily influenced by whatever I hear, or am I anchored firmly in God's Word? 3) Do I speak truth in love—or use “truth” as an excuse to speak without love? 4) If Christ is the standard, what is the next area of my life where I need to grow?

Eph. 4:16 “... from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

Eph. 4:16 NLT “He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”

- The power for being equipped and matured into lovingly authentic proclaimers is not in believers themselves, in their leaders, or in church structure. The Body receives its

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authority, direction, and power the b-portion of verse 15 and 16 reveals as it “**grows up in all aspects into ... Christ,**” ... “**from whom the whole body [is] fitted and held together.**” The two participles that these phrases translate by the words **fitted and held** are synonymous and are meant to express the close, tight, compacted correlation of a functioning Body as an organism and is the result of Christ’s power. That does not negate the efforts of believers, as proved **by the phrases by that which every joint supplies and according to the proper working of each individual part.** Each of these phrases is extremely significant in conveying truth about the function of the Body. Christ holds the Body together and makes it function **by that which every joint supplies.** That is to say, the joints are points of contrast, the joining together or union where the spiritual supply, resources, and gifts of the Holy Spirit pass from one member to another, providing the flow of ministry that produces growth. The **proper working of each individual part** recalls the importance of each believer’s gift. The growth of the church is not a result of clever methods but of every member of the Body fully using his spiritual gift in close contact with other believers. Christ is the source of the life and power and growth of the church, which He facilitates through each believer’s gifts and mutual ministry in **joints** touching other believers. The power in the church flows from the Lord through individual believers and relationships between believers. Where His people have close relationships of genuine spiritual ministry, God works; and where they are not intimate with each other and faithful with their gifts, He cannot work. He does not look for creativity, ingenuity, or cleverness but for willing and loving obedience. The physical body functions properly only as each member in union with every other member responds to the direction of the head (Jesus) to do exactly what it was designed to do. The sum of all that these truths affirm is that every individual believer is to stay close to Jesus Christ, faithfully using his spiritual gift in close contact with every believer he touches, and that through such commitment and ministry the Lord’s power will flow for the **building up** of the Body **in love.**

- The noun **growth** here indicates that the body produces its own growth through resident dynamics. As with all living organisms, spiritual growth in the church does not come from forces outside but from the vital power within that **causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself.** All of this is **in love**, which is always to be the spirit of the fellowship

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of believers. Above all things, the Body is to manifest **love**, and when it is built up according to this plan, the world will know it is the Body of Christ. **Read John 13:34 – 35**

Question: 1) Am I contributing something meaningful to the Body—or simply consuming what others provide? 2) What gift has God given me that I am not currently using? 3) Who is growing because I am faithfully fulfilling my role? 4) “What would happen if EVERY believer understood that they are a necessary part of the Body, faithfully used what God has given them, and did it all in LOVE?”

Read Eph. 4:17 – 24

- In the transition to **Eph. 4:17 – 24** Paul reminds us that when a person believes and confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and is thereby born again, a transformation takes place in their basic nature. The change is even more basic and radical than the change that will take place at death. When a believer dies, they already have been fitted for heaven, already been made a citizen of the kingdom, already become a child of God. They simply begins to perfectly experience the divine nature they have had since their spiritual birth, because for the first time they are free from the unredeemed flesh. The future receiving of their glorified body will not make them better, since they are already perfected; but it will give them the full capacity for all that eternal resurrection life involves.
- However, salvation is not a matter of improvement or perfection of what has previously existed. It is total transformation. The New Testament speaks of believers having a new mind, a new will, a new heart, a new inheritance, a new relationship, new power, new knowledge, new wisdom, new perception, new understanding, new righteousness, new love, new desire, new citizenship, and many other new things—all of which are summed up in newness of life. **Read Rom. 6:4**
- At the new birth **2 Cor. 5:17** teaches a person becomes **“a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”** It is not simply that we receive something new but that we **becomes** someone new. Paul said in **Gal. 2:20** **“I have been crucified with Christ,”... and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.”** The new nature is not added to the old nature but

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replaces it. We have but one nature, the new nature in Christ. The old self dies and the new self-lives: they do not coexist. It is not a remaining old nature but the remaining garment of sinful flesh that causes Christians to sin. The Christian is a single new person, a totally new creation, not a spiritual schizophrenic. It is the filthy coat of remaining humanness in which the new creation dwells that continues to hinder and contaminate the believers living. The believer as a total person is transformed but not yet wholly perfect. We have residing sin but no longer reigning sin. We are no longer the old man corrupted but is now the new man created in righteousness and holiness, awaiting full salvation.

- In **verses 17 - 24**, Paul moves from the general to the specific characteristics; first giving four characteristics of the walk of the old man and then four characteristics of the walk of the new.

Eph. 4:17 – 19 “This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.”

Eph. 4:17 – 19 NLT says, “With the Lord’s authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused. 18 Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him. 19 They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity.”

- Paul begins with the walk of the old man. The word **therefore** refers back to what Paul has been saying about our high calling in Jesus Christ. Because we are called to salvation, unified in the Body of Christ, gifted by the Holy Spirit, and built up by the gifted leaders in verses 1 - 16), we should **therefore ... walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk**. What this teaches is we cannot accomplish the glorious work of Christ by continuing to live the way the world lives.
- The word **Gentiles** from **ethnos** is not in all of the ancient Greek texts, and may have been a later addition. But its presence here is perfectly consistent with its use elsewhere

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in the New Testament, including Paul's other letters. The term basically refers to a multitude of people in general, and then to a group of people of a particular kind. It is this secondary meaning that we see in our derived English word **ethnic**. Jews used the term in two common ways, first to distinguish all other people from Jews and second to distinguish all religions from Judaism. **Gentiles** therefore were referred to racially and ethnically as **non-Jews** and religiously to all **pagans**. In his first letter to the Thessalonians in **1 Thess. 4:5** Paul uses the term in its pagan meaning when he refers to **“the Gentiles who do not know God”**, and that is the sense in which he uses it in our present text. **Gentiles** here represent all **ungodly, unregenerate, pagan persons**.

