



# VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

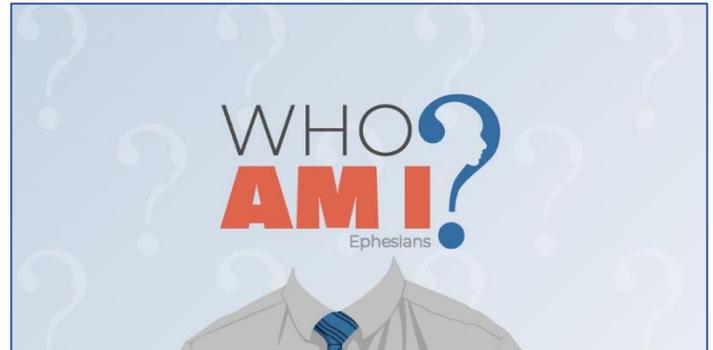
## SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

### We Were Made for More

### WHO AM I?

Ephesians 4:25–32

Tim Badal | March 19, 2023



Grab your Bibles and turn to the book of Ephesians. We've been in this series titled "Who Am I?" and are asking this fundamental, foundational question about our very existence. What defines me? How do I identify myself? We've come to realize there are a lot of opinions about how we are to go about defining and identifying ourselves. The world tells us there are four ways we can identify ourselves.

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- First, we can be identified by our status—our job, what we do for a living, our place in life.
- Still others say we're defined by the stuff we have—our possessions, the things we've acquired. That's what tells the world who we are.
- Still others say it's our skin color, our ethnicity, maybe where we find our homeland. That's how we identify ourselves, who we are.
- Still others—and this is a new phenomenon—say it's through our sexual orientation: who I'm attracted to, what inclinations I may have.

All of these, the Bible says, are faulty ways to identify who you really are. The Bible uses two identifiers in an either/or proposition. The first way you can identify yourself is to define yourself around you. You are living life; you are the captain of your vessel. You are the one who determines what you do, when you do it, how you do it, making that decision based on what pleases you, fills you and moves you from point A to point B. You are in many ways the sun of the universe. You are that which all your life orbits around.

The Bible says we learn that from our forefather Adam. Paul uses this phrase over and over again, "You are in Adam." That is, you identify yourself with the thinking Adam had. Adam had a relationship with God. He had everything he could ask for or imagine in the garden of Eden. But at the first opportunity, he made a decision to get rid of God and determine that he was the god of his universe. Whatever he longed for, whatever he desired, that was what he was going to pursue. The Bible says that when we hold this position, we find ourselves in a place of arrogance and ignorance. We find ourselves in a place of darkened understanding. We're told that this path of living for self and centering the world around ourselves will lead in the end to destruction.

Then there's another alternative. Instead of looking to center our lives and identify ourselves with ourselves, we say, "We are small. We are finite. We are frail. We are in need of someone else." We center our life on Christ. Paul will tell us 25 times in this book that we are in Christ, which is the opposite of being in yourself, being in Adam. This identity says, "I am not the center of the universe. I am not the center of my existence. God is. Jesus Christ is, so everything I say and do, everything I long for in this world, must be funneled through and founded upon God's Word and the truth we find in Jesus Christ our Savior."

Paul writes this letter to a group of individuals who have cast off the old way of thinking that the world revolved around them and their pleasures and desires. Now they have determined that Jesus Christ is the One Whom they will center their lives on. Because we've put our lives in Christ's hands, because we've allowed Christ to redeem us and position us in a place we could never gain on our own, because of the privileges that come through bowing the knee to Christ's lordship in our lives, we now live differently.

As we read this book of Ephesians, we'll see that there's a battle going on. Those of us who are in Christ will have this inclination, desire and temptation to stop living for Him, to stop living the way we've been taught to live through Christ's teachings and example, then go back to the old way. It still looks like fun to be in charge, to be our own boss and to set our own agendas, rather than placing ourselves in the service of the Master. Paul tells us we need to be careful.

At the end of last week's passage, we were told that we have to put off the old things and put on the new. The way we do this is described in verse 23 of chapter four, which tells us we need to be renewed in our minds. That is, we renew the way we think and that renewal will tell us we were made for more.

