

United We Grow
Ephesians 4:1-6
Rev. Brian Bill
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On Thursday, I spoke at SecondWinders and decided to honor Pastor Ed for his nearly 45 years of faithful ministry at Edgewood. Get this. Pastor Ed has now served longer than Pastor Brown, who served as Senior Pastor here for 44 years!

As part of this tribute, I asked people to share three words to describe him. One person couldn't stop at three, so he sent in 51! Our office manager Marie compiled this list and removed all duplicates, leaving well over 170 adjectives! That's why I entitled my devotional, *"There is No One Like Pastor Ed!"*

It's very obvious that Pastor Ed walks the talk. His behavior flows out of his beliefs and his deeds find their source in his doctrine. In other words, Ed's practice is based on knowing his position in Christ.

My only challenge with Ed these past 10 years is trying to keep him awake during the sermon. Shortly after I arrived at Edgewood, I was preaching my heart out one weekend and I noticed he had fallen asleep with his head on his wife Sheila's shoulder. I leaned forward and mouthed these words, *"Sheila, can you wake Pastor Ed up?"* Sheila simply smiled and replied, *"You put him to sleep. You wake him up!"*

Some time ago, someone took this picture of Ed catching some shut-eye during the sermon. I earnestly urged him to stay awake by telling him, *"Momma always told me you shouldn't nap when the preacher is preaching!"* It didn't work.

As we come to our passage in Ephesians today, we'll see how the emphasis shifts from doctrine to duty as Paul urges us to walk the talk like Pastor Ed does. Notice how Ephesians 4:1 begins: ***"I therefore..."*** Paul is saying: *"Because of what you now know to be true, this is what you must do."* How we behave in life will always be determined by what we believe.

In the first half of the book, there are only two commands; while in the second half, we'll discover over sixty commands as he moves from exposition to exhortation, from the indicative to the imperative, from orthodoxy (right belief) to orthopraxy (right behavior), from principle to practice. Paul follows a similar pattern in Romans when he spends eleven chapters describing doctrine and in

chapter 12 introduces our duty: *“I appeal to you therefore...to present your bodies as a living sacrifice...”*

Another helpful way to understand Ephesians is by considering three words: *sit*, *walk*, and *stand*. One author says, *“The Christian life consists of sitting with Christ, walking by Him, and standing in Him.”* We sit in Christ, we walk worthy in the world, and we take our stand against Satan.

- **Sit** (1-3). We must first sit or trust in our position in Christ. Ephesians 2:6: *“And raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”* Christianity does not begin with DO, but with DONE.
- **Walk** (4-5). Only after we have established our position in Christ, can we walk it out in practice. We see this in at least five places in the second half of the book.
 - 4:1: *“I urge you to walk in a manner worthy...”*
 - 4:17: *“That you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do...”*
 - 5:1: *“Walk in love...”*
 - 5:8: *“Walk as children of light...”*
 - 5:15: *“Look carefully then how you walk...”*
- **Stand** (6). After sitting in our position in Christ and walking in love and light, we’re called to take our stand in Christ’s victory over evil spiritual forces. We don’t fight *for* victory; we fight *from* victory.
 - 6:11: *“That you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.”*
 - 6:13: *“That you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.”*
 - 6:14: *“Stand therefore...”*

Check out this brief video clip from the Bible Project which will help us get our bearings in the book. I recommend you watch the full video which we posted on “Sermon Extras.”

As Paul moves from beliefs to behavior, the immediate context has to do with the glorious prayer found in the last part of chapter 3. Last weekend we learned how *God gives us more strength than we can even ask for when we fully surrender to*

Christ by living out the posture of prayer, the petitions of prayer, and the power of prayer.

Speaking of prayer, over 100 gathered for a Night of Prayer this past Sunday night. It was very moving as our younger adults and more mature saints prayed together. So many people came that we didn't have enough chairs, so some stood, and others put the sermon into practice by kneeling in prayer. I'm grateful to Pastor Kyle, Pastor Chris, and Pastor Chad for their servant leadership.

Let's turn to our text found in Ephesians 4:1-6: ***"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."***

As I meditated on these verses, I wrote down this summary sentence: *We all win when we walk as one.*

Here's the outline I see from the text.

- Exercise the right walk (1-2).
- Exert the right work (3).
- Express the right oneness (4-6).

