

“The Renewed Community”
Ephesians 4:25-5:2
Mercy Hill Church | February 25, 2024

Big Idea: As people created and renewed in the image of God, we are called to love one another in community through our words, hands and hearts – as Christ has loved and forgiven us.

Background & Overview to Ephesians

- Ephesians written by the Apostle Paul -- not to an individual (like 1 & 2 Timothy) nor to a specific church community but rather -- to a cluster of churches in Ephesus (and surrounding areas), mostly gentile (non-Jewish) believers. Consequently, the contents of this letter are less specific (re: does not necessarily address specific issues in one church) and more general.
- Like many of Paul’s letters, the first half of Ephesians (1-3) contains doctrine while the second half (4-6) contains the implications and application. The first half of the letter reminds the believers of the Gospel message: how God’s grace through faith in Jesus has led to their salvation and united them together as God’s people. The second half of the letter spells out the implications of how they are to live out the gospel as believers.
- This is important because true and right belief (doctrine - orthodoxy) ought to lead to proper behavior (duty – orthopraxy).
- Another way of saying this is when we rightfully believe who God truly is and what He has done for us (the Gospel message), we will rightfully respond in trust and obedience of Him
- Indicative: What God has done (for us) => Imperative: What God commands us to do (for Him and others)
- This is extremely important because what we are about to read this morning falls in the second half of Ephesians and what we’re going to read is, in essence, a series of list of commands
 - 12 imperatives (commands) in the passage; commands to “take off” (v.22) and to “put on” (v.24)
 - But keep in mind what the Apostle Paul has already reminded them of: what God has done for them (indicative) – namely grace through Jesus Christ!

1. Instead of Lying, Speak Truth In Love (v.25)

- Taking off falsehood, lies, untruths, partial truths – rather speak the truth, in honesty, without deception or manipulation, in love
 - Zechariah 8:16 ¹⁴ For thus says the LORD of hosts: “As I purposed to bring disaster to you when your fathers provoked me to wrath, and I did not relent, says the LORD of hosts, ¹⁵ so again have I purposed in these days to bring good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah; fear not. ¹⁶ These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace; ¹⁷ do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the LORD.”
- Temptation to say lies – or half-truths: convenient, benefits us, perhaps helps us to look better or serves to our advantage and convenience...
- Truth = what is factually true and what is ultimately true: Gospel truth (cf. 21b “as the truth is in Jesus”)
 - Not just truth, but truth in love (cf. v.15 “speaking the truth in love”)
- **Why? Because we are one body**
 - Letter written to the church community: the family of faith.

- Truthfulness (and honesty) is the foundation of any relationship. Without it, the relationship is a lie!
 - No truth => no trust => no relationship.
- If we are one body as a church community, family of faith, then we need to put away falsehood and speak truth to one another, be honest with one another.
 - Real relationships and connections within the church community based on honesty and truthfulness.

2. **Instead of Unrighteous Anger, Have Righteous Anger (vv.26-27)**

- Is being angry a sin? Was Jesus ever angry (cf. Matthew 21:12-13, 23:25-32)? Did Jesus ever sin? (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 John 3:5)?
 - As Christians, as a church community, we ought to be upset and angry over certain things: racism, the killing of unborn babies, the persecution and massacre of Christians around the world, the poor, the orphans, the widows being exploited, girls (and boys) being kidnapped and sold as sex workers, the name and word of God being distorted by false teachers and preachers or profaned, our own sins, millions of people never hearing or knowing the gospel and being condemned for their sin, etc.
- “...do not let the sun go down on your anger” – a natural time limit (or expiration date) (cf. Deut 24:14-15)
- **Why? Because we don't want to give Satan an opportunity**
 - Unrighteous anger gives Satan a foothold or grip onto our hearts and minds that allows him to create more room in our hearts and minds for (more) sin.
 - Sin comes from our sinful nature (within us), the world (society), and Satan. Let us not be clueless nor naïve about Satan and his schemes (cf. Ephesians 6:11-12)

3. **Instead of Stealing, Work Honestly (v.28)**

- In the context of an agrarian society, farmers had good seasons and bad seasons – which would lead to the temptation to steal from others. No welfare or unemployment back then.
 - Instead of stealing, work diligently and honestly
- **Why? So we can be generous with others in need**
 - Upside nature of God's Kingdom and way of life
 - We see our work not just as a means of self-fulfillment, self-prospering but also as a means of fulfilling others and prospering others! To help others, to bless others – not just our biological family but spiritual family! (cf. Acts 2:42-47)

4. **Instead of Tearing Others Down, Build Up (vv.29-30)**

- Notice how much of the focus on Christian behavior is on our words -- what we say, what comes out of our mouths and heart? (cf. vv.15, 25, 31, James 3:1-12)
- “Corrupt” = filthy, rotten, sour, bitter
- Ever wonder why God created and gave us two ears and only one mouth?
- **Why? So we can extend grace to each other and not grieve the Holy Spirit**
 - Grace – “unmerited favor” or “undeserved blessing”
 - Grieving the Holy Spirit (cf. Isaiah 63:10)
 - When we tear each other down with our words, we disrupt and ruin the unity we have in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit who has marked and sealed both you and the other person doesn't depart or abandon us – but grieves.

