

**Ephesians: Forwarding God's Care**  
**God's Care Expressed**  
***Caring Through Behavior***  
Ephesians 4:17-5:2

Intro: We want to express God's care for us through our everyday living. Some ways of behaving are definitely associated with darkness rather than light. These behaviors communicate the absence of God rather than his presence. These ways of acting and speaking are associated with our former lives when we did not know Christ.

We need to abandon that old way of thinking that got us into so much trouble. It not only twisted our minds, but it also damaged our relationships. And it does not faithfully represent the Father in heaven who saved us by his grace and brought us into his family.

We have a new way to think and to live in Christ. It is a way that is consistent with how God made the universe and how he saved us from our sin. This new mental and spiritual posture is an essential dimension of our new way of life.

Behavior among believers is of great importance to God. We left a certain lifestyle when we came to Christ. We put off the former way of living, and we put on the "new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:24).

The summation of this new way of behaving is this: "live a life of love" (Eph. 5:2). Living love is the challenge for every follower of Jesus. Love is the guideline, the goal, the touchstone, and the compass. You are a dearly loved child of God, so love others as Christ has loved you.

**I. ABANDON THE EMPTY BEHAVIORS** (v17-19): You must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking v17

A. You have a WALK. That is the word Paul uses here. It is the posture of your life—your behaviors and style, your words and deeds. Your walk is of great importance to God.

1. Your WALK is distinctively yours. It is unique to you. It will identify you from a distance for your friends and family who are familiar with you.
2. Your walk also expresses your loyalties and allegiances. You express your history, your purpose, and your goals through your walk. It is yours, but it is influenced by all these things.

B. You have a MINDSET: the thinking behind your walk.

1. If your mind is not working properly, you cannot keep your balance when you walk. You will walk sideways.
2. If you lose consciousness, you will fall down. You cannot walk without your mind working.
3. Your mind is what keeps your walk going.
4. Your frame of mind, your mindset, your core thinking, shapes your words and behaviors—your walk—every day.

C. You used to have FUTILITY of the MIND. This is how you used to be before you knew Christ and how lost people without Christ think and behave:

1. The word "futility" here is sometimes translated "vanity" or "emptiness." The idea is that their thinking lacks power and virtue and truth. It is empty.
2. This futility of mind is described by the Apostle with a number of terms. I want to try to summarize them:
  - a. Darkened: Abandonment as the core attitude: "Nobody cares about me, and I don't care about anybody." The greatest darkness of soul is the place where love is lost.
  - b. Separated: Hopelessness as the core attitude: "whatever will be will be;" Separation from God may end up in biological and social determinism—hopelessness.
  - c. Ignorance: Meaninglessness as the core attitude: "nothing means anything, including my life." This ignorance is not because of limited mental capacity or limited data. It is because of limited FAITH. It is an ignorance about what we know through faith.
  - d. Hardened: Pleasure as the core attitude: "if it feels good, do it." This code of behavior develops in you what verse 19 talks about: "having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality..."

**II. LIVE THE TRUTH THAT IS IN JESUS** v20-24: Surely you have heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus (v21).

A. YOU CANNOT LIVE THERE ANYMORE. You did not come to know Christ that way. Your mind has changed. You are not darkened, separated, ignorant or hard of heart. You have been saved. You are called and prepared and empowered for a new way of thinking and walking.

B. YOU LIVE IN ACCORDANCE—in agreement, in unity, in friendship, in accord, in harmony.

\*\*\*When we hear discord we are disturbed. If the band hits a sour note—not this band, but some other—it makes us cringe.

You already have three of the four notes in the right chord. Jesus has given you those notes through his example, his teaching, and his death upon the cross. You add the fourth note that fits the other three—your mindset and walk.

- C. You must PUT OFF your old self—that part of you that is still susceptible to corruption through deceitful desires.
1. The desires do not just stop. We all know about lust and greed and envy and slothfulness. Those old tapes can keep playing for a long time.
  2. You know the old self he is talking about in two ways:
    - a. MINDSET: remember that old mindset of yours?
    - b. WALK: remember that old behavior?
  3. The NEW MINDSET AND WALK will settle into your life only as you banish the old way of thinking and behaving.
- D. Identify the old thinking and walking by this quality: CORRUPTION.
1. The corruption of the Temple according to the Jews happened when anything in it was DEFILED or DAMAGED. Jesus referred to this corruption when he cleansed the Temple. He followed it up with "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days" (John 2:29). Jesus was concerned that they were destroying the inner sanctuary of the temple by their banks and barnyards in the outer court. Then he made the switch with this saying from the house of worship as a structure to the house of worship as a body: "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19). Do not corrupt this temple. Do not defile it or destroy it.
  2. Do you know the feeling of DEFILEMENT? Have you ever felt DIRTY? This is the defilement of your mind, your heart, and your soul. This is corruption.
  3. Do you know about being damaged? Have you ever hurt yourself with a behavior of choice? Have you ever damaged others with your behaviors? This is corruption.
  4. The Corruption we are fighting in our culture both DEFILES our community and DAMAGES our community.
- E. The new self—your saved and sanctified self—is created in a way that the old self is not and cannot be.
1. You are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Old things have passed away. All things are new. You need to claim this new you that is created in Christ for good works, that is his workmanship.
  2. You are created for TRUE righteousness and holiness. You had an old self-righteousness, but you know it was not true righteousness. You were either proud of yourself or ashamed of yourself perpetually depending on your behavior. You never achieved any peace of mind and heart in that old pattern.
    - a. Your pride in your behavior came from the notion that you could live a life acceptable to God on your own terms. So when you got it right you swelled up with pride.
    - b. Your shame came from the fact that you frequently fell into bad behavior that hurt you and others. It was and is corrupt. And because you were working on a self-made righteousness, you had no place to go for forgiveness. What do you do with sin when it is all up to you?
  3. The NEW Righteousness is one that you RECEIVE by FAITH from Jesus who died on the cross to remove your sin.
    - a. This is a true righteousness because it is not corrupted by pride or shame. It is based only on the death of Christ for your sin. Jesus paid it all, and you are made right, you are justified, through his blood.
    - b. This is true holiness because it starts in the heavenly places where you are now seated with Christ. You have changed spiritual position forever. You are now in Christ. That is your true separation from sin and unto God.

**Conclusion:** Everyone in this room needs this true righteousness and true holiness today.