1. Exercise the right walk (1-2). Let's start with verses 1-2: ***"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love."*** Even though technically Paul was a prisoner of Rome, he had such a high view of God's sweet sovereignty that he referred to himself as a ***"prisoner for the Lord."*** That's a good challenge for us. Whatever circumstance you find yourself in right now, choose to see our Sovereign Lord working His way and His will through it for His glory, and for your ultimate good.

The word ***"urge"*** means, *"to beseech, to come alongside with an appeal."* This word is also used to describe the work of the Holy Spirit. We're urged to ***"walk,"*** which is a synonym for our conduct, or how we live day to day. Walking implies motion and step-by-step progress. We must walk before we can run.

We're to walk "**worthy of the calling to which you have been called.**" This means we're to walk "*suitably or properly*" because we represent God to a watching world around us, which includes the invisible world.

If you're a Christ-follower, you've been called to salvation, and you've also been called to service. Wherever we are, and whatever our occupation, we're called to live out our vocation for His glory and for the sake of the gospel as we live on mission. You are not just a student; you are a missionary cleverly disguised as a student. You are not just a welder; you are a missionary cleverly disguised as a welder. You are not just retired; you are a missionary cleverly disguised as a retired person. You are not just a mechanic; you are a missionary cleverly disguised as a mechanic. You are not just a laborer; you are a missionary cleverly disguised as a laborer. You are not just an office worker; you are a missionary cleverly disguised as an office worker.

We're to exercise our calling by displaying five qualities which lead to unity within community:

- **Humility.** Actually, it says, "**with all humility,**" which means we can't hold back on being humble. To have "**humility**" refers to "*not rising far from the ground.*" In the Greek world, humility was considered a vice. In fact, neither the Romans nor the Greeks had a word for humility because it was abhorrent to them. As I understand it, they didn't even have a word for it. Humility is listed first because there is no way to have unity if we think we're better than those around us. R.C. Chapman writes, "*Humility is the secret of fellowship, and pride the secret of division.*"

I think of Philippians 2:3: "**Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.**" Someone has said, "*True humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less.*"

- **Gentleness.** Gentleness is often translated as "meekness," but this is not the same as weakness because Jesus described himself this way in Matthew 11:29: "**for I am gentle and lowly in heart.**" This word was used for a soothing medicine and means, "*strength under control*" and was used of a very powerful horse that had been tamed, or "*gentled.*" Gentleness is like a wild animal with its power in check. Unfortunately, many of us are more like wild mustangs than humble horses. Jonathan Edwards suggests that

gentleness “*may well be called the Christian spirit. All who are truly godly and are real disciples of Christ have a gentle spirit in them.*”

- **Patience.** Patience literally means, “long suffering.” A patient person has the ability to suffer for a long time. The Greek word for patience means to be slow to get angry, or to have a long fuse and a short memory. Unfortunately, some of us have a short fuse and long memory. Proverbs 14:9 says, “***Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.***” It’s wise to be patient but it’s foolish to be hot tempered. Here’s one of the best definitions I’ve ever heard: “Patience is a calm endurance based on the certainty that God is in control.”
- **Forbearance.** To “***bear with one another***” means to put up with the shortcomings of others. 1 Corinthians 13:7 says, “***Love bears all things.***” As we’ve been learning, and many of us have experienced first-hand, every relationship we have can rupture easily. If we don’t work at it, our idiosyncrasies will become irritants and our unity will unravel. We don’t do much bearing with other believers today. We sound off, run off, or run somebody else off. Sometimes we square off and want to knock someone off, but seldom do we put up with people.

The Believer’s Bible Commentary states, “*Bearing with one another in love – that is, making allowance for the faults and failures of others...it means positive love to those who irritate, disturb, or embarrass.*” One pastor believes the Christian life is a life of putting up with other people.

- **Love.** It’s not enough to just acknowledge that love is essential; we’re called to seek the highest good for others. In John 13:34, Jesus challenges us, “***A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.***” To love one another is not a suggestion; it’s a command. We tend to think that love is something that just happens to us. We fall in love like we fall into a ditch, or we fall out of love like we fall out of a tree. The Bible teaches us that love is a verb, an action that must affect the way we live.