- Like the church in our own day, the churches at Ephesus and in almost every non-Palestinian area in New Testament times were surrounded by rank paganism and its attendant immorality. Ephesus was a leading commercial and cultural city of the Roman Empire. It boasted the great pagan temple of Artemis, or Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. But it was also a leading city in debauchery and sexual immorality. Some historians rank it as the most lascivious city of Asia Minor. The temple of Artemis was the center of much of the wickedness. Like those in most pagan religions, its rituals and practices were but extensions of man's vilest and most perverted sins. Male and female roles were interchanged, and orgiastic sex, homosexuality, and every other sexual perversion were common. Artemis was herself a sex goddess, represented by an ugly, repulsive female idol that looked something like a cross between a cow and a wolf. She was served by thousands of temple prostitutes, eunuchs, singers, dancers, and priests and priestesses. Idols of Artemis and other deities were to be seen everywhere, in every size and made out of many different materials. Of special popularity were silver idols and religious artifacts.
- The church at Ephesus was a small island of despised people in a giant cesspool of wickedness. Most of the believers had themselves once been a part of that paganism. They frequently passed by places where they once caroused and ran into friends with whom they once indulged in debauchery. They faced continual temptations to revert to the old ways, and the apostle therefore admonished them to resist. He says in **Eph. 4:17**, **“This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the**

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Gentiles walk.” On the basis of what we are in Christ and of all that God now purposes for us as His redeemed and beloved children, we are to be absolutely distinct from the rest of the world, which does not know or follow Him. Spiritually we have already left the world and are now citizens of heaven. We are therefore not to love the world, nor the things in the world. **Read 1 John 2:15 - 17** The world’s standards are wrong, its motives are wrong, its aims are wrong. Its ways are sinful, deceitful, corrupt, empty, and destructive. **Eph. 4:17** reveals the warning Paul gives did not originate from his own personal tastes or preferences. It says, **“This I say ... and affirm together with the Lord.”** The matter of forsaking sin and following righteousness is not the whim of isolated, narrow-minded preachers and teachers. It is God’s own standard and His only standard for those who belong to Him. It is the very essence of the gospel and is set in bold contrast to the standards of the unredeemed. Paul then proceeds to give four specific characteristics of the ungodly, pagan life-style that believers are to forsake. The worldly life is intellectually **futile, ignorant of God’s truth, spiritually and morally hardened, and depraved in mind.**

- In final clause of **verse 17** the first characteristic of unregenerate people is that they live **“in the futility of their mind.”** It is significant that the basic issue of life-style centers in the **mind**. Paul continues to speak of understanding and ignorance, learning and teaching, and the mind and truth all of which are related to the intellect. Because unbelievers and Christians **think differently** we are therefore to **act differently**. As far as spiritual and moral issues are concerned, an unbeliever cannot think straight. His rational processes in those areas are warped and inadequate. Because man’s sinfulness flows out of his reprobate mind, the transformation must begin with the mind. Christianity is cognitive before it is experiential. It is our thinking that makes us consider the gospel and our thinking that causes us to believe the historic facts and spiritual truths of the gospel and to receive Christ as Lord and Savior. That is why the first step in repentance is a change of mind about oneself, about one’s spiritual condition, and about God.
- To the Greeks the mind was all-important. They prided themselves in their great literature, art, philosophy, politics, and science. They were so advanced in their learning that Greek slaves were prized by the Romans and other conquerors as tutors for their children and as managers of their households and businesses. Greeks believed that almost any problem

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could be reasoned to a solution. Yet Paul says that spiritually the operation of the natural mind is **futile** and unproductive. The word **futility** from **mataiotēs** refers to that which fails to produce the desired result, that which never succeeds. It was therefore used as a synonym for **empty**, because **it amounts to nothing**. The spiritual thinking and resulting life-style of **the Gentiles**—here representing all the ungodly—is inevitably empty, vain, and void of substance. The life of an unbeliever is bound up in thinking and acting in an arena of ultimate trivia. He consumes himself in the pursuit of goals that are purely selfish, in the accumulation of that which is temporary, and in looking for satisfaction in that which is intrinsically deceptive and disappointing. The unregenerate person plans and resolves everything on the basis of their own thinking. They become their own ultimate authority and follow their own thinking to its ultimate outcome of **futility**, **aimlessness**, and **meaninglessness**. After a life of experiencing every worldly advantage and pleasure, the wisest, wealthiest, and most favored man of the ancient world Solomon concluded in **Eccles. 2:26** that the worldly life is **“vanity and striving after wind.”** Yet century after century, millennia after millennia, men go on seeking the same futile goals in the same futile ways.

Eph. 4:18 “... being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart...”

Eph. 4:18 NLT says, “Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him.”

