

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

February 25, 2018

SPEAKER

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SERIES

Grace Unleashed:
The Book of Ephesians

PART

20

TITLE

Distinguished By Our Love

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:30-5:2



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All right good morning. Great to see you this morning. If you are a guest or visitor to Providence a special welcome to you, glad to have you with us this morning. If we don't know each other yet, my name is Thomas and I serve as one of the pastors here at Providence and I'm so glad that we get to share some time together this morning studying God's word. And we will be in Ephesians 4. If you have a Bible please go ahead and open up and meet me over in Ephesians 4. If you don't have a Bible, you can find one underneath one of the chairs in front of you. Don't be ashamed to use the Table of Contents. Ephesians is on that right half of the Bible, not that there's a wrong half or the right not left half of the Bible and we're looking for Chapter 4, that's the big number and we're going to study verse 30 down through the beginning of chapter 5 in verses one and two.

While you are opening to that part of the Bible, it's fitting to note in our gathering this morning that this last week Christianity like God's movement in the world right here and now, one of our great heroes of the faith Billy Graham stepped into eternity to be with the Savior and Lord Jesus Christ and we have so much to be thankful for from his life and for his witness. Personally, never met the man, read some things that he wrote and watched some sermons that he preached. Personally impacted by him because my mom when she was nine years old watched one of his crusades on television and went back to her room kneel down beside her bed prayed to trust in Jesus for the first time and when I think about that it's hard for me to imagine who I'd be, where I'd be without that man. So, I'm very grateful as I know many of you are thankful also that God is not done yet with this world and he is still at work in us.

So, here we are with Ephesians 4:30 down to Chapter five verses one and two. I'm very excited for this word to share with you this morning. I think it will encourage all of us. I think we have a lot of benefit in gain here. So let's just pause and posture our hearts for just that with a word of prayer.

Father in heaven, we need to hear from you now so we pray that you would speak with clarity. Father, we know that faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of God. So father I pray that you would overcome weakness and inadequacy and insufficiency in me to help just that happen. Father, give faith to your church, father, give faith to those who have yet to belong to you. Claim them as your own. Grow us all in Jesus name, amen.

Ephesians 4:30. "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Over the last few weeks we have been finishing this great chapter of scripture, Ephesians 4. Specifically, we've spent some time, extended time in verses 25 down to verse 29. And here we're going to continue spending time zoomed in, looking at important details of God's word and what God has for us. In a very real sense, we have been zoomed in on the details of scripture over the last couple of weeks and zooming in and slowing down and taking our time, this is a good thing.

We need to examine what God would say to our speech, how God would have us use our anger and our different emotions. We've been zoomed in on these different facets and aspects of the Christian life and this morning I want to stay zoomed in on a few aspects of this chapter, specifically versus 30, 31, and 32. I want to help us to think, like man, what is God saying to us. Like how can we display the love of Jesus in our lives through these specific behaviors and actions.

But here's something else I want to do for us in the process. I want to help us to zoom out and to understand how these specific teachings and applications of the Christian life really fit within the larger whole of Ephesians, the New Testament and yes, scripture. To help with that, I want you to look at a series of photos I'm going to show you and we need to consider the benefit we have zoomed in and the benefit we have by zooming out.

First, take a look at this right here. Glancing at it you might think, oh, these are some leaves or maybe some bushes or maybe Thomas just needs to cut his front yard. As you zoom in, you look at it and you can examine certain things because you're zoomed in and we're up close but when you zoom the lens out you're able to see that there's actually a whole forest to take in here. And you'd actually miss the forest if you stayed zoomed in on the details, there's something to be gained, a great benefit to be had by zooming out.

Consider the next one. Maybe you think we're talking about different clouds. The two types I can remember are cirrus and cirrus nimbus, there's a tenth grader in here you could call me on this right now. You're looking at it, it's like, oh, clouds, great. But when you zoom out you see there's something much larger here. You see the actual statue of liberty is here. It's here to be seen, it's here to be had, it's here to be observed if we will just shift our focus, if we will allow the details of the background to help us to appreciate what's in the foreground.

Last one. I got to admit, this is my favorite. Look at this one right here. Anybody know what this is? No, it's not a picture of your crusty elbowed like all zoomed into a thousand. This is actually a picture of lunch. I know, don't worry. Actually, as soon as we're done we're going to have sandwiches in the back of the room, you'll be able to pick one up on, just kidding.

