

## Walking Together as a Church

Ephesians 4-6

August 30, 2020

We are, as I mentioned in Scripture reading, we are going to be looking at the latter half of Ephesians this morning. So go ahead and turn your Bibles back to Ephesians chapter 4. We are going to be beginning at Ephesians 4:1-3. And we are going to trace the major theme that Paul mentions there of walking the worthy walk and doing that through the last three chapters of Ephesians. This sermon, I'll just forewarn you, this will not be typical for this pulpit, a verse by verse study of the text. This is still going to be an expository sermon, but you know it's all grounded in exegetical study. It follows the argument of the text, but instead of going detail by detail, we're going to be looking at the 35,000-foot-view, kind of hitting the high points along the way and getting the major themes.

So we will call this sermon "Walking Together as a Church" and that comes from what Paul wrote there in Ephesians 4:1, he says there, "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called." Several reasons

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that I want to address this theme of the worthy walk and all of them relate to body life here at Grace Church.

First, and most immediately Christ is, as you know, giving Grace Church some precious people today, joining them together in membership here in a covenant. We baptized seven people earlier. We are joining with them and about a dozen others into a membership covenant at the end of the service. And we want them, all of them, to hear in one sermon what makes Grace Church, Grace Church.

Secondly, and kind of in the same vein, we realize that there are some of you have been visiting Grace Church recently and so we want to do the same thing for you. We want to pull back the curtain, so to speak, let you see what is at the heart, the beating heart of this church and it all comes in Ephesians.

It was about six years ago, about this time six years ago when I was first coming to Grace Church to minister to here, here. People were asking me then, quite commonly they were asking me, what is your vision for Grace Church? Or using the language that was invoked back then, they said, what are the mission, vision values that you have, for Grace Church? To answer that question, I always do the same thing. I open the Bible to Matthew 28:18-20, and I want to show people

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Christ's mission for the church, not mine. Then I open Paul's Ephesian letter and I want people to see Christ's vision for the church.

I mean, what do you want to follow? Do you want to follow Christ's mission and vision or mine? Christ's is your answer. I'm just telling you, that's your answer. My, my hope always, my, my constant prayer, my constant aim is for my vision to line up with his vision. In fact, I want to scrap my vision entirely and I want to be informed by his, his vision is informed with divine omniscience, my vision is clouded by frailty, by weakness, by the daily struggle with sin. Like you, I am fighting daily to put my own values and vision to the sword.

God values his own glory and so that is what we as a church value together, we value God's glory. And God's glory is manifest in the virtues of Christ, and so we want to see those virtues showing up in the lives of people of Grace Church. We want to see the fruit of the Holy Spirit growing within us. We want to see the love of the father, that love that has captured us. We want that love to keep on captivating us. We want his love to keep on controlling us, compelling us so that we're characterized by that love. So that we're known by that love. And when that happens, our church will be useful to Christ. Our church will be a place where he is pleased to have his Spirit dwell. Our place will be where he fulfills his mission for his church, which is to make disciples of all the nations.

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And so, for the instruction of new members, for the information of inquiring and potential members, and to provide all of us a reminder, we're going to address this topic of walking the worthy walk this morning out of Ephesians 4-6. I want to give you one more reason for tackling a topic like this. We need to set the record straight I think, about what it means to walk the worthy walk. I think it's been far too common in years, decades gone past, whether you find this in a small group Bible study, or in discipleship curricula, or even in many sermons that I've heard. The prevailing view is that walking the worthy walk is an individual mandate for individual Christians.

It's at least that, but it's so much more than that. When Paul writes in Ephesians 4:1, "I urge you to walk in a manner worthy." He is not there primarily or foremost writing to individual Christians; he is writing to an entire church. In that verse, the second person pronoun, you, I urge you, that is not a singular pronoun, it is a plural pronoun. So, in the parlance of some of our southerner friends, it's not you, but it's y'all, I urge y'all to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

This is a corporate command. And to be sure the command is incorporating all individual Christians who are in the Ephesian church but it is a corporate command to the corporate entity that Paul identifies in Ephesians 1:1. We read it just a minute ago. Ephesians

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1:1. They are the saints who are in Ephesus. Saints. Identified as the church in Ephesus by Christ himself in Revelation 1 and Revelation 2.