- The second characteristic of ungodly and unregenerate people is ignorance of God’s truth. Their thinking not only is futile but spiritually uninformed. Paul teaches they are **“... darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart.”** For many people, to be called **ignorant** is a greater offense than to be called sinful. Yet Paul’s point in this passage is that **ignorance** and sin are inseparable. **2 Tim. 3:7** teaches that the ungodly may be **“always learning,”** but they are **“never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”** Paul teaches that the unregenerate are **being darkened in their understanding**. The Greek word behind **being darkened** is a perfect participle, indicating a continuing **condition of spiritual darkness**. This **darkness** implies both **ignorance and immorality**. The text also teaches that **darkness of understanding** is

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coupled with exclusion **from the life of God**. The cause of their darkness, ignorance, and separation from God the text reveals is **the hardness of their heart**, referring to their willful determination to remain in sin. Because men determine to reject God, God judicially and sovereignly determines to blind their minds, exclude them from His presence, and confirm them in their spiritual ignorance. Paul explains the ignorance of fallen mankind in **Rom. 1:21–22, 24** when he says, **“For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks... 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools.... 24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity...”** Paul explains **because of the hardness of their heart**, the ungodly are unresponsive to truth. Just as a corpse cannot hear a conversation in the mortuary, the person who is spiritually **“dead in [his] trespasses and sins”** cannot hear or understand the things of God, no matter how loudly or clearly they may be declared or evidence given of His presence. The word **hardness** carries the idea of being rock-hard. It was used by physicians to describe the calcification that forms around broken bones and becomes harder than the bone itself. It was also used of the hard formations that sometimes occur in joints and cause them to become immobile. It could therefore connote the idea of paralysis as well as of hardness. Sin has a petrifying effect, and the **heart** of the person who continually chooses to sin becomes hardened and paralyzed to spiritual truth, utterly insensitive to the things of God. And when men continually persist in following their own way, they will also eventually be confirmed in their choice by the God of heaven. Paul teaches in verse 18 when men choose to petrify their hearts by constant rejection of the light, they became **darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart**. That is the unspeakable tragedy of unbelief, the tragedy of the person who makes himself his own god.

Eph. 4:19 “... and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.”

Eph. 4:19 NLT says, “They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity.”

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- **Eph. 4:19** teaches the third characteristic of the unregenerate person is spiritual and moral callousness because **they ... become callous or and no sense of shame**. When people continue in sin and turn themselves away from the life of God, they become unconcerned and insensitive about moral and spiritual things. They reject all standards of righteousness and do not care about the consequences of their unrighteous thoughts and actions. Even their conscience becomes scarred with tissue that is not sensitive to wrong. **Read Titus 1:15** Many in our wicked society have **become callous** both to the reality and to the consequences of sin, and will endure any agony rather than admit that its way of living is the way of death.
- In the **b-portion** of **verse 19** it reveals as a result of futile, self-centered thinking, ignorance of the truth, and spiritual and moral callousness the unregenerate become depraved in mind. The text teaches it leads inevitably to “... **giving themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.**” NLT says, “... **They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity.**” The word **sensuality** from **aselgeia** refers to total licentiousness, the absence of all moral restraint, especially in the area of sexual sins. One commentator says the term relates to “**a disposition of the soul incapable of bearing the pain of discipline.**” The idea is that of unbridled self-indulgence and undisciplined obscenity. Such people cares nothing about what other people think—not to mention about what God thinks—but only about what gratifies the cravings of their own perverted and twisted mind.
- In the final clause it uses the words “...**for the practice of...**” The word **practice** from **ergasia** can refer to **a business enterprise**, and that idea could apply here. The ungodly person often makes business out of **every kind of impurity**. A Christian leader commented some years ago that many of the books published in the United States today rival the drippings of a broken sewer. Yet pornography, prostitution, X-rated films, suggestive TV programs, and **every kind of impurity** form perhaps the largest industry in our country. The vast majority of it is open, unashamed, and legally protected.
- Paul reveals the **practice** of the business is **impurity** and is inseparable from **greediness**. The word **greediness** from **pleonexia** is a word that describes **unbounded covetousness, uninhibited lust for that which is wanted**. Immorality has no part in love,

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and anything the sensual person does under the appearance of caring and helpfulness is but a trick or scam for exploitation. The world of **sensuality** and **impurity** is the world of **greediness**. The person given over to godlessness and immorality greedily takes whatever he or she can from those around them. They evaluate life only in material terms, uses other people to their own advantage, and turns their back on God in order to fulfill their own evil desires and their **greediness** is no less than idolatry. When a person determines to think their own way, do things their own way, and pursue their own destiny, they cut themselves off from God. When that happens, they cut themselves off from truth and becomes spiritually blind and without standards of morality. Without standards of morality, immorality becomes a shameless and calloused way of life. When that is continued it destroys the mind's ability to distinguish good from evil, truth from falsehood, and reality from unreality. The godless life becomes the mindless life.

- In **verse 17 – 19** we see a progression in Paul's warning to not walk as the unregenerate. He teaches **wrong thinking, leads to darkened understanding, causing hard heartedness, a callous conscience and corrupt conduct.**

Question: 1) Where might I be drifting spiritually without realizing it? 2) Have I become desensitized to anything that Scripture calls sinful? 3) Am I allowing culture to interpret Scripture—or allowing Scripture to interpret culture?

Transition: Paul now moves from teaching on how the old life walks to how the new life walks.

Read Eph. 4:20 - 24

- The new walk in Christ is the exact opposite of the old walk of the flesh. Whereas the old is self-centered and futile, the new is Christ-centered and purposeful. Whereas the old is ignorant of God's truth, the new knows and understands it. Whereas the old is morally and spiritually calloused and shameless, the new is sensitive to sin of every sort. Whereas the old is depraved in its thinking, the new is renewed.

Eph. 4:20 “But you did not learn Christ in this way,”

Eph. 4:20 NLT “But that isn't what you learned about Christ.”