When you think about it, how this works, when you zoom in, there are certain things to be appreciated, certain details to be had upon close inspection. That's exactly where we've been over the last couple of weeks. We've been zoomed in on different details, different behaviors of the Christian life.

And we're going to stay zoomed in on a few of those more this morning but also what we want to do, we want all the benefits that can be gained by taking a step back, considering what God is saying to us in Ephesians 4 and how we might live our lives in light of the truths that we find here.

As we take a step back and try to understand these details within the whole of scripture, we also need to remember that this piece of scripture was written to real life people who faced real life problems in real life situations. See, we need to remember a few of the things going on around the city of Ephesus if we are to understand how these details are intended to play for us in Raleigh today. Ephesus was a city of sexual perversion. The temple of Artemis function like a stronghold of wickedness in their time. Artemis was known as a sex goddess, a black idol that was a cross between something like a cow and a wolf. She was served by thousands of male and female temple prostitutes and perversion was practiced all throughout the city.

Also Ephesus was a major cultural center as well. In that temple of Artemis, it contained one of the largest art collections in the world at the time. So what does this mean? It means they had a refined sense of sophistication to gloss over all of the perversion and brokenness. It was a major banking center as well, Caesar stored his money there. Maybe the economic and banking center for the ancient world. It was a hub for bad guys as well. I know, very technical terminology this morning, bad guys. A quarter mile around the temple was a safe zone for known convicted felons. So if this place weren't messed up enough, the bad guys stayed within the temple of Artemis, they could not be prosecuted.

Sex, corruption, pride and power functioned as the center of meaning for this city. The fifth century Greek philosopher Heraclitus even said of Ephesus, "Ephesus is the darkest of vile itself. Their morals are lower than animals and the inhabitants are only fit to be drowned." Why am I bringing this up? I'm bringing this up because we need to think right here of what it means for God to bring someone from death to life and the many things that happen when God saves someone and then changes that person from the inside out.

I want you to hear Ephesians 4 mindful of the people in Ephesus who were converted. They were former temple prostitutes, money launderers, violent criminals and much more. They were from all spheres of society and in Ephesians, God through Paul called for dramatic changes in these people's lives. The people in Ephesus they would need dramatic power to live out these dramatic changes and what you need to know is Ephesus isn't special and these Christians aren't especially countercultural. What God says to us in the book of Ephesians is possible in Raleigh today and it's possible in your life.

We've been doomed in on the details of the different kinds of behaviors that Christians exhibit, and the point of Jesus is to make a new humanity that can live God's way for God's glory in God's world. Paul is now giving practical instructions for how this community of Jesus ought to live. And now he brings it home by summing the whole thing up. It's the punchline in Chapter 5:1-2. "Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children."

So we see all of this is going to end here, this whole thing terminates right here in this grand conclusion. So here's our task for the next few minutes. Stepping back from the detailed instruction of these behaviors in the last couple of weeks, let's ask the question, what do we learn about this movement called Christianity from Ephesians 4. What can we learn from the picture? This picture of Christianity contained just here in Ephesians 4, for the converts in that old city of Ephesus learning to follow Jesus, what was the picture of Christianity set before them and for today, us today in Raleigh, what is the picture of Christianity that we see in Ephesians 4.

I want to show you three features of this vision of Christianity, three applications by which we can step into the picture and start living it out and one grand conclusion that holds the whole thing together. And the first feature I need you to see is this. First, Christianity is about being made new. It's possible to read parts of the Bible and to get the wrong picture about what the Bible is saying. Ephesians 4 is full of teaching about how God's people ought to live. Consider what we've learned just in the last five weeks together. It's full of teaching about how we ought to put away falsehood, how we ought to speak the truth, how we ought to be angry without sinning. And we shouldn't steal but we should work hardily unto the Lord and we should avoid corrupting talk they can tear down.

In these verses this morning we're going to see more of this. We learn that we're not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, that we're to put away bitterness wrath, anger and clamor from our lives. And as a result we're to fill our lives by being kind to one another. Now, it's possible, maybe not for all of us but it's possible for some of us to read this and to walk away thinking, oh, okay, God just wants me to be a good and moral person. I mean, yeah, that's like half of it. Like yeah, God is making people that are good, God is making people that are moral. That's only the half of it. You only become good and you only become moral in God's kingdom because of what he's first doing inside of us, what he's first doing through us.