The word church, it's the word ekklesia. It literally is a compound word, a called out, and then a called out of. That prefix at the beginning there, ek, means called out ones. That's the literal translation, but never really meant that. It just meant assembly, it meant an, an assembly of people. A publicly recognizable corporate body, one that is known publicly by, one that is marked by certain identifiable characteristics. It is an assembly that people would recognize and know, as with clearly discernable qualities. Whenever you say a Black Lives Matter protest, it has certain qualities. Whenever you see Proud Boys or Antifa, you see in our culture, in our day, we see a group, we can picture a group, we know their qualities. Same thing here.

This assembly, these are not characterized by any of that stuff, they are characterized by holiness. They're saints who are in Ephesus. Saints, the word means holy ones. They are those who are set apart for holiness, that's what holiness means, is to be set apart. And they're set apart first of all by the sovereign election of God. They are set apart through the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. They are set apart by the Holy Spirit himself for salvation. So, they're justified. They're declared righteous by God, because of the work of Christ,

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because of the power of the Holy Spirit. They're set apart. They're positionally in a sanctified position.

Not only that, though, they are saints and holy ones because they are being sanctified by God through the work of Christ, by the power of the spirit. This is called progressive sanctification. So, you are set apart. You are holy. And you are at the same time then being made holy. Being set apart one time, justification. Sanctification is an ongoing process. These saints, these holy ones are physically located, they are physically located in Ephesus. As it says there, they're not, not saved by God and joined by the spirit in the body of Christ so that they can wander the earth, so they can do whatever is right in their own eyes, floating around as, as members at large of the church universal.

The body of Christ is a visible reality. It is manifest in the fruit of its members. It's manifest in the love that they have for one another. And it comes and is made visible, yes, the invisible, but made visible in local churches. So, this assembly, this church, this one is in Ephesus. These saints live, work, raise their families, conduct their lives in Ephesus. Just as we live, work, raise our families in Northern Colorado. And so, what marks them as saints is the same thing that marks us as saints.

Invisible, spiritual realities are made visible in our physical lives. They are, in the language of Ephesians 1, they are blessed in the

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heavenly places in Christ with every spiritual blessing, and that does not remain hidden. That, that blessing comes out, is lived out in time and space. Their election before the foundation of the world, that is now realized in time and space, just as ours is, through faith in Christ. And it's manifest in obedience by the Spirit. Their predestination, in adoption, for adoption as sons is now lived out as they learn the ways of the household, the habits, the rhythm of family life. A family that is marked by the character of its father, and so on and so forth through Ephesians 1, 2, and 3. All those spiritual realities, all those propositions of truth. All those things become manifest, known, as we obey the imperatives in Ephesians 4-6.

In fact, look back at Ephesians chapter 2, end of that chapter, this is vital, absolutely vital here. The household of the faith, the household of Christians is built upon it says in Ephesians 2:20, it's "built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets." It's built on the foundation of the holy apostles and the prophets of the early church. "Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone." So, there is a cornerstone that sets the, sets a guide for the foundation. And the foundation stones are the apostles and prophets. And then we, referred to there in verse 21 as the whole structure, we're "being joined together and we grow into a holy temple in the Lord. And in him, we also, you also are being built together into a dwelling place, for God, by the Spirit."

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So, you got a foundation of truth, starting with the truth of Christ, and guided off of the apostles and prophets. And that foundation is where? Below the surface. You can't see, just like in your house, your foundation is below the surface of the ground. But what is erected, what is built up above the ground where everybody can see? The Church. Believers. Christians. Us. We're being built up together. And notice, we're not being built up as little cinderblocks here and there scattered all over the earth. We're being built up together, not in isolation from one another. But established together on the same foundation, we are now growing together into a holy temple in the Lord. We are a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

This holy temple, as we're reading about in Ephesians, it's known as the Ephesian church, and in its local manifestation, this dwelling place for God by the Spirit. This is no longer a physical structure located in Jerusalem, where the Holy of Holies hides by a veil, the holiness of God. No, all this is, this temple now is a living organism, in people. A body of actual people. People who can be seen. People who can be known. People who you can, you can talk to. People who are physically present, actually knowable, they have personalities, dispositions. They have changing personalities that grow with time and experience.