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- After reviewing the evils of the pagan world—the **self-centeredness, purposelessness, lack of standards, and wickedness** that both **come from and lead to spiritual darkness and ignorance**—Paul now draws a sharp contrast for believers who were tempted to return to their former way of life. He declares, **“But you did not learn Christ in this way!”** In other words, that is not the way of Christ; that is not the way of His Kingdom; and that is not the way of His family. Paul is insisting that those who belong to Christ must no longer participate in, practice, or identify themselves with the values and behaviors of their former life. You have learned Christ—and because you have learned Christ, you must learn to live differently! You are not to have any part in such things—whether by participation or association. Your relationship with Christ demands a **new way of thinking, a new way of living, and ultimately, a new way of walking.**
- The words **“You did not learn Christ”** is a direct reference to **salvation**. To learn Christ is **to be saved**. While it is true that the verb **manthanō** can be used in reference to the process of **learning truth**, it can also mean **“to come to know.”** Both the context and the use of the aorist tense of the verb **“to learn”** in these passages lead to the conclusion that this **learning** refers to the moment of **saving faith**.
- **James 4:4** says, **“Friendship with the world is hostility toward God”**, and the person who makes a profession of Christ but makes no effort to break with his worldly and sinful habits has reason to doubt his salvation. **1 John 2:4, 15** teaches **“The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him,”** and **“If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”** From the human side, salvation begins with repentance, a change of mind and action regarding sin, self, and God. One of the first things a Christian should learn is that he cannot trust his own thinking or rely on his own way. Because we have the mind of Christ, **Phil. 2:5, 8** teaches we are to **“have this attitude in [ourselves] which was also in Christ Jesus,”** who **“humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”** God has a plan of destiny for the universe, and as long as Christ is working in us He is working out a part of that plan through us. The Christ-centered life is the most purposeful and meaningful life conceivable—it is part of the divine plan and work of God!

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Eph. 4:21 ‘... if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,’

Eph. 4:21 NLT “Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him...”

- In **verse 21** Paul teaches instead of being ignorant of God’s truth, the Christian has **heard** Christ and is **taught in Him**. Both verbs are in the aorist tense, again pointing to a one-time past act, and in this context referring to the time when the readers were taught and came to believe the gospel—here called the **truth ... in Jesus**. These terms describe the moment of salvation-conversion. When a person receives Christ as Savior and Lord, he comes into God’s truth. **If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him** could not possibly refer to hearing Jesus’ physical voice on earth, because there is no way that could have been true of all the believers in Asia Minor to whom Paul was writing. It therefore must refer to the hearing of His spiritual call to salvation. Many New Testament references speak of this hearing and being taught as the call of God.
 - **The words “in Him”** used here simply means **in union with Christ** and further emphasizes the fact that at conversion we received the truth embodied in Christ, because we came to be **in Him**. The **truth that is in Jesus**, then, is first of all the truth about salvation. This idea is parallel to **Eph. 1:13**, where Paul says hearing the truth and being in Him are synonymous with conversion: **“In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.”** The **truth ... is in Jesus** and it leads to the fullness of truth about God, man, creation, history, sin, righteousness, grace, faith, salvation, life, death, purpose, meaning, relationships, heaven, hell, judgment, eternity, and everything else of ultimate consequence. John summed up this relationship with truth when he wrote in **1 John 5:20** saying, **“And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”** As believers we are to know God’s truth.
- Eph. 4:22 “... that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,”**

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Eph. 4:22 NLT “... throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception.”

- In **verse 22** to demonstrate the transforming nature of regeneration, Paul further describes and defines the inherent realities of the truth in Jesus that his readers heard and were taught at conversion. He uses three expressions in **verses 22 – 24** to summarize what they heard in the call of the gospel: in **verse 22** he says, **lay aside**, **verse 23 “be renewed”**, and **verse 24 “put on.”** These three expressions describe the radical change that takes place when a person comes to Christ. They picture a decisive **break with the old life, a renewal of the mind, and the beginning of a new way of living**. Salvation is not merely receiving something new while continuing to live according to the old nature. **Salvation produces a new identity and a new direction.**
- When Paul says in **verse 22**, **“that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self,”** he is calling attention to what believers learned when they came to Christ. The Gospel calls us to **repentance**—not merely to feel sorrow over our sin, but to turn from our sin and turn toward God. It is important, however, to understand that salvation is fundamentally **God's sovereign work of grace**. We do not save ourselves by **laying aside the old self**, nor do our repentance and faith earn salvation. Rather, God's saving work produces a response of repentance and faith in the believing heart. We hear the Gospel, we believe the Gospel, and by God's grace we turn from the old life and surrender ourselves to Christ. **Lay aside the old self** is related to **“have heard ... and have been taught”** the gospel in **verse 21**. In contrast to the unregenerate person who continually resists and rejects God and lives in the sphere of dominating sin which is representative of **the former manner of life**, the Christian has heard the call to **lay aside the old self**. The phrase **“lay aside”** carries the idea of **stripping off or taking off old, filthy clothing**. Paul is picturing the believer deliberately removing the garments of the former life. The **“old self”** refers to the person we were apart from Christ—the old identity and manner of life dominated by sin.
- Notice what Paul says in the **b-portion** of **verse 22** about this **old self**: it is **“being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit.”** What this reveals is sin is not neutral. Sin promises satisfaction, freedom, and fulfillment, but its promises are deceptive.

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What appears to offer life ultimately produces corruption and death. The longer a person surrenders to sinful desires, the deeper that corruption becomes. Therefore, Paul's message is clear: the old life cannot be the believer's new lifestyle. The person who has truly learned Christ has been given a new identity. Romans 6:4 teaches through union with Christ in His death and resurrection, the believer has died to the old life and has been raised to **“newness of life.”** Note however, that this does not mean the Christian will never struggle with sin. It means that **sin no longer has the same rightful dominion over the believer.** The Christian is no longer defined by the old self but is now identified with Christ. So when Paul says, **“lay aside the old self,”** the challenge is essentially this: Take off what no longer represents who you are in Christ. Take off the old attitudes. Take off the old habits. Take off the old desires. Take off the old patterns of thinking. Take off the old way of living. Because you cannot continue wearing the clothes of your old life and expect people to see the new life Christ has given you. That is what the Ephesians had **heard and been taught in Christ:** salvation is not simply a change in destination; it is a transformation of identity, character, conduct, and direction. **The old self belonged to the old life. The new self belongs to the new life in Christ.**

Eph. 4:23 – 24 “... and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

Eph. 4:23 - 24 NLT “Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. 24 Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.”