Christianity is not primarily about being good or moral, it's about being made new by the spirit of Jesus Christ. A few things Paul tells us that are already new of us because of our salvation. We're reminded that salvation is not about personal improvement but perpetual transformation. Ephesians is full of truths for the church about what God has already done and the things that are already new in us. Would you consider, up until this point in chapter four, the list of things that Paul has already said are new for us. Church, Paul has said to us already that because of what God has done for us in Jesus we have a new mind, a new will, a new heart, new relationships, new inheritance, new power, new knowledge, new wisdom, new perception, new understanding, new righteousness, new loves and a new desire, and we're not even been issue a chapter four yet.

We are being made new because Jesus changes us from the inside out. Out of the overflow of what Jesus has done in us, we get to live as God's new creation. Being renewed is about a relationship with Jesus because the Christian life is about Jesus.

So what might we imagine Paul was concerned with when he wrote this letter into the heart of Ephesus that I just described for us? I guess is the Paul might have been concerned with the issue of hypocrisy. Whether the church would step into this newness and live out this newness or whether the church would retreat at moments of hostility and cultural confrontation and seek to be something they weren't any more.

Because we know who Jesus is, it must fill up our lives. We have these detailed up close pictures of scripture in these different behaviors because what we believe about God it can't simply be world view. This can't simply be personal opinion and this can't simply be a personal relationship with Jesus. While those things are good, maybe even central, it must then overflow out into all the practical and moral dimensions of our lives. If ever we needed a reminder that our world is longing for something new, all you have to do is take a look around. Much of the cultural opposition the church faces today in the modern world is that we fail to step into the newness that God has for us and the culture that we live in doesn't have any problem calling us out.

Consider the words of this cultural prophet, he said, "I hated religion because here was this Christian preaching one thing on Sunday versus how he was living on Monday." And I know you read that and you think, man, that's pretty good, is that C.S. Lewis? No, that's Jay Z's 444 Legacy Edition. That's what he would say to us. We live in a culture of self-empowerment self-fulfillment so whenever we encounter an issue we just try to do the best we can, just to depend on ourselves and just to try to navigate through it but that's not what God has for us. God intends for us to be something new.

So we remember, Christianity is not about self-improvement project, it's a total renovation project because God is making us into his people. So it would be a mistake to get to the end of Ephesians 4 having spent really good time and really beneficial time zoomed in on these different details and behaviors thinking man, wow, God is all concerned about me just trying really hard to make him happy. It's not the point. We remember Jesus. We remember that he's making us and all things new and we trust in him to do just that. First feature of Christianity from Ephesians 4.

The second one is this, Christianity is a community project. Christianity is about being made new and then we're made new together, Christianity is a community project. Paul's primary concern is that the people of God would love one another because the way of Jesus is profoundly communal. When Jesus came, Jesus said in John 13:34, "A new command I give you, to love one another." Community language, "Love one another as I have loved you." And here we have Ephesians 4 to help us understand how to live as Jesus' community of love.

Would you remember with me what we've learned over the last couple of weeks. Look at verse 25. We live as Jesus' community of love speaking truth over lies. We put off all falsehood and we speak the truth with one another to our neighbors.

We are a body composed of many parts just like an Olympic athlete racing down the track or in this season flying down a mountain, we are one body and we have all of these parts that need to be working harmoniously for us to be able to run the race that God has put before us. So we come here and we're like man, we really do need to speak the truth in place of lies because this is all connected. We are one body with many parts.

Then in verse 26, look at verse 26 again. We live this Jesus community project by having righteous anger in the place of rage. Some people think Christianity is about simply being nice. As if when God saves us then we ought to be able to get caught in a given day just like outside mowing the lawn wearing a turtlenecks smiling all the time. This whole thing isn't about being nice, it's about being made new and we can have different emotions. It's okay to have anger. The issue is if we sin in our anger and we learn what does it mean for us to be an emotionally healthy people.