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And it's in and through this gathered assembly of people, Ephesians 3:10, that "the manifold wisdom of God." God's, when we say manifold, we're talking about a many, multi-faceted wisdom of God that is being "made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." Who are they? "Rulers and authorities in the heavenly places." What are we talking about there? Angelic beings, right? The angelic realm, talking about both holy angels and fallen angels. They are watching. So don't ever underestimate, or understate the significance of what goes on here in a local church.

What is going on here at Grace Church of Greeley is being watched and observed by both angels and demons, every single week, every single day of the week. The holy angels see "the manifold wisdom of God" on display here, and it causes them to rejoice. It causes them to praise God. They act as ministers of, like flames of fire, they're ministers of God to protect all of us, who are inheritors of salvation. They're fighting battles that we're not even seeing or perceiving, to protect.

The demons, they see the same thing. They hate what they see. They conduct a, what is really a futile war against us, and against God, because we've read the book, we know who wins in the end. God has won. He sealed the victory at the cross, and it's all over but the shouting, isn't it? But here we are, we are the source of praise for

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holy angels, and we're the source of, of growling and groaning for the demons.

And the demons hate what they see. You know what they love to see? Christians who are ineffective. Christians who are neutralized. Christians who are off spinning off in the, in somewhere else, doing nothing. What really terrifies them. What really angers them. What really causes them to go to war are Christians on the march. Christians who are growing.

So for all of you who are joining Grace Church today, this is what we are as a church. We're a force of Christ, to fulfill his purpose and mission in the world. To glorify his father in his redeeming grace. And we're going to walk together as a church, as Paul says there, "in a manner worthy of the calling to which we've been called." And so for all of you who are visiting, for any of you who are observing Grace Church. We endeavor to be a true and faithful church, we're not perfect. We are growing. We're building. We invite you to join with us to walk that worthy walk with us by the grace of God.

With all of that as introduction, let me set up our outline by looking at that word walk. It's a key word in Ephesians, in the book of Ephesians. And it gives us our theme. The word walk is peripateo,

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literally means, peripateo, pateo and then peri. It means to walk about or walk around. You may have heard of someone being known as a, a peripatetic teacher. R.C. Sproul, in his younger days was walking all over the place. He's very interesting to watch. But that's a peripatetic teacher. One who can't stand still, who's always walking back and forth.

There's also a common figurative use of the word peripateo in Scripture. To walk is a metaphor for living life. It's a, it's a picture, something that we can picture in our minds, and imagine referring to how someone conducts himself, conducts herself. It's the, it's the kind of behavior someone engages in. It's how someone lives, as a characteristic habit and pattern of their life and Paul uses this word, peripateo throughout Ephesians 4-6. He says "we're no longer to walk," Ephesians 4:17, "as the Gentiles walk, in futility, in darkness, in alienation from God." And all the rest.

Instead, Paul says, using the same word, "we're to walk worthy of our calling." Ephesians 4:1. And then he modifies that metaphor with words of virtue, so we "walk in love," Ephesians 5:2. We "walk in the light," Ephesians 5:8. We "walk in wisdom," Ephesians 5:15. That's really what it is to walk worthy of our calling, is to walk in love, light, and wisdom.

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So, we're going to organize our thoughts around that metaphor, walk. And we'll unpack this idea of walking worthy through these final chapters of Ephesians. And we're going to be doing this together as a church. So, again, we're only able to hit the high points here. So I'm just going to put it on you, it's your job to go home, read through Ephesians, and make sure that I'm representing Paul's argument well. Okay? That's your job. Your homework coming out of this, coming out of this sermon.