Let's look at what Paul tells us in this passage, then we'll dig more into the renewing of our minds and how this will lead us to live, talk and think differently as a result of the change in our lives:

<sup>25</sup>Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. <sup>26</sup>Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup>and give no opportunity to the devil. <sup>28</sup>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. <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup>Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup>Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Let's look at this passage under the heading: "You and I were made for more." I'll begin by going back to an illustration I used a couple weeks ago. I told you that when I was a little kid, my grandparents took me to the Shriner's Circus in Chicago. It was a pretty big deal; I'd never been to a circus before. As we arrived in the parking lot, all the sights and sounds told me something special was in the air. I saw all kinds of trucks and trailers everywhere in the parking lot. I saw all the animals that were staged around us, waiting for their turn in the big show. What caught my eye especially were the huge elephants. I think there were four or five of them. I'd never been that close to an elephant before. Nothing separated us but a rope to keep people away from them.

I was amazed to noticed the only thing that kept the elephants in their place was a tiny rope around one foot. I was probably seven or eight years old, so I grabbed my grandfather and asked, "How can a beast so big be held by that little rope?" It didn't make any sense to me. My grandfather said, "Tim, at some point these elephant were told these rope were stronger than the elephants were." Probably when they were young, these elephants had been conditioned to think those ropes were stronger than they really were. Then as they got older, they continued to believe the lie that the ropes—that were so small in comparison to their own great size and strength—still had power over these elephants. The elephants believed what they had been told, even though it wasn't true.

I want to speak as one elephant to a room full of elephants this morning. At some point in our lives, we have been told that our identity—the definition of who we are—is to be defined by the things that hold us back, not the things we've been made to believe. Many of us are being held back by a measly rope, even though in Christ we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing under heaven (Ephesians 1:3). Because we are in Christ, He can do exceedingly abundantly more than we could ever ask for or imagine through us (Ephesians 3:20). Because we are in Christ, we have the power that raised Him from the dead (Ephesians 1:15-21). Yet the world and the devil tempt us to remain held in bondage by these ropes, believing we don't have the power or strength to break free.

In spite of this power, some of us were told early on certain things about ourselves, our abilities and our purpose in this world that have consigned us to be held by a measly old rope. But Paul tells the church, "You were made for more than this." And we see the way this will happen in verse 23: we have to renew our minds.

You see, the elephant's problem wasn't the rope; it was a problem with his thinking. Some of you think the problem you have is your sin. Sin is the rope. It's the measly, tattered old rope that has you thinking you can't go on. The sin isn't the problem; it's your thinking. You and I are not thinking right, because we're not allowing the renewal of our minds to take place. It's the renewing of our minds that allows us to put off the old sins and put on the new righteousness Christ produces in our lives.

So how does this take place? How can we begin to think the right way? Notice first in verse 23 that the renewal is in the present tense in the original Greek. It needs to happen continually, not just once in the past. The elephant didn't say, "At one point in the past I believed the rope will hold me." No, he believes this to be perpetually true. Every time he feels that rope on his leg, he

continues to believe the rope is stronger than he is. In a similar way, we need to renew our minds on a continual basis. The question is: how do we do this?

Some of you might be thinking, "I've got to white knuckle this thing. Come hell or high water, I'm going to renew my mind." The problem is you can't do this on your own. This verb "renew" is in the passive voice. In other words, it's not something we do; it's something that is done by an outside power. This means we have to allow Christ into our lives. We need to say to Him, "I'm no longer going to live for myself; I'm going to live for You. As I do, I'm going to allow Your Word to transform my thinking. I will saturate my mind in Your Word, then as I position myself under its leadership, my thinking is going to change."

You see, our present predicament of sin is not the problem; it's our thinking. God is offering to renew our minds continually, because He wants us to know we were made for more. We are then given a list of things we are made for, so let's center our attention on three specific things for our daily practical lives.

## **Since God made us for more, don't ever forget that...**

### **Our words were made for more.**

We were made for more when we talk. Paul lists various things we are to "put on" and "put off," which gives a checklist to those of us who profess Christ. Are we characterized by the things we're supposed to put on, or are we characterized by the things we should already have been putting off?

Paul begins by speaking about the words we use. Notice in verse 25, he says, *"Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor."* He starts by talking about lying, then he brings up one other aspect of our mouths 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."* So we have a problem with our mouths.

We all know about "morning breath." Most of us would never leave our homes without making sure our breath smells good. It could be that the taste or smell bothers us, but even more, we know it's offensive for us to share our bad breath with other people. Amen? There's nothing worse than a conversation—and I apologize if I've ever done this to you—with someone who has bad breath. You can feel it with every word. You smell it. You can't get away from it.