Then in verse 28 we learn that we live in Jesus' community by encouraging one another, community language with our words. Just last week we saw we're to put the corrupting talk off and to put the encouraging talk on. That corrupting talk has the idea of the smell of rotten fish. It's like man, this isn't even a good thing, it doesn't even smell good, why would we even want it in our lives. So we put these things off. We remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 12:36 that we will give an account for every careless and idle word we speak.

And then here we come, arriving at our verses for consideration this morning with verse 31. And we see that we live as Jesus' community by removing bitterness from our lives. Let's just slow down and think about this for a minute. Bitterness in our lives. We tend to think of bitterness is some type of active hostility or resentment, something that's at the top of our minds and at the forefront of our emotional character to where we have hostile resistance to someone or to something. Maybe it's an argument we had that we never really cleaned up or a conversation that was left with a few things unsaid that we haven't really gotten over. And we can let bitterness grow in our hearts.

We can think of bitterness as some type of like hot blaze of anger that's just eating us up. But here's a better picture for how to consider bitterness is actually one of smoldering coals. When you think about how bitterness so many times works in a person's life, it's not some full fledged fire that's consuming the whole thing. Oftentimes, it's some coals that look like the fire is just about done. But if you've ever been around a fire for any amount of time you know that it's actually in the coals and not the first 15 minutes of the big blaze that this thing puts off the real heat.

Bitterness in the Christian's life is like a pile of coals that looks like it's just about cooked through. But if someone were to raise a name or to remind you of a situation or to bring up that thing from that place and that person that time, the whole thing would get hotter than it was before. This is a picture of bitterness in the Christian life, smoldering coals.

Let me ask you a question I've been asking myself in the last week. In your spirit, is there any relationship around you that you're connected with that looks fine but it can become hot as blazes if somebody stumbles on it and stirs it up? It's more than that.

It's Hebrews 12. "See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many." Here that, defile many. This is community, we're in this together. So bitterness here. This idea of these smoldering coals that results in a fiery root. There's more than that though. Look at the other words that we're told to watch. You see wrath right here versus 31 and 32. Wrath being seized by passion and responding in the moment. You see, anger, a deep but subtle feeling. You see clamor, it's what you do when you have a shout of an outcry. You see slander. That's being a blasphemer. You know it's possible to blaspheme someone's name or reputation and not just the spirit of God. We can be blasphemers against God and we're capable of blasphemy against one another. You also see malice at the root of all of this, is the intentional desire to do wrong or evil.

Now, here's the truth, if we don't reconcile these emotions then we carry these emotions into every relationship we encounter. Finish a dating relationship with one person moving off to the next person. If you have any of these emotions that haven't been settled, you carry those emotions into the next relationship.

Listen, we hear at Province we are passionate about church membership, like by God's grace, for God's glory, we are eager to see this church grow and we're happy to have people coming in from other churches if that's how God's working in someone's life. But make no mistake, if you come here from another church and you had some type of bad experience or emotional falling out with someone or something in that church and you don't deal with those emotions you bring those emotions into this family. We got to deal with this God does not want our souls to be smoldering ruins but he wants our souls to be full of life giving fruit. And as we step back and consider how all of these behaviors fit together, the picture that we're given, part of the picture here is we start to see wow, in light of all of these behaviors we are a family. We're a family.

Because consider, you don't need all of these details, you don't need all of these ways to watch your mouth and to forgive one another and to be easy on one another. We don't need this teaching if the goal of the Christian life is simply for you and Jesus to get alone somewhere together and just enjoy yourselves. The point of the Christian life is not you and Jesus snuggling in a hammock somewhere. The point of the Christian life is you and Jesus working it out in a community with God's family. We need this. There are 59 one another commands in scripture. Think about this, Christian, it is actually impossible to be an obedient disciple of Jesus Christ without being a deeply involved member of a community of faith to live these commands out with.

Ephesians 4 is getting diverse people ready to live deeply with one another. You think about it again, temple prostitutes, cultural elites, marketing minded people, moms, dads, kids and everybody else, Ephesians 4 is discipleship to get us ready to live together as a community of faith. And we need this teaching to explain how we ought to live together. I know, if you're looking at this, you're like, man, this is a high calling, we're going to need some serious power to live it out, you're right. And that's the third feature of the church I want to show you right here. Christianity is also empowered by the Spirit.

