

Ephesians, Chapter Four, Lesson Six

WALKING IN KINDNESS Ephesians 4:25-32

STIMULATE

** If you will open your Bibles to Ephesians, chapter four, I would like to ask to look back at verse 22 from last week's study. How did Paul address the position of a Christian with reference to their old way of life?

They have (by God's grace) repented and laid it aside, no longer following its deceptive demands.

** As we are "Walking in Truth" we will reflect both the righteousness and holiness of our God. To grow in our ability to reflect godly characteristics, we determined last week to look closely at the "habits" of our life. I hope that you made the time to prayerfully remove or add those habits to your walk with the Lord which would enhance the glory He receives from your life!

The Lord has impressed on my own heart the need to spend more time with my beloved wife. As ministry challenges and opportunities present themselves, I must be ever mindful of the first priority that she represents in my life.

MOTIVATE

** For today, as we draw chapter four to a close, let me ask you a question. How do people know that you are a Christian? Is it because you go to church, or carry a Bible, or even pray before you eat a meal? The apostle Paul is going to show us that by "Walking in Kindness" we will be manifesting our Christianity in five specific ways. Let's look at our passage together - Ephesians 4:25-32.

Read passage (V.25-28) (V.29-32)

Opening Prayer

Walking in Kindness

INVESTIGATE

V.25 ** Paul opened this chapter in verse one with a call to walk worthy. He then painted a beautiful picture of the unity of the Body and the uniqueness of each Believer. We have seen that Christ has given each one of us a spiritual gift to be used for His glory and that as we use our gift the Body is built up, strengthened against Satan's schemes and is caused to grow by God Himself. Paul also reminded us of the vast difference between the child of God and the child of Satan as he encouraged us with the reality that we have laid aside the old man and put on the new.

With all of that as background, Paul now gives us five ways to exhibit our Christian life. If we are "Walking in Kindness" what is the first way we will display the genuineness of our Christianity?

1. By speaking the truth with one another!

We are "laying aside falsehood" and should "speak truth, each of you, with his neighbor".
cf. 1Corinthians 6:9

"laying aside" translates "apotithemi" and means to discard, strip off or to cast away.

When the men who were stoning Stephen wanted to free themselves to do their evil deed, they "apotithemied" or "laid aside" their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. cf. Acts 7:58

As Christians, we free ourselves to be good witnesses for Christ by "laying aside" falsehood and speaking truth!

** How does the world view lying?

The end justifies the means. If lying will get you what you want - it is perfectly acceptable, you might even get to be President someday if you are good enough at it! cf. John 8:44

** According to this verse, what is the motive for us to be speaking truthfully with one another?

"we are members of one another" We are all members of His body and as such we cannot get involved with tearing it down through falsehood. cf. Ephesians 5:28-30

V.26 ** Alright then, let's look at the second way to display our Christianity while we are "Walking in Kindness". Is Paul suggesting that we can do that by getting mad? No - Me genoito

2. Rather, by how we control our anger!

At the outset of this chapter Paul encouraged us to live with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love. And he will end this chapter with a direct command, "let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice". He would not contradict himself in the middle of those two statements.

** So what does he mean by "be angry"?

There is a time for anger - Jesus Himself expressed extreme anger, but was it because of something done to Him?

No, "...while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats; but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1Peter 2:23)
cf. Romans 12:17-21, 1Peter 3:8-9

** Then if we are not to become angry when something evil or unjust is done to us personally, when are we to "be angry"?

When God is dealt with in an evil or unjust manner by humanity. cf. Psalm 69:9, Psalm 97:10, John 2:13-17 and Matthew 21:12-13

** Why would Paul put a time limit on this type of "holy indignation" here in verse 26?

Because we are human beings. Even though saved, in very little time that which begins as a righteous indignation can quickly degenerate into an evil form of anger. That which the child of God is never to entertain.

** How do we control our tempers then?

We must become trained in recognizing our anger, whether it is on behalf of God's holiness, or if it is merely defending our own selfish egos. As soon as it is determined to be sinful, we must confess it as such and leave it behind. cf. Matthew 5:21-22

V.27 ** According to verse 27, what will happen if we are not careful to monitor our anger?