Paul is talking here about spiritual halitosis. We can have the most pristine breath because we've brushed and flossed and used mouthwash. We even suck on mints or chew gun. We take care of the physical problem. But spiritually, could it be that some of us are not walking out into the world with the fresh breath of the words God has given us? Paul begins by telling us we must put off lying and falsehood. Just because we're followers of Jesus Christ doesn't mean we're not liars. Lying is part of human existence.

In the book [The Day America Told the Truth](#), we're given these facts about lies.

- First, 91% of us lie on a regular basis.
- By the age of two or three, 90% of children have learned the concept of lying.
- Based on studies that have been done, it's estimated that 60% of adults cannot have a ten-minute conversation without lying at least once. Within those first ten minutes, three lies have already been told.

Why do we lie? We lie to save face. We lie to shift blame. We lie to avoid confrontation. We lie to get our way. We lie to be nice. We lie to make ourselves feel better. On average, men and women lie four times a day. That adds up to almost 1,500 lies in a year.

Also, guys lie more than women. The women all say, "Amen." I don't know why we lie more, but we do. It's probably because we're trying to answer all the questions the women around us ask that we don't know how to answer. Right? Oh, I just got myself into trouble.

The number one lie both genders tell is this: "Nothing is wrong. I'm fine We lie for a lot of reasons. We lie to make ourselves look good, to get out of trouble, to avoid hurting someone's feeling. 80% of women sometimes tell harmless white lies to avoid hurting a person's feelings. Well, how would they feel if they knew you were lying to them? This is part of the problem.

Let's move on. Kids struggle with lying. Nine out of ten middle schoolers surveyed admitted to regularly cheating on their homework which is lying about the work they've done. We also see that lying is costly. Fifteen million Americans are victims to someone lying that they're you. It's called identity theft. This costs about \$50 billion in damages a year. Sadly, lying also incorporates cheating. We're cheating on ourselves. 57% of men admit to infidelity in their past or present relationship. You would think ladies would be better, but their number is 54%. We're constantly lying, through our words and deeds. However, we're told that 50% of our lies are never detected. We're really good at this because we cover one lie with another lie. Sometimes we lie so much we no longer remember the truth. It's clear that we have a problem with lying.

The second issue with our mouths that Paul addresses is "corrupting talk." Paul tell us we should let no corrupting or unwholesome talk come from our mouths. Other translations use the word "filthy." The Greek word speaks of something that is rotten, corrupt, disgusting, rank, foul, putrid or worthless. Generally this would then include conversations that are filthy, suggestive or off-putting because they're off-color or filled with profanity or inuendoes. In the wider sense, this could refer to conversations that are frivolous, empty, idle or worthless. Paul will deal with swearing in Ephesians 5:4, when he says, *"Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving."* We'll get to this next week.

The problem is this. To those of us who have put on Christ and have been given new life in Christ, Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says, "Your words were made for more. You can't tell lies, even though you want to. You can't use corrupting words. You can't use profanity. Your words were made for more." So we need to examine our words and think, "How many lies have I told this week and why did I do that? How much profanity did I use this week? How much profanity was I around through my choices of what I watched or listened to? Am I centering myself on God and His Word? Am I putting on this truth from God's Word, or are my deceitful desires lying to me, telling me this is who I am?"

The Bible makes it clear that the reason our words are so important is because our mouth is a window into our soul. Jesus said, "Out of the overflow of the heart, the hands move." No. "Out of the overflow of the heart, the feet operate." Nope. *"Out of the overflow of the heart,"* Jesus says, *"the mouth speaks"* (Matthew 12:34).

So if you want to know what's going on inside, you can say all you want about your profession of faith, but your words do the talking. Paul says we must put on truth. We must speak the truth to our neighbors because we are members of one another. We also must speak words that are *"good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear"* (verse 29).

Listen, I don't want to beat you up. If you're struggling with cursing or lying, I'm not saying you're a terrible person. We are all sinners in need of grace. But here's why Paul singles this out. He's saying, "If you're a follower of Jesus Christ, then your number one desire should be to proclaim the excellencies of Him Who called you out of darkness and brought you into His wonderful light." We're to tell people about Christ.

As he says in Ephesians 5:4, our words should be filled with thanksgiving. Why? Because we are sinners saved by grace. What good does it do for us to share the gospel one minute, then lie to the person the next? If we're known to be liars, when we share the gospel, what will that person know is true? "I found out the sales report you said was ready wasn't ready. Is what you say about Jesus also not true?"

If our words are filled with profanity, slander and other unbecoming things, how can we speak of the purity, righteousness and goodness of Jesus Christ? The Bible says we can't speak out of both sides of our mouths. The same well doesn't produce both fresh water and salt water. These things are indicators that we've not put off the old and put on the new.