- In contrast to the depraved, reprobate mind of the unregenerate person revealed in **verses 17 - 18**, the Christian **is renewed** continually **in the spirit of [his] mind.** The word Paul uses for **“renewed”** appears only here in the New Testament. The idea is not merely changing what we think, but experiencing a fundamental transformation in the **attitude, disposition, and moral direction of our thinking.** This makes clear that such renewal is the consequence of **“laying aside the old self”** and is the context in which one may **“put on the new self.”** This is important because salvation affects more than our eternal destination—it affects our **mind.** Our minds are the center of our **thoughts, understanding, beliefs, motives, attitudes, and decisions.** Therefore, if we are going

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to live differently, we must learn to **think differently**. The **NLT** captures the thought well: **“Let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.”**

- The **spirit of your mind** is explained by one commentator as intending to show that it is not in the sphere of human thinking or human reason, but in the moral sphere, that this renewal occurs. When a person becomes a Christian, God initially renews their **mind**, giving it a completely new spiritual and moral capability—a capability that the most brilliant and educated minds apart from Christ can never achieve. The Holy Spirit begins this work when we come to Christ, but He continues that work throughout our Christian lives. This renewal is not a **one-time accomplishment**; it is an **ongoing process** in which the believer increasingly learns to think God's thoughts, embrace God's truth, and desire what God desires. This is why Paul says in **Romans 12:2**, **“be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”** Our resources are God's Word and prayer. God uses His **Word and prayer**, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, to renew our minds. As our thinking is transformed by God's truth, our attitudes change; as our attitudes change, our actions change; and as our actions change, our lifestyle begins to reflect Christ. We cannot consistently live a Christlike life with a worldly mind. **The world is trying to shape our thinking, while the Word of God is trying to transform our thinking.** The question is: **Who is winning the battle for our minds?**
- Paul then says that believers are to **“put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”** The renewed **spirit of** the believer's **mind** is a consequence to putting on the **new self**, which is the new creation made in the very **likeness of God** and **has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth**. The picture is again that of **clothing**. **Verse 22** says, **“... lay aside the old self.”** **Verse 24** says, **“... put on the new self.”** Paul is describing a complete change of identity and conduct: **take off the old clothes and put on the new clothes**. That which was once darkened, ignorant, hardened, calloused, sensual, impure, and greedy is now enlightened, learned in the **truth**, sensitive to sin, pure, and generous. Whereas it was once characterized by wickedness and sin, it is now characterized by **righteousness and holiness**.

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- It is essential to expand the concept of the **new self** so that it may be understood more fully. The word “**new**” refers to something new in **quality, character, and kind**—not simply something old that has been repaired or renovated. In Christ, God has created something genuinely new. The **new self** is new because it has been “**created in the likeness of God.**” That is a remarkable truth. God does not merely clean up the old person and make him slightly better. Through salvation, He creates a **new person with a new identity and a new nature**, one that is being conformed to the likeness of Christ. Paul says in **2 Corinthians 5:17**, “**if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature.**” And Peter also describes believers in **2 Peter 1:4** as those who have become “**partakers of the divine nature.**” **Read Gal. 2:20** This does not mean that believers become God. It means that God gives us a new spiritual life and begins restoring His image in us so that we increasingly reflect His character.
- Paul concludes **verse 24** and describes what characterizes this **new self** which is “**righteousness and holiness of the truth.**” Notice the contrast with **verses 17 - 19**. The old life was characterized by: **darkness, ignorance, hardness, callousness, sensuality, impurity, and greed.** But the new life is characterized by: **truth, righteousness, holiness, purity, sensitivity to sin and Christlikeness.** What was once **darkened** is now enlightened by truth. What was once **ignorant** is now learning Christ. What was once **hardened** is becoming sensitive to God. What was once **corrupt** is being transformed. What was once characterized by **sin** is now characterized by **righteousness and holiness.** This is the evidence of regeneration. **God changes the person from the inside out.** The believer, now possesses a new nature, a new self, a holy and righteous inner person fit for the presence of God. This is the believer’s truest self. The many therefores and wherefores in the New Testament usually introduce appeals for believers to live like the new creatures they are in Christ. Because of **our new life, our new Lord, our new nature, and our new power**, we are **therefore** called to live a correspondingly **new life-style**. We don't live differently in order to become new; we live differently because **Christ has made us new.** Therefore, Paul is calling believers to live consistently with their new identity.

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Question: 1) What am I still holding onto from my old self? 2) What needs to be renewed in my mind? 3) What is God asking me to put on? 4) If my family followed my example, would they see the old self or the new self?

Transition: Paul after showing what believers are and have **positionally** in Christ in **Ephesians chapters 1 – 3**, he then first gives general basic instruction for the **practicality** of living the new life in **Eph. 4:1–24** and now he continues throughout the rest of the letter to give specific commands for the conduct of that life. In **Eph. 4:25 - 32** Paul gives commands reflecting several contrasts between the old life and the new. Based on their newness of life, believers are to change from lying to speaking the truth, from unrighteous anger to righteous anger, from stealing to sharing, from unwholesome words to edifying words, and from natural vices to supernatural virtues.

Read Eph. 4:25 – 32

Eph. 4:25 “Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.”

Eph. 4:25 NLT “So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body.”

