

Living the New Life

Ephesians 4:25-32

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March 16-17, 2024

A man went to see his doctor in a state of high anxiety. “*Doctor,*” he said, “*you have to help me. I’m dying. Everywhere I touch it hurts. I touch my head and it hurts. I touch my leg and it hurts. I touch my stomach and it hurts. I touch my chest and it hurts. You have to help me, Doc, because everything hurts.*”

After giving him a complete examination, the doctor gave the diagnosis, “*I have good news and bad news for you. The good news is you are not dying. The bad news is you have a broken finger.*”

In our passage for today, we come face to face with some bad news, followed by some really good news about how to fix what is broken.

Last weekend, we were challenged to put off the old life as we focused on this truth from Ephesians 4:17-24: *Believers are to behave differently than unbelievers.* As we finish up chapter 4 today, we’ll discover how *a new life in Christ must lead to a new lifestyle.*

Let’s see what the Spirit has in store for us as we give our undivided attention to Ephesians 4:25-32: ***“Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”***

Paul tells us what this new life should look like.

- Exemplify Christian Values (25-30).
- Excise Unchristian Vices (31).

- Exercise Christian Virtues (32).

Exemplify Christian Values (25-30)

I see five ways we're called to exemplify Christian values.

1. Speak the truth. According to verse 25, a Christian should be known for being a truth-teller: ***“Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.”*** The word ***“therefore”*** links us back to what we learned last week about how we're to put off our old life and put on a new wardrobe as we saw in verse 24: ***“And to put on the new self...”*** The phrase, ***“having put away”*** is a once-for-all decision to renounce falsehood.

According to Kent Hughes, *“Lying was endemic to the Greeks...and some who had recently become Christians had brought the practice right into the church... disregard for truth and a disposition for lying are everywhere, and the church is no exception.”* According to the book called, *The Day America Told the Truth...*

- 91% lie routinely about trivial matters.
- 36% lie about important matters.
- 86% lie to parents.
- 69% lie to spouses.

We should pray like the psalmist did in Psalm 119:29: ***“Put false ways far from me...”*** because Proverbs 6:17 says one of the things God hates is ***“a lying tongue.”*** In John 8:44, Jesus called Satan ***“a liar and the father of lies.”*** Revelation 22:15 is sobering and frightening: ***“Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”*** We need to remember that according to Acts 5:1-11, the first sin God judged in the early church was the sin of lying. Warren Wiersbe writes: *“Whenever we speak truth, the Holy Spirit goes to work, but when we tell a lie, Satan goes to work.”*

We're to speak truth because we are ***“members one of another.”*** While we're commanded not to lie in the ninth commandment (Exodus 20:16), the motivation Paul gives here is not the commandment but that we are committed to one another, or as Ephesians 5:30 says, ***“Because we are members of His body.”***

2. Keep short accounts. I believe I've shared this before, but it bears repeating. The night before our wedding rehearsal, the pastor who married us said he wanted to meet us down by a river. After we walked for a few minutes, he stopped and opened his Bible to the book of Ephesians. I thought he was going to challenge me to love Beth as much as Christ loves the church. I was a little confused when he started reading from the fourth chapter of Ephesians. I thought he was off by one chapter. In fact, I almost told him that the marriage material is in chapter 5, not chapter 4.

He proceeded to read Ephesians 4:26-27: ***“Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.”*** Then he challenged us to make a vow never to go to bed angry. He explained that the devil will take advantage of our anger if we don't resolve it before we go to sleep each night. Both Beth and I eagerly assured him that we were ready to make this commitment. I remember him being skeptical of our eagerness and so he spent some time explaining how serious a vow is.

This vow has been tested many times. But, by God's grace and with His enablement, we've worked hard not to go to bed angry. Sure, we've had some pretty late nights talking, but it's been worth it! That doesn't mean we solve all of our problems or even resolve the issues behind the anger that night. What it does mean is that we try to go to sleep without harboring any anger.

Paul is quoting Psalm 4:4 to show that it's possible to be angry and not sin. In fact, we should experience righteous anger about the unrighteousness dwelling within us and in the world around us. In John 2:15-17, Jesus expressed anger at the moneychangers in the temple and Mark 3:5 tells us Jesus was angry at unbelief: ***“And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart...”***

While it's possible to be angry and not sin, it's also very easy to sin when you are angry. It was Benjamin Franklin who said, *“Anger is never without a reason, but seldom with a good one.”* Some anger is righteous but for most of us, our anger is anything but right as James 1:20 states: ***“For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”***

The problem with anger, even righteous anger, is that it can intensify and end up controlling us, giving ***“opportunity to the devil.”*** The word ***“opportunity”*** means, *“scope, occasion, place, or foothold.”* It refers to a piece of ground. The name ***“devil”*** means, *“accuser,”* which is a good reminder of how the evil one looks for openings to accuse, deceive, and destroy.