The devil will gain an opportunity! cf. James 4:7 and Revelation 12:10

V.28 ** Up to this point we have seen that we exhibit our Christian faith by "Walking in Kindness" when we 1) Speak truth to one another and 2) Control our anger. What is the third way we can exhibit our faith?

3. How we view our possessions!

** What are the three basic ways of gaining possessions?

Earning them, receiving them as gifts, stealing!

** Paul addresses all three in this verse. What is his instruction to the one who would steal?

Stop! This is not intended to be complicated. If we are Christians who are "Walking in Kindness" we would never view possessions as more important than people and then from that perspective be inclined to steal what belongs to others.

** What about just little things, how urgent is this command in the mind of Paul?

"...steal no longer..." - it is emphatic! Stop immediately! The name of Christ is at stake!

** According to what he is saying in this verse, what is the only acceptable alternative given for stealing?

"labor" - hard work!

** How do we know that Paul expects the ex-thief to be directly involved in this labor?

He is "performing with his own hands what is good".

** Why should he do that?

So that he can then share with others who have need, this is a complete reversal of his view of possessions. cf. Acts 20:33-35 (Paul himself)

V.29 ** Let's move on to the fourth way we can exhibit our Christian life, what is it?

4. How we control our speech!

Earlier in this study we saw that we are to speak truth with one another as a broad parameter to what comes out of our mouth and heart. cf. Psalm 141:3 and Colossian 3:8

** Paul is now going to get far more specific in his instruction to us as to how we are to speak. Instead of "unwholesome" words, what are we to speak?

"only such a word as is good for edification"

What a challenge! We would truly be "Walking in Kindness" if this were true of our speech pattern. cf. Matthew 12:36-37

** How frequently are we to be ready to do this?

"according to the need of the moment" - always! Every moment of every day!

** Who was the Master at doing this?

Jesus, of course! cf. Luke 4:22

Wouldn't it be wonderful if people were amazed at the "gracious words" we always spoke, because we are just like Him Who gave His life for us?!?

** If we were to be faithful in this area, what impact would it have on our audience?

"...it [would] give grace to those who hear..."

V.30 ** According to verse 30, if we do not control our speech what will be the impact upon the Spirit of Christ in us?

It will give Him grief!

** What rather significant reason is given to us in this verse for not wanting to grieve Him?

He has sealed us for the day of redemption! We owe Him everything, the very least of which should be a desire to speak in a manner that would bring Him glory and pleasure.

cf. 2Corinthians 8:9

V.31-32

** These last two verses will give us the fifth way we are to exhibit our Christian faith.

5. By controlling our attitudes and the actions they will produce.

V.31 ** What three negative attitudes are we to avoid?

Bitterness, wrath and anger. That can be understood as "smoldering resentment, antagonism and self-centered fuming".

** What three actions will always be produced by those sinful attitudes?

clamor, slander, malice - or "public outburst, evil speaking behind another's back and delighting in inflicting injury upon others".

** What does Paul say to do with these negative attitudes and actions?

"put [them] away from you"

V.32 ** In their place, what three attitudes should we always maintain in our walk with the Lord?

"kindness, tender-heartedness and forgiveness"

** How effective do you think we would be in "Walking in Kindness" if we always maintained these three attitudes toward others?

We are guaranteed victory!

** What motive does Paul present before us to make us desire these attitudes at all times?

This is exactly how our gracious God has treated us!
"just as God in Christ also has forgiven you"!

EXTRICATE

** If we are "Walking in Kindness", what are the five ways that we will exhibit the genuineness of our Christian faith?

1. By speaking the truth to one another.
2. By controlling our anger.
3. How we view our possessions.
4. How we control our speech.
5. How we control our attitudes and the actions they will produce.

DELINEATE

** How many of these five areas would be good for us to focus on as we desire to be "Walking in Kindness" to the glory of God?

All of them of course! And I would certainly want to encourage you to be sensitive to the conviction of the Holy Spirit if that were to be the case.

EVALUATE

** For today, may I ask you to pick just one of those five to concentrate on for this next week? Which one would you choose if you had to at this very moment?

For myself, I am ever and always aware of the need to control my speech for the glory of God!

ACTIVATE

** You might well presume that I would ask you to take just one of these ways of exhibiting your Christian faith and be willing to commit to your Lord a desire to remain mindful of obeying Him this next week in that area of your life so that you would be walking in a manner worthy of your calling. Let's do that together!

Closing prayer