One of the things I've done regarding speaking the truth, particularly regarding not using profanity, is I've taught my three boys that they can observe what I'm doing, then they're permitted to do the same. "You can use whatever words I use." I know this happens anyway—children imitate their parents. I realize I have no right to punish them for repeating what I say. That's the old "Do as I say and not as I do" idea. But this has helped me realize there's nothing worse than hearing my child lie, swear or use obscenities. We might not think about these things when we do them, but we certainly don't like it when our children do them.

So what does it mean to renew our minds regarding our words? Ask yourself, "Would Jesus use these words? Would Jesus tell that joke? Would Jesus use this lie?" If Jesus is a liar, then we should be most pitied of all people, because He has sold us a bill of goods. You're thinking, "Of course He didn't lie. He's Jesus." But what if He lied about some things? If that were so, we wouldn't know what

is true or false. If we know we need to hear a pure salvation message and about the purity of Christ, how much more important is it for us to also speak truth? The Bible says, "How will they know unless they have heard?" How can we share truth if our words are so out of place?

### **Our work was made for more.**

Paul says our words were made for more. God wants to grace your words, so they might be of great benefit to all who hear them. Then second, our work was also made for more. Paul continues in verse 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."*

The word "steal" here is in the present tense. It speaks of something that is continually being practiced. There are two things we need to know about this thief. He's too lazy to work and he's too selfish to share. He's a taker, not a giver. Paul says we need to put this behavior off.

When you go to work or school, or when you have a responsibility, you are to do it. Any putting off of your responsibilities is theft. To have someone else do your homework is thievery; you have stolen from someone and taken it as your own. In the workplace, we can steal time, we can steal items, we can steal all manner of things. By nature, we are more given to stealing than to sharing. Paul says the people of God must be sharing people, not stealing people.

Paul wants to us ask, "What thinking causes us to steal?" The thought process that brings us to stealing is that God is not good enough to provide for me. He's not strong enough to take care of me. Therefore I must take my life into my own hands and get what God will not give me." That's rebellious thinking. That's a form of unfaithfulness to the God Who has said He's given us everything we need under heaven. But we have put on self instead of Christ. We're saying, "God isn't going to provide this for me, so I have to get it for myself." We aren't trusting that God will provide what we need to survive, so we steal.

Paul also says that anyone who does not share is stealing. The idea is we don't have anything that is truly our own. You don't have your job, you don't have your possessions, you don't have any sort of wealth on your own. These are all things God has given you. He gave you the abilities, strength and everything else you need. God is asking us not to keep these gifts for ourselves, but to share them with others.

So in your work life, school life or whatever your area of responsibility is, are you stealing? Are you cutting corners? Or are you seeing these things as something God gave you to steward, thus doing your best and sharing the fruit of it with others. That is what Jesus modeled for us.

This will change the way we approach tomorrow morning. Our work isn't for us; it's an opportunity for us to use the gifts God has given for the betterment of others. Paul is saying that our work was made for more. But it goes even deeper than this.

### **Our wounds were made for more.**

In verses 31 and 32, Paul tells us that our wounds were made for more. He writes, *"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice."* Why would these things be in us? As followers of Jesus Christ, why would we be filled with bitterness and not grace? Why would we have wrath and anger, instead of being calm? Why would we slander or speak maliciously? It's because people in this world will hurt us. Paul isn't saying that our hurts don't matter. He's actually telling us to let them matter even more in our lives, because our wounds were made for more. When we are wounded and let the sun go down on our anger, those wounds can fester into bitterness and resentment.

If you're struggling with unforgiveness, bitterness and resentment because of something someone has done to you, I would encourage you to go to our website and look for the sermon series on forgiveness from the book of Philemon. That will give you more than I have time to give you this morning. In that series, we looked at the when's and what's and how's of forgiveness from a book that was dedicated to the topic of forgiving well.

The reason our wounds were made for more is because we need to go past them, moving past verse 31 to verse 32: *"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ Jesus forgave you."* Because God in Christ Jesus forgave us, He calls us to forgive others.

In the next chapter, Paul will tell us we need to be imitators of God as dearly loved children. We're to walk in love by watching the example Christ has given us. When we're hurt, we have a decision to make, asking, "Will I put on the things the world and the devil tell me to, or will I put on Christ?"