So, five ways that we walk together as a church. Five ways. First way, first outline point, you could say. We mature together in doctrinal unity. We mature together in doctrinal unity. Go back to Ephesians 4:1. We'll take a look at those first opening verses together. Paul writes there, "I, therefore." Therefore referring back to the propositional truth of the first three chapters. All the indicatives. All the propositions that he laid down of our union in Christ. Therefore, based on what God has done, "I, therefore, a prisoner for the, for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

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Stop there. Many wonderful things written there. I, I can't hit them all. But I just want to zero in on one principle in particular, because it's what Paul urges us in developing, and he uses to develop everything in chapter, chapter 4:3-16, and then following. He urges us here, he exhorts us to walk in such a manner as to be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." What does that mean? "Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

The word eager, it's spoudazo. It's, it's the word, to be zealous. It's, it's to show great urgency in some matter. It's to make every effort. It's to be diligent and passionate, eager. So this is no passive approach to maintaining unity of the Spirit. This is aggressive in nature. This is about taking initiative. This is something, being eager requires constant attention, passion, zealous energy. For what? Zealous energy to maintain the unity of the Spirit, to keep the unity of the Spirit, to guard it.

That's not talking about ecumenism. That's not talking about bringing together all kinds of Protestant denominations, holding big conferences with Protestants, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox leaders. All that done at a superficial level on a big huge stage. The only thing they manage to achieve in ecumenical teaching is a superficial unity. It's an external show of solidarity in a cause,

some basic, lowest common denominator Christian-ish confession, and it only confuses everyone by ignoring the deep doctrinal differences that lie hidden just beneath the surface.

That's not what Paul's talking about here. Modern spirit of ecumenism, ecumenism has nothing to do with a text like this. It doesn't have anything to do, by the way, with Jesus' prayer for Christian unity, "that they may all be one." That was answered, by the way, when the Spirit came. Spirit came and united the Church together. "They may all be one," is an answered prayer.

Paul wants us to be eager to maintain, keep this unity, as in the unity. The, there's a definite article there. True unity, it's a unity that already exists among all true Christians. So the expression Paul uses there actually is a word that can be translated, oneness. So it's the oneness. Be eager to maintain the oneness of the Spirit, refers oneness there, refers there to a state of being. It refers to a state of oneness that actually exists. A oneness that is. No matter what it looks like on the surface, it's an, it's a oneness that is. This isn't something we produce, this unity.

We do not produce this, this is something the Spirit has brought together and manifests in the Church. It's something that already is,

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because it is grounded in the very nature and essence of the living God. The living God whose essence is simple, whose being is one. As the Shema says, "Hear, O Israel: Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is Echad." It's Yahweh is one. It's the same unity and simplicity of God that is manifest in and through the unity of the church.

Look at verses 4-6, there is, here, here again, one, one, one, one. All over, that, these next few verses. "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Those statements, we should not pass over them quickly. We should actually think carefully about what they're, what they're actually representing. They, they refer to something that is deep, this oneness, this unity. Something that is profound. Something that is most fundamentally true about all of us as Christians. And they said, this isn't something we produce. But it is something that we manifest, externally. This is something that God is, in oneness, in his essence. This is what God has saved us to. It's what he's joined us to, by his Spirit. It's what all Christians have in common, whether they really know it or realize it or not.

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First we belong to one body. What's that talking about? That's talking about the church. There's a spiritual entity over which Christ is the head. And when we study this together, this one body, we're learning ecclesiology, which is the doctrine of the church.

Second, we're joined together to the one body by one Spirit. The study of the Spirit's work is called pneumatology. Pneumatology, the study of the Spirit. We learn about the Spirit's role in creation, in revelation, in the incarnation and ministry of Christ, in the salvation and sanctification of the believer. All pneumatology.

Third, by the Holy Spirit, we're saved to one hope. One hope refers to the doctrine of last things. We formally call that eschatology. The eschaton, the study of last things. We direct our thoughts to the future fulfillment of all God's promises.

Fourth, our hope is grounded, and bought and paid for by one Lord. That refers to Christology, the study of Christ our redeemer and head of the Church.