This is about being made new, this is about being made new together and we have a power that's outside of ourselves, it's the very spirit of God. When we zoom in and we see these behaviors, we can get stressed, we can even get discouraged because the reason is we know how strong the teaching of Scripture is and the weaknesses that we have and we know all too well in our lives. We can even despair in thinking, there's no way I'm going to be able to live this out. And listen, if you have that thought, that's the thought I have too. I look at this, I'm like man, in my power, in my strength, there's no way I can live an Ephesians 4 lifestyle. But with God's help anything is possible and God has helped us through the spirit.

When Jesus talked about the spirit in John 16, he talked about the spirit who is someone as a helper. Let me remind you of who the spirit is and how the Spirit wants to be at work in our lives as a church. We know that the spirit is personal. He is not an impersonal force or a blind energy, he is not holy electricity, the spirit is a he and consistently defined by masculine pronouns. Our God, one God, represented in three persons and the spirit is a person.

In Ephesians 4 we see the spirit can be grieved. Acts 5 we learn that he can be lied to. Acts 10:19 we see that he still at work in the church today and Jesus given us any word, any metaphor idea to understand who the spirit is Jesus chose to describe the spirit as a helper. The spirit is personal. He is a personal helper to us and he is also extremely powerful. The spirit of Jesus was powerfully at work in God's son. Jesus is the man of the Spirit. He performed miracles in dependence upon the spirit and at death and resurrection the spirit was involved.

The spirit is persistent in the church today. Think about this Christian, it was through the Spirit that Jesus gave us his life in Romans 4. The spirit fills us and unites us to Christ. We get a new identity and a new nature, a completely new heart and all these things that we are called to do in Ephesians 4, they flow from this new heart that the spirit supplies us with. The work of the Spirit doesn't end with our regeneration. His goal is to get us all the way to God so in the meantime the work is conformity to Christ. And here we are at a moment in Ephesians 4:30 where we're told not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. What does this mean?

Well, the spirit like a person, just like you can experience grief, the loss of a loved one or someone who commits an action against you or to someone else it can actually cause you the emotion of grief in your life, it's possible for us to respond to the person of the Spirit of God in a way that causes grief in his.

Well, the spirit like a person, just like you can experience grief, the loss of a loved one or someone who commits an action against you or to someone else it can actually cause you the emotion of grief in your life, it's possible for us to respond to the person of the Spirit of God in a way that causes grief in his. Because the job of the Spirit is not only to get us to God in the end but to conform us to the image of Christ in the mean time. The spirit intends nothing good towards us. He intends to help us to put the spotlight on Jesus through our lives but before that to be able to see Jesus and experience Jesus in every thought and in every situation.

So when we think about man, what does this mean that I could grieve the Spirit of God. Well, there's two times in Scripture that we're told not to do something with the spirit. One of them is over in 1 Thessalonians 5 when we're told not to quench the spirit, it says, "Don't quit the spirit, don't despise prophecies, test everything and hold fast to what is good and throw out whatever is evil." And then over here we're told not to grieve the spirit. 1 Thessalonians we see not to quench the spirit. That means there might be times in God's community when the Spirit is working in some way and God just wants to use one person to walk up to another person say like, hey, I just wanted to encourage you with something. If I can just speak a word to you about something I think God wants you to hear.

1 Thessalonians says, don't quench that work, that's something the spirit might be stirring up in the community. So if that happens you don't have to throw it out altogether, just take it, if anything's evil, toss that out and you just see what God does with it in good time.

Then over here, don't grieve the spirit. It says if the spirit is trying to lead us deeper into life, the spirit is trying to bring us joy but for some reason we pump the brakes, we hold off and it causes grief in him and loss in us. A picture to illustrate what all of this is like is the picture of a bonfire, maybe some friends sitting around it. Oh wait, there it is right there. As you're looking at it, you're like, man, that's not much of a bonfire. This is a baby bonfire, remember the smoldering stage that we talked about. So here's some friends sitting around the fire. It's almost like the Spirit of God is a fire at work inside of each and every one of us. If possible, a collective fire that God is building right here in this church called Providence. And this fire inside of each and every one of us, this fire can be both grieved and it can be quenched.

