

Intro. Read Eph. 4:25-32

Blessed and satisfied are those who tell the truth, control their anger, work hard, talk right and act kindly. What could be easier? Not only is it not easy, it is impossible without the transforming love of God in Christ. We are learning in our study of Ephesians that our behavior is driven by our sinful hearts that are dead, enslaved and condemned. Because of God's great love, he provides complete deliverance from sin by faith in Jesus Christ's substitutionary and atoning death. The good news of the gospel is that God gives hopeless sinners a new heart when they turn from sin to embrace Christ as Savior and Lord.

The gospel is on display. God's powerful love to save and transform lives can be seen in his church. The new life that is created when one is saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ is reflected in our new calling from God (4:1), our new union with Christ and each other (4:15), our new submission to Christ's authority (4:20-21) and our new identity being created in righteousness and holiness (4:24). By God's grace, the life of the child of God is completely new. Like a complete makeover, the old is gone and the new has come.

We are learning that living the new life in the context of the community of faith is both the most compelling display of the gospel as well as the most satisfying experience of knowing God. While the new life has glorious potential, we are also learning that it must be lived out by faith and obedience every day. This daily process of living our new lives in Christ is a significant challenge. Our experience demonstrates that displaying the gospel and experiencing satisfaction in God can quickly become about other things. Truth telling, anger, work, hurtful talk and reactions are the ingredients that can quickly give our lives the appearance and aroma of the old, the corrupt and the dissatisfying.

This morning we are confronted with five examples that help train us in how to live the new life. These examples come from your life and mine as they have to do with our speech, work, anger and reactions. Two important learning devices are used in these verses that are intended to change the way we approach our new lives. One is showing us the new thinking behind the new behavior. Don't just do something because you are told to, do something because you love God, love people and desire to see the gospel advanced in the church. Being made new in our minds is at the same time something God does and we learn by cooperation with him. So we will see clearly a new way of thinking with new values.

The second learning device is repetition. The life shaping influence is missed if we narrow our view too much. We need the repetition of the bigger picture of all five practical examples of behaviors and thinking that frankly at times frustrate us and cause havoc in our lives and relationships. So get ready for repeated examples that will show you how to live the new life . . . do you have it yet? . . . let's do it again until you do . . . let's repeat it one more time to be sure.

The general pattern of new thinking taught in 4:17-24 is summarized by the decisive commitments of putting off former ways, being renewed in your mind and putting on new ways. This pattern is stamped into our thinking as we consider it with regard to the practical life activities covered in 4:25-32. There is not a person in the room that does not struggle in some way with truth telling, anger, wanting things that are not yours, talking right and reacting wrong. Let's take the training to learn the new way of thinking behind the new way of living provided by God in Christ.

Live the new life example #1 – Tell the truth.**4:25**

Speaking truthfully can be challenging in the multitude of relationships and circumstances you find yourself in. Not speaking truthfully is irresponsible and destructive to those around us. Note the new way of thinking regarding speaking truth as it unfolds in verse 25.

Put off . . . falsehood, speaking that which is untrue in many and various forms.

Put on . . . speak the truth with people around you.

Why/Renewed thinking . . .

- Because God speaks truth openly and you are his child. Zech. 8:16 quote; E 4:21; 5:9
Cmp. 4:24; 5:1
- Because you now belong to one another as a united body. 4:15-16; 5:30

Truth builds relational unity. Untruth destroys relational unity.

Live the new life example #2 – Solve problems quickly.**4:26-27**

Personal resentment, hurt feelings toward people, brooding and exploding are all common responses when you find yourself confronted with people or circumstances that provoke you. Directing the passion of anger in a solution oriented manner is both right and difficult. Being angry without sinning is the goal. How is God at work in you to help you control and limit your anger?

Put off . . . sinful anger; anger that is expressed in ways that are wrong and hurtful. ‘the anger of man’ spoken of in James 1:19-20

Put on . . . prompt and appropriate responses to provocation. Be angry but yet don’t stay angry for very long. The implication is clearly directed at responding appropriately to provocation rather than using anger in a sinful way to get your way.