Fifth, in Christ we've been saved in one faith. That is "the faith that is once for all delivered to the saints." This is bibliology.

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This is the study of the canon, the inspired, authoritative Word of God. Absolute authority.

Sixth, we're saved in one baptism. It's a summary way that Paul refers to soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, and all of its glorious sub doctrines, like imputation, justification, regeneration, all these glorious doctrines packed into soteriology.

And then finally, seventh, we're all saved for the purpose of by, through, and to one God. The one God who is for us become our father. He is the father of all. This is what we call Theology Proper, the study of the essence and attributes of God. This God whose glory is our chief end, whose Being is our eternal reward.

This is seven points of, summary points of doctrine. Ecclesiology, pneumatology, eschatology, Christology, bibliology, soteriology, Theology Proper. If those sound like chapters in a systematic theology textbook, that's because they are. The study of Christian theology is simply just the study and the pursuit of greater clarity about the oneness of the Spirit, what the Spirit has saved us to. All that he has saved us to, all that he has revealed, can fit into one of those seven categories of study.

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And get this, though you may feel like, I can't possibly know all of this in this lifetime, I sympathize. I really do. A thousand lifetimes would not allow me to get to the depth of all that he has revealed. But one day, one day every true Christian will be in complete agreement about every point of doctrine at the surface and to the very depths. We're going to be in agreement. Right now, in this life, as we live and breathe and have our being here on earth, there are reasons Christians differ on these different points of doctrine. Reasons that we see some things differently.

We're weak and frail because of sin. We live within certain limitations. We live in limitations by God's good design. We live in limitations by God's wise providence. We, we fight and struggle to understand these things. We, we some, many of us are, I mean we are all products of our early discipleship. So there are reasons why we differ and disagree in this lifetime on these things, and understanding what they, what they really mean.

But in truth, all true Christians are fundamentally united together in the same orthodoxy because we share of the same Spirit. When God saved us and planted within us the seed of salvation, it's grown into fruit in our lives. That seed is stamped by truth in every single point of doctrine. So if you remove all of our weakness, all of our frailty, take away all of our sin from the mind and the understanding and you

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give us perfect understanding, we're going to be is, as at one in all of these truths, as Father, Son, and Spirit.

Do you thing among Father, Son, and Spirit they've got five points of, of understanding of maybe election? You know, remember, you ever see those point, counter point kind of books where you got five points on this and ten, ten views on that. And Christians can just agree to disagree. Not among the Father, Son, and Spirit. They're one in thinking, one in everything and we as children of the Father, saved by Christ, united by the Spirit, also one.

And that's going to be manifest in time in its, all of its fullness, in all of its glory. But our joy now, in the church. Our joy and our solemn duty is to do here what Paul has exhorted us to do to be zealous, to make every effort "to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

We get to, every single Sunday, every single week, throughout the week, every month, every year, of all of our lives, we get the privilege of exploring and discovering and clarifying and articulating these truths. Isn't that awesome? We get to do, we get to deal with holy things, revealed things, things that have not entered into the mind of man. Not entered into his heart, these are things that God has

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kept for us and revealed to us in Christ. As we do that, as we bring these deep things that have been planted within us and are revealed to us. As we bring these deep things to the surface and expose them, study them together, we mature together in doctrinal unity; becomes more and more a reality for us, what actually exists down deep in, within us.

So how do we accomplish that? How do we get that done? How do we study together? Again, we don't do this at the macro level. We've seen over and over again at the macro level, and the denominational level, symposiums, big ecumenical conferences. That's an absolute waste of time. It's, it really is a failure of, of magnitude, huge proportions. We get to do this at the micro level. And as our unity grows here in the church, we then can grow in unity with other local churches. And as those local churches come together, well you never know where that can go.

To help us fulfill this mandate, studying together, bringing those deep unifying things, bringing them to the surface, exposing them. To help us fulfill this, Christ has given us gifts in the church. He's given gifted men who lead, teach, shepherd the church. Look at Ephesians 4:11, Christ "gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers."