There can be times when God might want to grow the fire a little more, he might want to make things a little hotter, he might want to stir things up a little more and he might prompt us in our hearts, hey, step out and encourage that man, step out, serve that woman. Extend a word of encouragement here. Go share the gospel with someone there. Sign up for this trip. You can give a little more. Whatever it is.

There are times when the Spirit of God is trying to build something up inside of us and it's as if he's saying, throw another log on the fire. And what we can do, we can actually quench the spirit by refusing to add to the work that he's doing in our lives. But this time in Ephesians we can actually also grieve the Spirit or as we're sitting around the fire and enjoying its warmth, we can actually engage in behaviors that stunt the growth and strength of the fire. And we adapt any of these behaviors that we're told not to do here. The spirit's like hey, we don't talk like that anymore, hey, what are you doing, we don't say that anymore. And we literally go over to the fire and we empty a liter of water on top of it. Muting its strength, holding back the power that it's eventually going to have on us all.

Christian, Ephesians 1:4 says that God has sealed us for all of eternity. 2 Corinthians 1:22 tells us the spirit is our guarantee of our inheritance. So Christian you are sealed. When God saved you, the spirit was a down payment and a pledge, a pledge that you will have a safe and sure passage to God. When God gives us His Spirit, He gives us himself. The goal of the Christian life is to spend all of eternity with God forever and is a pledge is a marker is an initial deposit that day's going to come, we get the presence of God now.

And Christian, it doesn't matter how many times we've grieved the spirit, it doesn't matter how many times we've quenched the spirit, we can not outlive his guarantee on our lives. This should lead to rejoicing. We get a picture of who God is, how much he is for us, how all three members of the Trinity are committed to saving us, empowering us and getting us to the end. And then we return to these behaviors, we're like man, if this is how God saved me, if this is what God's done for me, if this is how much he's for me, this is how we live in the kingdom, let me hurry to do just that.

We get to the end of Ephesians 4 and encounter the spirit of God. At the end of all this teaching is a reminder that the spirit is at work. His job is to bring attention to Jesus in your life and through your life. The job of the church is to be sensitive to the leading of the spirit and to respond in obedience.

So here we are, kind of down to the end of Ephesians 4 and this is Paul in Ephesus preaching to the Ephesians giving them this constant of discipleship right here. If we were to leave Ephesus and come back to Raleigh and find Paul here this morning reading this to you, not only would it be a much better sermon than this but what would he actually say to us. Like if Paul were here in the midst of Ephesians 4 looking at life in Raleigh What are some things he would say, how can we leave here and start living out this picture of Christianity or if you'd like, how do we step into the picture of Christianity that we see and how do we live this way.

At least three things. First one is this. First, let's put off the pagan. Let's put off the pagan. Or if you'd like, let's put off the old and let's put on the new. Or if you like, let's be done with what's dead and let's engage what's new. Why? Because the pagan life frankly it doesn't look good on you and it doesn't look good on me.

So think about this, at the bottom of Ephesians 4, now at the end of what we've studied, is there anything left from your old way of life. In my experience, the longer we've been a Christian the more blind spots we develop and the more calluses to God that we're capable of developing.

We begin with this massive experience, huge understandings of God, man, sin, death, righteousness, grace, love and forgiveness. But then after a while we kind of settle in, don't we? After a while, we don't have these major issues to think about, we just have a little bitterness, just a little jealousy, just a little pride. Yeah, they're not massive, they're not massive but think about this. A worm making its way through your intestines, that's not that big, is it? It's not that massive. But if left unchecked, he can bring you down.

I know that's kind of intense for 9:30 on a Sunday but it's kind of there, right? So we ask our questions. In our sexuality, pagan or Jesus? In our money, pagan or Jesus? In our love for one another, pagan or Jesus? See, Jesus doesn't send Ephesians 4 to condemn us but to set us free. We have this because there is no life in these behaviors, Jesus loves us enough to bring us out of them into His kingdom of life.

So take some time to be alone with this text, think about your [foreign nation 00:34:15], think about where you are with God. Thank God for saving you from this church and worship him.

Second way we respond to this is by having a passion for discipleship. Discipleship is simply learning to live like Jesus. We get to the end of this we think man, it's going to take some serious studying and continued work. I'm really going to have to like get around people so they can point these behaviors out in me and I'm really going to have to depend on the spirit of God if God's going to do this in me. Yeah, that's right, and let's have a passion for discipleship, let's get alone with Jesus. It was Jesus who leads us to think, no longer will one say to another, know the Lord for they will all know me and they will all be taught by God.