- This second **therefore** of the chapter provides an anticipated response to the general description of the new life in Christ described in **Eph. 4:20 - 24** and introduces the first specific command for the new walk.
- Lying includes more than simply telling direct falsehoods. It also includes exaggeration, adding falsehood to that which begins as true. Some years ago a Christian man became widely known for his powerful and moving testimony. But after several years he stopped. When asked why, he replied with some degree of integrity, “Over the years I embellished the story so much that I no longer knew what was true and what was not.” Cheating in school and on income tax returns is a form of lying. Making foolish promises, betraying a confidence, flattery, and making excuses are all forms of lying.
- The Christian should have no part of any kind of lying. Lying includes more than simply telling direct falsehoods. It also includes exaggeration, adding falsehood to that which begins as true. Some years ago a Christian man became widely known for his powerful

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and moving testimony. But after several years he stopped. When asked why, he replied with some degree of integrity, “Over the years I embellished the story so much that I no longer knew what was true and what was not.” Cheating in school and on income tax returns is a form of lying. Making foolish promises, betraying a confidence, flattery, and making excuses are all forms of lying. Christians are to be characterized by **laying aside falsehood**, because **falsehood** is incompatible with his new nature and unacceptable to his new Lord. The words **laying aside** derived from **apotithēmi**, has to do with discarding, stripping off, and casting away. The Christian lays **aside falsehood** so he can be free to do the righteous work of the Lord.

- In the **b-portion** of **verse 25** quoting **Zech. 8:16**, Paul goes from the negative prohibition to the positive command to, **speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor**. When a person becomes a believer he steps out of the domain of **falsehood** into the domain of **truth**, and every form of lying which is utterly inconsistent with his new self. Scripture teaches in **John 14:6** Christ is Himself **“the way, and the truth, and the life.”** In **John 17** it teaches the Holy Spirit is **“the Spirit of truth”** and then in **John 17:17** it teaches that God’s Word is **truth**. God’s economy is based on truth, and His people—either as individual believers or as the corporate church—cannot be fit instruments for His work unless we live in truthfulness. We are to **speak truth, each one of [us], with his neighbor, for we are members of one another**.
- The word **neighbor** is defined by the phrase **members of one another** and means **fellow Christians**. We are to **speak truth** to everyone and in every situation, but we have a special motive to be truthful with other believers, because we are **fellow members** of Christ’s Body, the church, and therefore **members of one another**. The church cannot function properly if its **members** shade the truth with **one another** or fail to work together honestly and lovingly. We cannot effectively minister to each other or with each other as **Eph. 4:15** teaches if we do not speak **“the truth in love”**, especially among our fellow believers.

Questions: 1) What am I tempted to hide, exaggerate, minimize, or misrepresent? 2) Do my words consistently reflect what is actually in my heart? 3) Am I building trust with people through my words, or slowly breaking it down? 4) If my words affect the spiritual health of others, how carefully should I choose them?

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Eph. 4:26 – 27 “Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity.”

Eph. 4:26 – 27 NLT “And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 for anger gives a foothold to the devil.”

- Paul’s command is to **be angry**, with the qualification **and yet do not sin**. The word **anger** from **orgizō** describes an emotional response of **anger**, particularly when someone has been wronged, offended, or provoked. However, as seen in this passage, its New Testament use can represent **an emotion good or bad**, depending on motive and purpose. In this statement Paul may be legitimatizing **righteous indignation, anger at evil**, at that which is done against the Person of the Lord and against His will and purpose. It is the anger of the Lord’s people who hate evil. It is the anger that detests injustice, immorality, and ungodliness of every sort. Jesus expressed righteous anger at the hard-heartedness of the Pharisees who resented His healing the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath in **Mark 3:5**. Jesus was always angered when the Father was maligned or when others were mistreated, but He was never selfishly angry at what was done against Him. That is the measure of righteous anger.
- **Anger** that is **sin**, on the other hand, is anger that is self-defensive and self-serving, that is resentful of what is done against oneself. It is the anger that leads to murder and to God’s judgment. Anger that is selfish, undisciplined, and vindictive is sinful and has no place even temporarily in the Christian life. But anger that is unselfish and is based on love for God and concern for others not only is permissible but commanded. Genuine love cannot help being angered at that which injures the object of that love. But even righteous anger can easily turn to bitterness, resentment, and self-righteousness.
- Consequently, Paul says, “... **do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.**” Even the best motivated anger can sour, and we are therefore to **put it aside** at the end of the day. Taken to bed, it is likely to **give the devil an opportunity** to use it for his purposes. If anger is prolonged, one may begin to seek vengeance and thereby violate the principle taught in **Romans 12:17 - 21. (Read)**

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- In **Eph. 4:26b – 27** it may refer entirely to **unrighteous anger**, in which case Paul uses the imperative in the sense of saying that, because anger may come in a moment and overtake a believer, and because it has such a strong tendency to grow and fester, it should be dealt with immediately—confessed, forsaken, and given to God for cleansing before we end the day. In any case of anger, whether legitimate or not, if it is courted, we can believe Satan will take advantage of us, and he will feed our anger with self-pity, pride, self-righteousness, vengeance, defense of our rights, and every other sort of selfish sin and violation of God’s holy will.

Questions: 1) When I become angry, do I focus more on what was done to me or on how God wants me to respond? 2) When I'm angry, am I trying to resolve the problem or punish the person? 3) What opportunity might I be giving the enemy when I refuse to deal with my anger God's way? 4) Do I tend to explode, withdraw, retaliate, or hold things inside?

Eph. 4:28 “Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need.”

Eph. 4:28 NLT “If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need.”