I heard about a man who was given a gospel tract but since he couldn’t read, he asked, “*What is this?*” When he was told it was a tract, he said, “*I can’t read it; so, I’ll watch your tracks.*”

Rebecca Manley Pippert concludes her book, “Out of the Saltshaker and into the World” with a moving story. When she first went to Portland, Oregon, to work with a campus ministry, she met a student named Bill who was always disheveled and never wore shoes. Rain, sleet, or snow, Bill was always barefoot.

“Bill became a Christian, but his appearance didn’t change. Near the campus was a church made up of mostly well-dressed, middle-class people. One Sunday, Bill decided to worship there. He walked into church with his messy hair, dirty jeans, tee shirt, and without shoes. People looked a bit uncomfortable, but no one said anything.

Bill began walking down the aisle, looking for a seat. But the church was quite crowded that day, so he got all the way down front without finding a seat. He decided to just plop on the carpet, which was fine for a college Bible study, but a bit unnerving for this rather formal church. You could feel the tension in the air.

Suddenly, an elderly deacon began walking down the aisle toward Bill. Was he going to scold him about how you’re supposed to look when you come to church? As the man kept walking slowly down the aisle, all eyes were on him. You could hear a pin drop. When the man reached Bill, with some difficulty he lowered himself and sat down next to Bill on the carpet. He and Bill worshiped together on the carpet that day. There was not a dry eye during that service.”

That elderly man accepted Bill by demonstrating humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, and love. When we do the same, God is glorified, and the church is unified.

We all win when we walk as one.

2. Exert the right work (3). After exercising the right walk, we must exert the right work. We see this in verse 3: **“Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”** To be **“eager”** means, *“to be earnest and diligent, to make haste, to strive and labor.”* It comes from a root word meaning, *“to make haste”* and carries with it the idea of zealous effort and diligence.

To **“maintain”** has the idea of *“watching or observing attentively.”* This is a present participle, meaning we are to be *“constantly maintaining.”* We must work at watching our unity all the time. Notice we don’t strive to attain unity; our job is

to maintain the unity the Holy Spirit has already accomplished through the ***“bond”*** of peace. Interestingly, the first duty Paul exhorts us to fulfill is to ***“maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”***

Unity among believers is a big deal in the Bible. Jesus prayed for it just before He went to the cross. The Lord longs for us to walk together in absolute unity for His glory. Pastor Brown was fond of saying, *“In essentials, unity. In nonessentials, liberty. In everything, charity.”*

1 Corinthians 1:10 challenges us, ***“I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.”*** Psalm 34:14 says, ***“Seek peace and pursue it.”*** Romans 14:19 challenges us: ***“So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.”*** Here’s a question: Are you a peacemaker or a peacebreaker?

I heard about two Quakers who were having an intense conversation. One turned to the other and said, *“You know, sometimes I think that everyone in the world is a bit off except for me and thee...and, sometimes I wonder about thee!”*

Have you ever noticed we are all different? We come with different backgrounds, preferences, personalities, quirks, cultures, races, politics, interests, maturity, ages, spiritual gifts, convictions, commitments, families, and even sports teams. Because the Holy Spirit has enfolded all believers into a soul-satisfying unity, we must do all we can to maintain this. Kent Hughes writes, *“There is no room for rivalries or hatreds or factions...Christian unity in profound diversity brings great glory to God.”*

I was challenged by a sermon this week in which the pastor gave these applications:

- If you’re quick to get angry, you need to work on patience.
- If your tendency is to be proud, arrogant, egocentric, and boastful, you need to work on humility.
- If you are insensitive, rough, or bossy, you need to work on gentleness.
- If you struggle with being intolerant with the shortcomings of other people, you need to work on bearing with one another in love.
- If unity among fellow brothers and sisters is not a priority for you, you need to make it a priority.

Let me come back to something I've heard Pastor Ed say over the years. When you're in conflict, or hear of someone else who is, you have a choice to make. You can throw gasoline on the fire, or you can pour water on it. When you hear some gossiping or complaining, you can add gasoline by agreeing or you can lower the temperature by saying something positive. Pastor Ed is a master at putting out fires, even the ones he starts.

We all win when we walk as one.

3. Express the right oneness (4-6). It's important when we're talking about unity that we be united around doctrinal truth. The key to unity is to make sure we are worshipping our Triune God for His worth and His work. Listen for all three members of the Trinity in verses 4-6: *"⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."*

Here are a couple observations.