Do you want to be taught by God? Get alone with God. Spend some time with of Jesus in the secret place reading His word, memorizing his word, confessing your sins, praying for yourself and for one another. And with that, let's schedule time to be with God in prayer, meditation and confession. On top of that, let's schedule time to be with God's people and worship community and one another in love and let's schedule time to pursue our neighbors because we have the words of life.

Third, let's restore broken relationships. Think this was what Paul would put before us. He'd say, yeah, like how do you step into Ephesians 4. You step into restoration and healing. I don't say this to you lightly. I know the weight of brokenness. I know the sting of pain in my own life and experience with God. God's work is always forgiveness and reconciliation. I know this is hard and I know it's going to require risk and great sacrifice but that's okay because that's how God's loved us. Are there broken relationships in your life? Marriage? Family? Work? Children? Stepping into Ephesians 4 is where we step in to restoration.

Is there any bitterness in your spirit or in your heart? Yeah, it looks fine but if somebody stumbles upon it in the next hour or so the whole thing comes up again. God wants to replace the pile of smoldering mess with life, with fruit and with peace.

So here are these three big descriptors of what's going on in the church. These three ways we live it out and here's the conclusion that holds it all together. Christianity ultimately is about imitating Christ. The conclusion of Ephesians 4 that we are God's loved children and we need pictures in details of how to live because we weren't born into his house.

So frankly, we need the detailed descriptions of what's going on through Ephesians. We need to zoom in to talk about our tongue for a whole sermon. Then we need to shift the focus over to our anger and our emotions and spend some time there because this is ultimately foreign to us. We didn't grow up in his house, we don't know his house kingdom rules so we need time to be taught and to study. But I know how this works because I've sat where you sit and I've experienced the same feeling myself. You get to the end of something like this and you think, man I'm not going to be able to do it. The teaching is too high, the power is too weak. There's no way I'm going to be able to live this out. There's too much sin or there's not enough power.

Listen church, for everyone look you take to your sin, take 10 looks to Christ and see that he isn't all sufficient savior eager to save you and eager to sustain your very life. Consider how chapter 5:2 ends. For all the times that you broke God's heart in your sin, for all those times Jesus took all of our sins to God once and for all as a final penalty in payment for our sins and he made a sacrifice for God. And the aroma here, the aroma of what happened on the cross, it was pleasing to God. Language takes us all the way back to Genesis 9 and we think about when Noah made sacrifices to God after the great flood. In that moment, God was pleased with the sacrifice that had been made and with Christ the sacrifice on the cross was sufficient for all time.

If you have your faith in Jesus Christ, it doesn't matter how many times we've lost and we've blown it here, God still saves us. His love still endures. So look to Christ and know that God was pleased to punish him in your place and find strength there at the foot of the cross to engage these behaviors of Ephesians 4. Look at this picture of Christianity and marvel at that what God could do through it and through us in his world today. Look at this picture of Christianity with Jesus as the great standard. And as we see Jesus as the great standard we start to see each other for who we really are.

We're going to let each other down. I'm going to let you down, your pastors are going to let you down. Your life group's going to let you down. We're going to have times when we fail each other. That's okay, because I'm not the standard, not another pastor is the standard. Jesus is the standard. He's the one we're looking to. We're going to have times when we fail each other, when we come up short but we're a family, we're brothers and sisters hanging in this thing together ultimately looking to our father.

So when we come up short we be sure we're keeping our eyes on Jesus and we forgive one another in our weaknesses and we learn to forgive ourselves because Jesus has forgiven us. Forgiveness is a great weapon against evil. Anything that their enemy would want to stir up among us. William Blake said forgiveness is the glory of Christianity to conquer the world through forgiveness. Martin Luther King said, through forgiveness it's how we turn our enemies into friends, through love this is what we do. And this is what we do because this is how Jesus has loved us.

