

Lesson 5 – Peace and the Power of Words

Text: Ephesians 4:17-32

Introduction

Congregations of the first century often consisted of individuals from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds. Devout Jews had a very strict moral code governing sexual behaviors and ethics, whereas Gentile attitudes, especially toward sexual behavior, were much laxer. Cultural differences made assimilation of these groups into a single functioning unit more difficult. The second part of the Ephesian letter stresses practical applications of being a disciple of Christ.

In this section Paul calls the Ephesians to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which they had been called!” Being a follower of Jesus is not only about what you believe. It is about what you do!

Section 1 – “Put off the Old Self”

There are two major parts of this text. Please spend most of your time on Section 2 – “Power of Words”

Opening Question: Which is more important for the Christian – what you believe or the way you live?

Text – Ephesians 4:17-24

¹⁷ So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

²⁰ That, however, is not the way of life you learned ²¹ when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Teaching Points

1. **1 Corinthians 6:9-11** and **Romans 1:21-23** are passages that give more details about the behavior Paul is condemning. He states that these practices are inconsistent with the Christian lifestyle. Believers must change from the way they lived before they put on Christ.
2. Many of us who were “raised in the church” didn’t have to make “radical changes” in behavior when we “became Christians”. For us, what does it mean to be “crucified with

Christ”, “to be made new in the attitudes of our minds” and “to put on the new self”?
Galatians 2:20; Galatians 3:27

Section 2 – “Living in peace with one another – the Power of Words”

Text – Ephesians 4:25-32

²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶ “In your anger do not sin”[Ⓜ]: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold. ²⁸ Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Opening Question: Do you believe the following adage is true? “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me!”

Give some examples when words were hurtful for you! When words were helpful for you!

Teaching Points:

1. A major theme of the book is unity in Christ even though we come from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. The famous “ones passage” of Ephesians 4:4-6 precedes this section. Paul is attempting to build a “unified” blended family!
2. How we communicate with others and the attitudes we display often influence how we “get along” with each other.
3. In this section, Paul lists the behaviors that must be **eliminated** from our interactions, but he immediately follows each with a behavior that should be **adopted**. If we adopt these behaviors, the family will be more unified!

Stop

Do

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Put off falsehood | Speak truthfully |
| • Don’t hold on to anger | Be reconciled |
| • Stop stealing | Work to have something to share |
| • Avoid unwholesome talk | Say things to build others up |

Practicing the Peace of Christ

- Get rid of bitterness, rage, anger, slander, malice
- Be kind, compassionate, forgiving
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Some Questions to Consider:

1. How can our words/behavior “**grieve the Holy Spirit**”?
2. Does “letting the sun go down on your anger” make the situation **better** or **worse**? What will be the result if we stay angry over an extended period? How do we sometimes justify our anger while judging others/ anger?
3. What are some common and accepted forms of lying in our culture? Paul tells us to “speak the truth”. Being silent when one should speak is also wrong. Is there a time when you knew you should speak out but didn’t?

Personal Reflections:

1. Although the immediate context of this passage is how Christians communicate and interact with fellow Christians, the personal application is much broader. Christians serve as Ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20) and since we have put on Christ, our interactions with others should imitate His ways. Our culture is dominated by social media. Some people write things behind the relative anonymity of blog/post/tweet that are mean-spirited, derogatory, belittling, and otherwise unbecoming of an Ambassador for Christ. Our speech should be seasoned with salt (Colossians 4:6) and directed toward encouraging others in the hope that our words and actions will lead someone to Christ!
2. What mindsets and/or behaviors do I need to “put off” to better contribute to the unity of this body of believers (i.e., our Class, Congregation)?

Source of the following is unknown!

10 Ways To Foster Gracious Speech

1. Regularly reflect on the unbounded grace God has lavished on us.
2. Remember God will hold us accountable for every word we speak (Matthew 12:36).
3. Constantly check our hearts for sinful attitudes and motivations. (See Matthew 12:34-36.)
4. Ask God to heal old hurts, soothe anger, and humble pride.
5. Refuse to use "corrupt" speech – any words that wound, discourage, or tear down.
6. Commit to using "good" words – kind and gracious words that build up and encourage.
7. Find something positive with which to begin and end every conversation.
8. Don't waste time talking about things that can't be changed.
9. Focus on the other person. Ask questions about them and their feelings.
10. Exercise self-control. Sometimes the most gracious thing to say is nothing.