Why/Renewed thinking . . .

- Because God has promised to produce good from evil. Psalm 4:4
- Because the devil uses unresolved conflict to disrupt unity in the body. Jas 4:7; 1Pet 5:8ff

Live the new life example #3 – Work hard.**4:28**

Whether it is a strong sense of entitlement or actively taking things that do not belong to you, there are many forms of stealing. Apparently some thieves became believing members of the Ephesian church and were struggling with leaving the old and living the new. New life thinking is both clear and effective.

Put off . . . do not steal.

Put on . . . work with your own hands. This implies hard labor that produces rather than stealing that is productive with little effort. Honest work is work that is beneficial to others; good.

Why/Renewed thinking . . .

- Because God works and has ordained work to be productive. Phil.2:13; Psa.8:3ff
- Because there are people who need your help. 1Thess.4:11; 2Thess.3:10-12

Live the new life example #4 – Talk right. 4:29-30

Words are powerful tools in both harmful and beneficial ways. Unwholesome, corrupting words damage relationships. Encouraging and good words have incredible power to build someone up. Your talk is certain evidence of new life thinking.

Put off . . . Stop corrupt, unwholesome and harmful talk.

Put on . . . Talk to each other with words that are encouraging, appropriate and grace filled.

Why/Renewed thinking . . .

- Because God gives grace to others through your words. ‘those who hear’
- Because bad talk is an attack on God’s Holy Spirit. 2:22; 4:3,4

Live the new life example #5 – Act right. 4:31-32

This example returns our attention to the topic of anger and our sinful reactions when provoked or hurt. There are powerful responses that have been deeply embedded in our thinking that progress from a resentful attitude to public shouting and abusive language. New life thinking is powerful to dig into the deeply held habits of words and actions that we use for comfort and safety when under attack.

Put off . . . Put away all forms of evil words and reactions. 6 terms w/summary ‘all malice.’

Put on . . . Kindness, compassion and forgiveness toward those who provoke/hurt you.

Why/Renewed thinking . . .

- Because you display that God is kind, tenderhearted and forgiving when provoked. 2:7
- Because you are forgiven by God. Luke 7:41-50

Tell the truth.

Solve problems quickly.

Work hard.

Talk right.

Act right.

Why . . . values that shape new thinking . . .

- You display God's likeness, character for others to see.
- You protect and build the unity and union of those in Christ.
- You appreciate the unseen powers at work in people.

Take Aways

1. Confront and deal with specific old life behaviors.
2. Purpose to cooperate and change at your 'renewed thinking' process. What godly, new life values do you under-appreciate?
3. Review your understanding of the gospel in terms of God's grace, patience, kindness and forgiveness toward you in Christ Jesus.

Study Questions

1. Read Ephesians 4:17-32 as a group. Then have your best reader read the passage while others listen. Share your observations of key terms, repeated themes and general direction of the passage.
2. Many have heard that the primary focus of 4:25-32 is godly communication. Defend that view with observations from the passage. Is that view complete or adequate to include the message of these verses? If not, what is the theme or primary focus?
3. Find in the introduction the two learning devices mentioned and share whether you see them in the passage and how important they are to the message of the verses.
4. Review the five examples of new life living. What observations or aspects light you up a bit? Why?
5. Share with your group an aspect of your thinking that is or has been deeply habituated to resist new life values . . . and as a result produces the corrupt fruit of hurt feelings and broken relationships.
6. How can the process of put off/be made new in your thinking/put on be incorporated into parenting? Discipleship? Marriage? Counseling? Small group?
7. Compare new life thinking to the two greatest commandments. Does a pattern emerge that supports a life of love as opposed to a life of rules/prohibitions? What is the pattern? Luke 10:27; Dt. 6:5
8. Pray for each other and the renewed pursuit of living the new life with new life values.