- The third command Paul sets forth demands a change from stealing to sharing. No one is completely free from the temptation to steal. There is a certain fleshly attraction in taking that which does not belong to us and trying to get by with it. The **old self** had a built-in inclination to steal, and that is one of the many characteristics of the **old self** that the **new self**, which is in the likeness of God puts away. The word **steal** is from the word **kleptō**, and is where we derive our English word **kleptomaniac**. Paul here says, Christians are to **steal no longer**. In the past several decades shoplifting has grown alarmingly, a large percentage of it being done by employees. In some large stores up to a third of the price of the merchandise is used to cover theft losses of various sorts. Stealing includes intentional overestimating, falsified cost overruns, and outright embezzlement, padding expense accounts, reporting more hours than were worked,

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failing to report income to the IRS, and other such deceptions are accepted as normal by many people. To them, stealing is simply a game in which getting caught is the only cause for regret or shame. Petty theft, taking some of your dad's money off the dresser, reneging on a debt, not paying fair wages, or pocketing what a clerk overpays in change are all stealing. There is simply no end to ways we can steal, and whatever the ways are and whatever the chances for being caught, **stealing is sin** and has no part in the new walk of the new man in Christ.

- Paul moves forward with the alternative to stealing which is to **labor ... in order ... to share with him who has need**. It is God's plan for everyone to work who is able to do so. **2 Thess. 3:10 - 11** says, “**If anyone will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all.**” **1 Tim. 5:8** teaches the Christian who does not work and “**provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, ... has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.**”
- The text teaches the believers **labor** should be in **what is good**, in work that is honest, honorable, and productive. The term **good** from **agathos** connotes that which is **good in quality**, and here **refers to God-honoring employment**. A Christian should never be involved in a job, profession, work, or business that demands compromise of God's standards, that dishonors Him, violates His holy commands, or misleads or harms others in any way.
- The words “**performing with his own hands**” in the text stresses the truth that the norm is for every person to be responsible for his own provision, and even more, to share with those who, in spite of hard work or because of devastation or incapacity, are in **need**. Not only should our work harm no one, it should be for the specific purpose of helping them—to **share with him who has need**. A Christian's desire to earn more should be for **the purpose of being able to give more and help more**. Beyond providing for his own and his family's basic needs, he **gains so he can give**. Like the rest of his life, a Christian's occupation—directly or indirectly—should above all else be a means of service to God and to others. **Read Luke 14:13 – 14; Acts 20:33 – 35 Paul teaches here believers are to walk in the new self and lay aside the old self.**

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Question: 1) What behaviors may I need to “steal no longer” even if society considers them acceptable? 2) Am I simply working to get something, or am I working to become someone God can use to bless others? 3) Do my financial decisions reflect stewardship or selfishness? 4) Am I known more for what I take, what I keep, or what I give?

Eph. 4:29 – 30 “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

Eph. 4:29 – 30 NLT “Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. 30 And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.”

- A fourth change in the Christian’s life should be from speaking unwholesome words to speaking wholesome ones. Our speech should be transformed along with everything else.
- The words **“Let no unwholesome word”** refers to that which is **corrupt or foul** and was used of rotten fruit, vegetables, and other spoiled food. Foul language should never **proceed from the mouth** of a Christian, because it is totally out of character with his newness of life. **Unwholesome** language should be as repulsive to us as a rotten apple or a spoiled piece of meat. Off-color jokes, profanity, dirty stories, vulgarity, and every other form of corrupt talk should never cross our lips. Paul wrote the **Col. 3:8 “But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth.”** James also notes in his letter the tongue is exceedingly difficult to control. **Read Jam. 3:6 – 8** How much it must have grieved Peter to remember that he not only denied his Lord but that he even denied him with cursing and swearing. **Read Matt. 26:74** A foul mouth comes from a foul heart, and the only way for the Lord to cleanse our tongue is through His Word.
- In addition to renouncing corrupt and harmful language we are to develop speech that is pure, helpful, and pleasing to God. Paul here mentions three specific characteristics of wholesome speaking: it is **edifying, appropriate, and gracious.**

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- First, the words of a Christian are to be **good for edification**. Our speech should build up by being helpful, constructive, encouraging, instructive, and uplifting. Sometimes, of course, it must be corrective; but that, too, is edifying when done in the right spirit.
- Second, everything we say should be appropriate, **according to the need of the moment**. It is not that every word we speak is to be spoken with great significance, but that what we say should always be fitting for the situation, so that it constructively contributes to all. Obviously, we should never unnecessarily mention things that might harm, discourage, or disappoint someone else. Some things—though they may be absolutely true and perfectly wholesome—are better left unsaid. Everyone admires the wisdom and virtue of those who speak less often but usually say something of benefit. **Prov. 25:11** teaches: **“Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances.”** **Prov. 15:23** affirms that **“a man has joy in an apt answer, and how delightful is a timely word!”**
- Third, what we say should be gracious, **that it may give grace to those who hear**. As Paul has already said, the mature Christian not only speaks the truth but speaks it in love. Raw truth is seldom appropriate and is often destructive. We have been saved in grace and we are kept in grace; therefore we are to live and speak in grace. Just as grace supremely characterizes God it should also characterize His children. Graciousness always characterized Jesus. Isaiah said in **Isa. 50:4** **“The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word.”** **Col. 4:6** says, **“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt.”** Salt is a preservative and helps retard spoilage. The gracious words of Christians help retard the moral and spiritual spoilage in the world around them. They also provide strength and comfort to those in need. Our graciousness reflects the grace of Christ, who uses our graciousness to draw others to His grace.
- Finally, a powerful motivation for putting off unwholesome talk is not to **grieve the Holy Spirit of God**. All sin is painful to God, but sin in His children breaks His heart. When we His children refuse to change the ways of the old life for the ways of the new, God is grieved. **The Holy Spirit of God** weeps, as it were, when he sees Christians lying instead of speaking the truth, acting unrighteously angry rather than righteously angry, stealing instead of sharing, and speaking corrupt instead of uplifting and gracious words.