Someone once said, "Self-pity weeps on the devil's shoulders," turning to Satan for comfort. His invitation is this: "Come unto me, all you who are grieved, peeved, misused and disgruntled, then I will spread on the sympathy. You will find me to be a never-failing source of the meanest attitudes and the most selfish sort of misery. At my altar, you may feel free to fail and fall, to sigh and fret. There I will feed your soul on fears and indulge your ego with envy, jealousy, bitterness and spite. There I will excuse you from every cross, every duty, every hardship, permitting you to yield to temptation." The devil wants you to feel like a victim and to live there—never forgiving. But here's the problem with a victim mentality. It makes us think we're always the victim, forgetting that we too are victimizers. Paul agrees that we might be victims, but remember that we have victimized others as well. More importantly, who did we victimize? Jesus Christ Himself. We offended Him. We hurled insults at Him. We rebelled against Him. We put Him on the cross, forcing Him to die for our sins. Yet He forgives us. He loves us and He does not hold bitterness or malice toward us. He forgives. Those wounds Christ endured on the cross were made for our redemption. So how much more should our wounds be used for redemptive purposes for those around us, if we would just forgive?

So how do we do this? Let me close with two statements. Think through these to see how they might apply to your words, your work and your wounds.

## **Remember in your search for more that...**

### **The devil loves to steal, so don't give him any space.**

Paul says in verse 27, "*Give no opportunity to the devil.*" The NIV translation says, "*Do not give the devil a foothold.*" Don't give him an inch, because he'll take a mile. Some of us are allowing the devil to have a foothold in our lives. Maybe we say, "But that's just the way I talk. That's just the way I work. You need to know the people I'm around. I can explain why I'm stealing." Or maybe we're thinking, "I've been wronged in so many ways, I can't get past this." Brothers and sisters, whatever it is, do not give the devil an inch, because he will destroy your life. Jesus says in John 10:10, "*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*" We must stop listening to the devil.

### **The Spirit is preparing you for greatness, so don't push Him away.**

Here's the answer for us: the Holy Spirit. Verse 30 says, "*Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*" Don't give the devil a foothold, but also don't grieve the Holy Spirit. Why? The Spirit is preparing you and me for greatness, so don't push Him away.

Every day we need to wake up and say, "Lord, by Your Spirit, renew me. By Your Spirit, define me. By Your Spirit, lead me. As You lead and guide me, my words are going to change. My work environment and my view of work is going to change. The way I view my wounds is going to change. As I let You into my life by hanging out with the Holy Spirit, I am forced to grow and mature."

Let me close with this. When I was dating Amanda—maybe you don't know this, so it might come as a shock—I was the immature one in the relationship. One of the things I fell in love with about her was her poise and maturity. She was unlike any other young lady I knew. I was surprised she wanted to hang around with a goofball like me. As I look back at it now, I'm sure she was wondering, "Why am I with this guy?" When I talked, she often asked, "Why do you say that?" Or, "Why do you act that way?" We were both in college; she worked so hard, while I coasted. I did whatever it took just to get by. She would ask me, "Why don't you just work harder at this?" But that just blew by me; I didn't care.

Again this might be a surprise, but I got myself into some trouble one day. I was given one phone call, so I called her. "Come and get me, and bring some money." When we left that place that will remain nameless, I remember looking at her when the Holy Spirit said to me, "This girl isn't going to hang around you if you're going to be immature. You've got to grow up. If you want this relationship with her, things have to change." I thought, "I do want this relationship," so I had to make some decisions. I had to put off the immature thinking, this immature way of living, so I could be the person I know she wanted me to be, that she needed me to be.

Now let's equate that to the relationship we have with our Father through Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We can't hang around God while doing these things. God's going to say to us, "You were made for more than this." He's going to convict us, then we're going to be really bothered when we hear Him say, "What are you doing? Why are you doing that? You're better than that."

Now, I don't want you to go away thinking, "I'm just not going to use bad words anymore. They're history. And I blanking mean it this time!" That isn't going to work. But if you will put yourself into a closer relationship with God and His Word, the Holy Spirit will make you great. He will give you the ability to accomplish what you can't do on your own. If we will allow Him to move in our lives and not grieve Him, He will prepare us for what we were made to be. So center yourself on that. Devote yourself to that. Don't try to grip this thing like a steering wheel—10 and 2— thinking, "I'm going to fix this on my own." That doesn't work. But if you say, "Holy Spirit, lead me, guide me, use me. I'm going to follow You. I'm going to model my life by what I see modeled in You," then and only then will our words, our work and our wounds be made for more.

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