A dad was reading the story of Adam and Eve to his children. When he was finished, he asked, “*What did you get out of the story?*” His young son was quick to reply, “*Don’t play with snakes!*” That’s spot on. Deal with your anger before the day is over or Satan will play with you.

Some of you have been giving the devil a foothold in your marriage by not dealing with your anger before you go to sleep. You’re like the husband who said, “*My wife is not talking to me today and I’m in no mood to interrupt her.*” If you carry anger over, you will give the devil a foothold to do some bad stuff and bitterness will rise up like bile in your life.

3. Share with those in need. Verse 28 calls us to a life of integrity: “***Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.***” The words “***thief***” and “***steal***” come from the Greek word *klepto*. I’m told the IRS received the following letter from a conscience-stricken taxpayer: “*To Whom it May Concern: My conscience has been bothering me. Here is \$175, which I owe in back taxes.*” There was a P.S. at the bottom which read: “*If my conscience still bothers me, I’ll send in the rest.*”

Notice again how we’re called to stop doing something destructive and start doing something constructive: “***but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his hands.***” The word “***labor***” refers to “*toiling to the point of weariness.*” Proverbs 21:25 says: “***The desire of the sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to labor.***” I want to give a brief warning about gambling. Proverbs 13:11 says, “***Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it.***” 2 Thessalonians 3:10 says: “***If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.***”

While we work in order to provide for our needs, Paul pushes us to see we are “***to share with anyone in need.***”

I wrote down three reasons we’re to work.

- **Purpose.** *We work to fulfill our purpose.*
- **Provision.** *We work to meet our needs.*
- **Partner.** *We work to meet the needs of others.*

John Wesley put it like this: “*Make as much as you can, save as much as you can, and give as much as you can.*” It’s such a joy to be part of such a giving church as

we watched how God moved among His people to pay off our mortgage this past fall. Let's continue to give so others can go with the gospel, especially as we partner with our own members who are seeking to be missionaries.

4. Use your words well. Next, Paul challenges us to watch our words in verse 29: ***“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”*** The word ***“corrupting”*** means, *“foul, filthy, putrid, and rotten.”*

I grew up deer hunting and eating a lot of venison. Shortly after Beth and I were married, my dad gave us some venison which we put in our freezer. This freezer did not always work well so the meat thawed a few times and then refroze. When we finally decided to eat it, that morning we put it on the counter to thaw. When we came back to our apartment, the smell was so rancid, we became nauseous. Paul says that we must avoid rancid language which can cause others to feel sick.

We're called to use words that are beneficial for ***“building up”*** and delivered at the right time in order to ***“give grace to those who hear.”*** Proverbs 15:23 says, ***“To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is!”*** Proverbs 18:21 says, ***“The tongue has the power of life and death.”***

Augustine hung this motto in his dining room: *“He who speaks evil of an absent man or woman is not welcome at this table.”* Are you giving life words or death words to the people around you? Here's a commitment we should all make: *“I will use my tongue to launch life instead of delivering death.”*

Proverbs has a lot to say about what we say. It refers to our tongue, our mouth, or our lips over 150 times in 31 chapters! If you struggle to put a muffler on your mouth, I recommend reading a chapter of Proverbs every day.

Proverbs 16:24 says: ***“Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.”*** Honey was both a luxury and a medicine in ancient Israel. When we talk tenderly with others, our words become priceless and provide healing to broken hearts. As Eliphaz said of Job in Job 4:4: ***“Your words have upheld him who was stumbling...”***

Are you a discourager or an encourager? When people see you coming, do they take cover, or do they try to get close to you? Alan Redpath had his church members follow a simple formula before speaking to one another.

- T** Is it true?
- H** Is it helpful?
- I** Is it inspiring?
- N** Is it necessary?
- K** Is it kind?

On a windswept hill in an English country churchyard stands a drab, gray slate tombstone with an epitaph not easily seen unless you stoop over and look closely. The faint etchings reveal these words:

*Beneath this stone, a lump of clay,
Lies Arabella Young,
Who, on the twenty-fourth of May,
Began to hold her tongue.*

Don't let that be the way people remember you.

5. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:30 says: ***“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”*** To ***“grieve”*** means, ***“to make sad or afflict with sorrow.”*** We grieve the Holy Spirit by holding on to gross stuff in our lives and by allowing relational grievances which foment friction in our families and friendships. Incidentally, this shows the Holy Spirit is a personal being who can be grieved, He's not simply a force. In context, the Holy Spirit is grieved by our unholy outbursts and corrupt conversations.