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Whatever violates the will of God and the holiness of the heart will **grieve** the third Person of the Trinity. Grieving can lead to quenching the Spirit and to a forfeiture of power and blessing. It should be noted also that such responses by the **Holy Spirit** indicate His personhood, which is seen in the use of personal pronouns referring to Him. His identity as Comforter, or Helper in **John 15:26**, indicates that He is like Christ, who is a person. The **Holy Spirit** has intellect, feelings, and will. He works, searches, speaks, testifies, teaches, convicts, regenerates, intercedes, guides, glorifies Christ, and directs service to God. Specifically in light of this text in Ephesians, the personhood of the **Holy Spirit** is seen in the fact that He can be treated as a person. He can be tested, lied to, resisted, insulted, and blasphemed. **Read Acts 5:9; Acts 5:3; Acts 7:51; Heb. 10:29; Matt. 12:31 - 32**

- Paul words in the closing clause of verse 30 asks in effect, how can we do that which is so displeasing to the One **“by whom [we] have been sealed for the day of redemption?”** The **Holy Spirit** is God’s personal mark of authenticity on us, His stamp of divine approval. How can we **grieve** the One who is our Helper, Comforter, Teacher, Advocate, Divine Resident of our hearts, and guarantor of our eternal redemption? How can we ungraciously grieve God’s infinitely gracious **Holy Spirit**? He has done so much for us that, out of gratitude, we ought not to **grieve** Him by continuing to live the old life.

Question: 1) Before I speak, do I ask whether what I am about to say is true, helpful, and necessary? 2) When people leave a conversation with me, are they usually built up or beaten down? 3) Do my words make people feel valued, heard, encouraged, and loved? 4) Before I say something hurtful, do I consider how God feels about what I am about to say? 5) If I truly remember that I belong to Christ, what should change about the way I speak to people? 6) Would I say the same thing if Jesus were visibly standing beside me?

Eph. 4:31 – 32 “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

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Eph. 4:31 – 32 “Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. 32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.”

- The final change Paul mentions is from natural vices to supernatural virtues and amounts to a summary of the other changes. Man’s natural tendency is to sin, and the natural tendency of sin is to grow into greater sin. And a Christian’s sin will grow just like that of an unbeliever. If not checked, our inner sins of **bitterness and wrath and anger** will inevitably lead to the outward sins of **clamor, slander**, and other such manifestations of **malice**. Paul teaches here all these must be, must **be put away from you**.
- Paul in the verse begins to unpack the list of ungodly behaviors that **must be put away**. He begins with **bitterness** from the word **pikria** and reflects a **smoldering resentment, a brooding grudge-filled attitude**. It is the spirit of **irritability** that keeps a person in **perpetual animosity**, making them **sour and venomous**. Then he says **wrath** from **thumos** which has to do with **wild rage**, the passion of the moment. Third he speaks of **anger** from **orgē** which is a more **internal smoldering, a subtle and deep feeling**. Forth **clamor** from the word **kraugē** and is the **shout or outcry of strife** and reflects the **public outburst** that reveals **loss of control**. Fifth he says, **slander** from the word **blasphēmia**, and is where we derive our English word **blasphemy** which speaks of the **ongoing defamation of someone** that rises from a bitter heart. Finally Paul then adds the word **malice** from **kakia** and is the general term for **evil** that is the root of all vices. Paul says believers are to **put away** all these ungodly behaviors from them self because they are sin. These particular sins involve conflict between person and person—believer and unbeliever and, worse still, between believer and believer. These are the sins that break fellowship and destroy relationships that weaken the church and mar its testimony before the world. When an unbeliever sees Christians acting just like the rest of society, the church is blemished in his eyes and he is confirmed still further in resisting the claims of the gospel.
- In **verse 32** Paul teaches we are to put in place of those vices godly virtues. He identifies these virtues as: **be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven us**. These are graces God has shown to us and they are the gracious virtues we are to show to others. God did not love us, choose us, and

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redeem us because we were deserving, but purely because He is gracious. **Rom. 5:8, 10** says, **“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.... While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son.”** If God is so gracious to us, how much more, then, should we **be kind, ... tender-hearted, and forgiving** to fellow sinners, especially **to one another**.

- Being unconditionally **kind** characterizes benevolence and goodness. Paul in **Rom. 2:4** speaks of **“the riches of His kindness ... that leads you to repentance.”** Then he speaks of being **tender-hearted** which denotes the idea of being compassionate and concerned about the needs of others. Next he says believers are to **forgiving each other** which reflects Christlike character that it needs little comment. The most graphic illustration of forgiveness is in the parable of **Matt. 18:21–35**. When Peter asked about the limits of forgiveness, the Lord told him a story of a man with an unpayable debt who was forgiven by his creditor, the king. This was a picture of salvation—God forgiving a sinner of the unpayable debt of unrighteous and rebellion against Him. The forgiven man then went to someone who owed him a small amount and had him imprisoned for nonpayment. He who eagerly accepted a massive, comprehensive forgiveness would not forgive a small, easily-payable debt of another person. The absurdity of his action shows the heinousness of a believer's unforgiving heart, and the man was severely chastened by the Lord for his wicked attitude. Paul has this same relationship in mind as he calls for believers to forgive **just as God in Christ also has forgiven you**. Can we who have been forgiven so much not forgive the relatively small things done against us? We, of all people, should always be eager to forgive.

Question:1) What am I still carrying that God may be asking me to release? 2) Do I want the person who hurt me to experience God's grace—or simply experience what I think they deserve? 3) Who needs to experience Christ's kindness through you right now? 4) What keeps me from forgiving—hurt, pride, fear, anger, or the desire for justice? How can I become more tender-hearted?