5. **Instead of Bitterness & Anger, Be Kind & Forgiving (vv.31-32)**

- We are to take off bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and slander.
 - Possible progression from the internal (heart attitude) to the external (outward expression)
 - Bitterness => Wrath (rage) = initial outburst => Anger = “steady festering” or “seething anger” => Clamor = “loud shout” or “scream” (also used in expressions of joy or sadness) – lack of restraint => Slander = “blasphemy” or defamation
- Put on kindness, tender-hearted and forgiveness
 - Kindness
 - One of the fruit of the Spirit (cf. Galatians 5:22)
 - Kindness of God in the face of Israel’s sin (cf. Jeremiah 33:11)
 - Tender-hearted = compassionate, sympathetic to the needs of others
 - Often used of God’s heart towards sinners (people) (cf. Matthew 9:36, 14:14)
 - Forgive
 - Not just forgive others, but also to seek & ask for forgiveness (cf. Matthew 5:21-24)
 - Forgiveness is so important that Jesus in essence says don’t bother making an offering at the altar to God if things aren’t right between you and another person (i.e. be reconciled first, then worship God)
 - Why? Because can we truly worship who God is – God of grace, forgiveness and truth – while we’ve sinned against another person?
- **Why? Because we have been forgiven by God in Jesus**
 - Matthew 18:21-35 (Parable of the Unforgiving Servant): How many times do we need to forgive others?
 - “He who is forgiven much, forgives much”
 - When we understand the depths of our sins – in acts and in thoughts, and we understand God’s grace and forgiveness through Jesus Christ, how dare we hold onto bitterness, resentment and anger towards one another?

6. **Be Imitators of God by Walking in Love (vv.1-2)**

- “Therefore” – ultimately, what we are called to do? Imitate God, imitate Jesus!
 - Summary of the previous verses (and also the following verses)
- “Beloved children”
 - Beloved – loved by who? God the Father!
 - Children – of who? Of God!
 - Like father, like son; like mother, like daughter. If God is our heavenly Father, we as His children will grow in His likeness and resemblance
- Why? Because of Jesus' sacrificial love for us
 - We grow in likeness to God because we are God’s children – He has called us to Him!
 - We don’t love others to earn or make God love us – we love others because God first loved us
 - We don’t forgive others so God will then forgive us – we forgive others because God first forgave us through Jesus
- All these commands to “take off” the “old self” (v.21) and “put on the new self” (v.24) is in light of what God has done for through Jesus Christ!
- Indicative: What God has done (for us) => Imperative: What God commands us to do (for Him and others)

- The question is not how should I act and what should my attitude be in order to be a Christian, but rather, as a Christian, what is appropriate behavior and conduct that is fitting for me as a Christian, one who has been saved by grace through faith in Jesus?
- When we fail to live out God's commands, it's often because we have failed to believe what God has done for us! We demonstrate we have received and understand the grace of God by following the commands of God.
- The root of grace in our lives is revealed by the fruit of our lives
- This is a regular, daily, moment by moment: taking off, putting on what is appropriate and right as Christ-followers.
 - For God's glory that the power of the gospel is able to transform us, not just individually, but as a renewed community, as a church, as a witness to the power of the gospel and the spread of the gospel!

Big Idea: As people created and renewed in the image of God, we are called to love one another in community through our words, hands and hearts – as Christ has loved and forgiven us.

Reflection Questions

- Why is it important to get the order correct (indicative => imperative) in understanding and applying this passage? What happens when we get it backwards?
- Which of the areas do you struggle with? Why? How might remembering the "why" (and the Gospel) help you?
- Who are some people in your life you have harbored bitterness, frustration, hurt or anger towards in the church (or elsewhere)? What next steps can you take towards forgiving (and reconciling with) them? What happens if you don't?
- What are ways you can pray for and help foster in our church a community which lives out Christ-like love in these areas?
- Parent Corner: What area(s) of growth can you pray for and help nurture in your child? How are you modeling what forgiving others looks like to your child?