What's the picture as you get to the end of Ephesians 4 and you start looking ahead into verses one and two of chapter five? The picture is that we look to Christ and draw all the resource necessary to live as his people. Because if we're all really honest, we actually don't need moral appendix at the back of the Bible that we can turn to in every moral dilemma and relational issue we face and think okay, how do I live the way of Jesus here and it's word by word detail, we actually don't need that. What we need is a picture of God and what we need is his loving invitation to live it out.

When Jesus came to people he gave them a very simple invitation and in the imitation was this, to follow me, to imitate me or to mimic me. And the disciples had a different understanding of education that we do today, because those disciples understood that okay, what he's inviting me into is I'm going to follow this guy so closely that literally the dust that's kicked up off the ground from his Birkenstocks is going to land on my knees before it hits the ground. They would actually start to mimic him in his ways. When Jesus would sit around the fire and they'd be talking politics they'd actually try to talk politics like Jesus. When Jesus would eat certain food or maybe even when they would go to a restaurant, the disciples would actually start mimicking and imitating all the behaviors of their Lord. It's like Jesus likes olives and Peter doesn't like olives, they go to a restaurant and Jesus is like, we'll have olives, it's like, olives, I love olives. That kind of stuff starts happening.

It's kind of like in an office or in an internship when the intern shows up. Week one, they talk how they talk, they dress how they dress. Week two, they talk like everybody else and they dress like everybody else. We are invited to mimic Jesus and to imitate Jesus in all we say in all we do because the key to getting all these behaviors right that we've zoomed in on is not about avoiding the behaviors, it's about looking to God and doing what we see him do.

I'll close with this. You've heard the expression like father like son. in many ways I'm coming to see through my wife's tutelage that I'm a lot like my dad. I have some really deep habits and patterns that I've learned from him over the years and I'm very grateful. My dad is a great man, not a perfect man but a great man. I would mimic him and imitate him at different times through my life. An in so many ways it's made me the person I am today. If I could just show you two pictures here of me imitating, mimicking my dad.

One is this picture on the left, just would watch my dad shave in the morning. I don't know anyone else would ever do this, I just watched my dad shave in the morning then one day legend has it, I don't remember anything from this, I mean, look at my hair. One day, apparently I just went in the bathroom and I just started shaving my chest, not that I have chest here, not that I do today or did then but I don't know, I'm just like, this is it I've seen dad kind of go here, let me go everywhere and here I am. Just looking at my dad all silly almost clumsy childhood obedience right here but just looking at dad though, I mean, just eating up with dad, loving dad and just kind of doing what I see him do.

Picture on the right. Cadillac Caprice. Any takers? We would joke that you could put \$20, you could take \$20 to the steering wheel of that thing and leave it running downtown Montgomery and somebody just take the \$20. But I mean here we are. One day I just see washing the car and he didn't really invite me to wash the car, I'm just in his house and I'm just kind of loving my dad and I'm following house rules and I just think he's great. So I'm just looking at him and I'm just paying attention to him and one day I come out here, I actually think these are green and white striped overalls I'm wearing and I just start washing the car with Dad because I love my dad and I'm just paying attention to dad. Where's dad, what is dad doing, what is dad saying, what is dad eating. How is dad living, how does dad treat mom, what is dad up to, I'm just following dad.

Listen to me church, we need Ephesians 4 because we need a code of ethics for house rules for what it means for us to live in the kingdom of God because we weren't born into his house. Once you remember we've been adopted in His mercy. It was grace that brought each and every one of us in. Now, we have the father's love, we have our father's name, we have our father's security. So how should we live? What is the picture? Therefore, be imitators of God, His beloved children. Pray with me.

Oh loving father, we need you. Each and every one of us in here, we need to you. Father, for the person who doesn't know you, who doesn't know your love and your sacrifice, father, I pray that they would experience your love and your touch right now in this moment. I pray they would experience that as they repent of their sins in light of your high calling and standard and place their faith in Jesus and I pray they would experience your love invading their heart.

Father, for us your church, however weak and frail we need you. We need you to speak to us. We need your word and your truths to be real to us. Father, the end of all of this really helpful teaching zooming on these different parts of the picture, we pray for the grace to take a step back together, to have this full picture of God and we ask for the strength to step into that picture and to live it out. So father we pray that your spirit would be at work now as you empower us even in this moment, to help us to understand who you are and how you would have us respond. We pray that you help us to have ears, Jesus' name, amen.



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