Once you hear the gospel, believe Jesus died in your place and rose again, and receive Him into your life, you will be saved, forgiven of your sins and ***“sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.”*** In Bible times, a seal was imprinted by a signet ring which conveyed authenticity and ownership. It was used for security and safekeeping. Romans 8:16 reminds us how the Holy Spirit serves as our assurance that we are His possession, and we will always be under His protection: ***“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”***

A new life in Christ must lead to a new lifestyle.

Excise Unchristian Vices (31)

As part of our new lifestyle, verse 31 tells us we must excise, or “**put away,**” six specific vices: “**Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.**” The word “**all**” is used twice and means, “*every,*” signifying there is no place for any of these vices in our lives. We must not excuse them or tolerate them but instead be vigilant to get rid of them.

1. Bitterness. This word means, “*harsh, sharp, hard, and irritable*” and has the idea of “*smoldering resentment or a grudge-filled attitude which refuses to be reconciled.*” One commentator defines bitterness as, “*a settled hostility that poisons a person.*” Hebrews 12:15 warns us about allowing a root of bitterness to get the better of us: “**...that no ‘root of bitterness’ springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.**”

Alan Carr writes: “*Bitterness, if allowed to exist in your heart, will produce a root system that will grow until it has infiltrated and undermined every area of your life...and it will destroy you.*”

Romans 3:14 tells us a root of bitterness can lead to the fruit of bitter words: “**Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.**” Someone has said, “*Bitterness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.*”

2. Wrath. Wrath refers to “*impetuous outbursts or wild rage that feels like an explosion.*” We might say it’s like “*flying off the handle.*” The Greek word *thumos* is where we get “*thermonuclear.*” One person tried to defend his temper by saying, “*I explode and then it’s all over with.*” Unfortunately, these explosions hurt the people in the epicenter of those outbursts, as verbal shrapnel slices and dices those who are closest.

3. Anger. While “**wrath**” refers to outbursts, “**anger**” refers to “*a deep, brooding, resentful feeling,*” which is often depicted as being “*red-faced.*” If wrath has a hair-trigger and is highly volatile, anger is less explosive, but much longer in duration. As one pastor says, “*It savors the sinful satisfaction of making people pay over a long period of time.*” If we don’t learn to handle our anger, it will eventually handle us. Proverbs 29:22 says, “**A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression.**”

Frederick Buechner writes:

Of the seven deadly sins, anger is probably the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over

your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontation still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back; in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you.

4. Clamor. The word “*clamor*” means, “*wailing, tumult, outcry.*” There’s a lot of clamoring in our culture today and unfortunately this emanates from Christians as well.

5. Slander. The idea behind “*slander*” is the spreading of evil reports that are injurious to another person’s good name. Proverbs 6:19 says among the things God hates is “*A false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.*”

6. Malice. This refers to a “*congealed hatred and ill will*” with a desire to injure someone. I heard about another man who went to the doctor and was given this diagnosis, “*I’m sorry, but you have rabies.*” The patient nodded and immediately pulled out a pad and pencil and began to write. Thinking the man was writing out his will, the doctor said, “*This doesn’t mean you’re going to die. There’s a cure for rabies.*” The patient replied, “*I know that. I’m making a list of people I’m gonna bite!*”

This list of vices escalates and feeds upon itself as bitterness begets wrath, wrath leads to anger, anger turns to clamor, clamor paves the way for slander, which leads to malice. Have any of these vices taken up residence in your life? If so, “*put them away*” by throwing them in the garbage.

A new life in Christ must lead to a new lifestyle.

Exercise Christian Virtues (32)

After exemplifying Christian values and excising unchristian vices, we’re called to exercise three key Christian virtues.

Ephesians 4:32 says: “*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*” Observe how the phrase, “*one another*” is used twice to show the importance of exercising three key virtues. Putting off these vices and putting on kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness will lead to reconciliation.

1. Be kind. The word “*kind*” is the idea of being, “*good, pleasant, and gracious*” and appears to be the counterpart of malice. It can be defined as, “*An unselfish concern for the welfare of others, and a desire to be helpful even at great personal sacrifice.*” The tense of this command means we are to “*keep on becoming kind.*” Christians are to be kind to each other as 1 Corinthians 13:4 says, “***Love is patient and kind...***” This is the same word translated as “*gentleness*” as a Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:23.

Romans 12:10 says, “***Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.***” Let’s be like the people Paul encountered in Acts 28:2: “***The native people showed us unusual kindness...***” Interestingly, Paul uses a play on words in the original. We’re urged to be kind (*chrestos*) because of Christ (*Christos*).

2. Be tenderhearted. The word “*tenderhearted*” means, “*to be full of compassion and pity toward others.*” The idea is to have a sympathetic, affectionate, and compassionate interest in others, along with a willingness to bear their burden.