- Since our unity is tied to the Trinity, our unity is eternal and unbreakable. John Stott writes, *"The unity of the church is as indestructible as the unity of God Himself."*
- The word **"one"** is used seven times showing God's heart for oneness. Unity was at the heart of Jesus' prayer in John 17:11: *"Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one."*

We see seven ways God has worked to make us one. We must tether ourselves to these truths.

- **One body.** Every born-again believer is part of the universal body of Christ. While many of us are members of Edgewood, which is the small "c" church, we must never forget we are also members of the global big "C" Church. That's one reason we're doing our Easter outreach on Saturday, March 23 with five other gospel-preaching churches in Rock Island. That's also why we must pray for the persecuted church as we read in Hebrews 13:3: *"Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body."*

A couple years ago, I led a devotional for the leadership team at Youth Hope, one of our Go Team partners. By the way, I'll be interviewing Mark Drake, the executive director of Youth Hope on the 4G Podcast this week. If you haven't heard Pastor Kyle interview Pastor Chad about worship last week, I encourage you to check it out.

Here's what I said near the beginning of the devotional: *"I understand Youth Hope partners with 65 churches! That's incredible! I'd like to go around the room and have you shout out the name of your church. As you do that, we'll count the number of churches that are represented on staff."* As I recall, the total number was around 10. And then I said, *"So, 10 churches are represented, right? Let me do the math again and do a recount. Actually, that number isn't accurate. Actually, we're part of many different local churches but we're members of ONE Church!"*

- **One Spirit.** The Holy Spirit is mentioned some 12 times in Ephesians. The same Holy Spirit is in all believers, making us one. Romans 8:9 says, *"Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him."*
- **One hope.** Every believer has the same hope of Heaven because of salvation. In Ephesians 1:18, Paul prayed for believers to hold on to this hope: *"Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you."*
- **One Lord.** There is only one Lord and His name is Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 8:6: *"Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist."* Someone has said, *"If Jesus is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all."*
- **One faith.** We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone. This *"faith"* also refers to biblical doctrine which must be guarded by not caving into culture or watering down the truth. We see this in Jude 1:3: *"Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints."*

- **One baptism.** This could mean the baptism by which we become members of the body of Christ at conversion, or it could refer to water baptism which is part of the Great Commission as stated by Jesus in Matthew 28:19: ***“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”*** Baptism for believers by immersion is an outward picture of an inward reality. This weekend, a total of 12 people will be baptized, publicly identifying themselves with Jesus Christ.

Just this week, I heard an update from another country where Far East Broadcasting was part of a church outreach that saw 1700 baptisms! Here’s a picture of people lining up on a muddy shore to get baptized in Mozambique.

- **One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.** There is only one God and He is Father of all who come to Him in faith. He is over everything, which means He is sovereign, powerful, and transcendent. He also works through all, which means He is involved in everything, weaving His ways and His will according to His purposes. And He is in all, meaning He is close and personal.

One of Pastor Ed’s most impactful ministries these past 45 years is ministering to families while leading funeral services. We estimate Ed has conducted at least 400 funerals! That’s a lot of eulogies.

I’m told there’s a new trend to share a eulogy with someone while they are still living, so I shared Pastor Ed’s eulogy at SecondWinders on Thursday. If you’d like to read it, I posted the manuscript on my Facebook page as well as the Edgewood Facebook group and page.

The word eulogy is derived from the Greek term eu-logos. Eu means “good” or “well,” while logos refers to “speech” or “word.” When combined, eu-logos translates to “good speech” or “praise.” A eulogy literally means, “to give a speech in praise of a person,” whether they are living or dead.

“Eulogies for the living” offer a unique and powerful way to express our gratitude, admiration, and love towards someone special while they are still here to hear it!

Psalm 133:1 says: ***“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.”*** As a way to build unity within the body of Edgewood, let’s work this

week to express our appreciation to a brother or sister in Christ while they are still here to hear it. Think of three things you appreciate about three different people this week and then tell them in person, through a phone call, a text, or a note in the mail.

We all win when we walk as one.

Benediction

Receive this closing charge from Ephesians 4:1-6 as we continue to live out our worship in the world in which God has called us to live.