This past Monday night, a group of us met to pray for an unreached people group called the *Tajik*. It was a very moving time as we pleaded with God to save these dear people. I appreciate Emma Janacek’s leadership for this. When we were finished, I asked Aaron Langworthy to share some highlights of his trip to Uganda. While he was sharing about the need for the gospel and his desire for his family to move there as full-time missionaries, he broke down and started weeping. It’s very obvious that God has tenderized his heart for the people of Uganda. We’re praying for God to supply their needed support so they can leave this year.

3. Be forgiving. Verse 32 ends: “***...forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.***” The word “*forgiving*” is in the present tense and implies a continuous action. It literally means “*to give freely and unconditionally; to bestow as a gift of grace.*” The phrase “*one another*” reminds us we are sinners in need of forgiveness. We are also sinned against by sinners and therefore need to forgive fellow sinners.

Our model for forgiveness is Christ Himself. Colossians 3:13 says it strongly: “***Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.***” When we think we can withhold forgiveness, let’s remember how much we’ve

been forgiven. Because we have been forgiven, and only because we've been forgiven, are we able to forgive others. *Christians are the most forgiven people in the world and should therefore be the most forgiving people in the world.* C.S. Lewis once said, *"To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in us."*

Actually, without the doctrine of forgiveness, what is Christianity? If we don't give to others what we've received, Jesus says we will be imprisoned by our iniquities according to Matthew 18:35: ***"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."*** Here's a question. Would you want God to forgive you in the same way you forgive others?

The Bible uses a number of different words to convey the concept of forgiveness. One word means *"to blot out,"* in the sense that God erases the record of the sins we commit. Another common Hebrew word means *"to lift and carry away,"* speaking of the complete removal of our sins, as if a heavy load had been lifted from our shoulders.

Still another word means *"to release from debt,"* indicating that the punishment for sin has been canceled. One Greek word means *"to show grace to one who has sinned greatly,"* speaking of the undeserved nature of forgiveness. Another word often translated as *"forgive"* means, *"to let go or release."* I'm told that when missionaries first came to Labrador, they found no word for forgiveness in their language, so they had to create a brand-new word which means, *"Not being able to think about it anymore."*

I came across a church sign with these words on the marquee: *"The most influential person in your life is the one you refuse to forgive."*

Most of us know we're supposed to forgive, and we understand what God says about forgiveness, but we still fight it. C.S. Lewis was right when he said, *"Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive."*

That leads to a question. Are you more interested in being "right" than you are in being reconciled? General Ogelthorpe once said to John Wesley, *"I never forgive, and I never forget."* To which Wesley replied, *"Then, sir, I hope you never sin."*

Nancy Leigh DeMoss, in her excellent book, "Choosing Forgiveness," writes this: *"Whatever sin has been committed against you, the choice not to forgive is itself a*

serious sin. In fact, failing to forgive can often bring about problems in your life far worse and more long term than the pain of the original offense.”

Forgiveness does not mean we somehow wipe out of our mind the record of what happened. Forgiveness means we choose not to remember it by releasing the debt. It's a deliberate decision to let it go. If you're having a hard time forgiving, maybe it's because you're still dwelling on the deeds that have been done to you. In short, it's time to stop getting “historical” by bringing up the past.

Clara Barton, the founder of the Red Cross, was talking with a friend one day when the name of a person they both knew came up. This person had done some very bad things to Clara years ago. The friend asked her this question: “*Don't you remember when she did that to you?*” To which Clara Barton replied, “*No. I distinctly remember forgetting that.*”

Corrie Ten Boom, who survived the Holocaust, received some helpful advice from a pastor when she was bitter over what some Christian friends had done to her. After two sleepless weeks, her pastor told her, “*Up in the church tower is a bell which is rung by pulling on a rope. When the rope is pulled the bell sounds out 'ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong.' But if the rope is not pulled the sound slowly fades away. Forgiveness is like that. When we forgive someone, we take our hand off the rope. But if we've been tugging at our grievances a long time, we mustn't be surprised if the old angry thoughts keep coming for a while. They are just the ding-dongs of the old bell slowing down.*”

Friend, are you still yanking on the rope? If you're going to grow, you must let it go.

Allow God to put His finger on what is broken so He can fix it.

We can't live the new life until we receive new life in Christ. We won't be able to live Christian values, put off unchristian vices, or put on Christian virtues until we claim the victory Jesus accomplished over the devil, over death, and over our own depravity when He died on the cross in our place and rose from the dead on the third day.

Invitation

Child Evangelism Fellowship Interview – Dawn Wassell

1. Can you give us the history of Child Evangelism Fellowship?
2. What kind of ministry is taking place in the QCA right now? What do you hope to see in the future?
3. How can we be praying for CEF?

New Member Saturday Night – Marsha Larsen