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Christ, as we said, he built the foundation of the church. A doctrinal foundation that was laid by himself "in the apostles and the prophets." Ephesians 2:20. They wrote down what was "revealed to them by the Holy Spirit." Ephesians 3:5. And so the ministry of the apostles and prophets, that has been fulfilled in that transition time in Acts. Fulfilled in the completed canon of Scripture and now, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, gifted servants of Christ, they take what's been written down in Scripture and they use that inscripturated truth to instruct and lead and guide and teach the church. To what point? To what purpose? Look what it says there, further, "He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers," verse 12, here's the point, "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ." That's the point.

The gifted men teach the saints, the saints then do the work of the ministry, and they build up the body of Christ. How long? Verse 13, "Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." We keep doing that so that, verse 14, "We may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves, carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and

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deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head into Christ.”

So these gifted men, the evangelists, the shepherds, the teachers, they equip the saints for the work of ministry. Which is to make disciples, right? Matthew 28:18, building up the body of Christ. That happens in the local church when we strive for doctrinal clarity, when we strive for understanding truth. Verse 13, “The unity of the faith, knowledge of the Son of God.”

We keep teaching that doctrinal truth, massaging it in, encouraging maturity. Growth into mature manhood, verse 13, measured by Christ the standard. Strong, discerning, powerful, you know that’s happening when the language of the Bible, the language of biblical doctrine permeates the speech and the behavior and the conversations within the local church.

That’s what verse 15 says, “speaking the truth in love.” Literally the noun, truth, *aletheia*, is made into a verb here. *Alethuo*, so it’s, the literal translation there, instead of speaking the truth in love. It’s literally, *truthing* in love. We’re to be *truthing* with each other. We’re to be speaking, yes, but also living truthfully, practicing truth together.

It's how the body, it's how the church puts this deep doctrine that we're learning and coming to understand into practical effect and when every member of the church is doing this, verse 16, the body is "building itself up in love." That's what it is, first point, to mature together in doctrinal unity. So much more to say on that, but we got to keep moving.

Second point, after we mature together and keep striving together and mature in doctrinal unity, we also then, secondly, repent together in humble sincerity. We repent together in humble sincerity. Middle of the chapter there, Paul says, Ephesians 4:17-19, as we learn together, growing in unity and maturity in the truth, we see the need in our lives for deep repentance.

We see the need for repentance in every area of our lives. Some people describe seeing sin in our lives like, like peeling the air, layers of an onion, so we see sin on the surface. We peel those things away and you keep seeing more and more layers. And you're wondering, how deep does this go? Well it goes all the way to the core of us, the onion. We got to get down there, we got to find everything and repent of it. We want to do that.

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So we're no longer to walk and behave and live as the Gentiles do; summarizes our former manner of living as unbelievers enslaved to sin, verse 20, "That is not the way you," were, you, "learned Christ." We didn't learn Christ by continuing in sin and ignorance and callousness and hardness of heart. We didn't, we didn't learn Christ that way. We learned Christ, verse 22, first, putting off our old self. We're to put off, that is to repent. Past tense completed action. "Having put off what belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires," in Christ, coming to Christ, we put that off.

Verse 23, second, we learn Christ by "being renewed in the Spirit of our minds." It's a present tense, there, continuing action. So the first thing is something that's been done. Renewing our minds, being renewed in the spirit of our minds, that's continuous. How does that happen? Back to the doctrinal unity, right? We continue to grow in doctrinal unity together. We renew our minds.

And finally, number three in verse 24, "We put on the new self. Again, it's another past tense verb, there, completed action, points to the reality of the new creation in Christ, which is, as it says there, "Created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." So we want to see that come out of us. This pattern of repentance in coming to Christ, initial repentance that brings salvation, putting off the old self, being renewed in our minds,

putting on the new self. That then, sets a pattern for our continuing repentance in the progress of salvation. We put off the old, we renew the mind, we put on. That is growth in Christ.

Notice in the next verses that come there. We apply that pattern of repentance to very specific areas of our lives. Paul lists, lists those for us in the rest of chapter, Ephesians 4:25-32. In each of those five examples, he just uses five examples there: telling the truth, verse 25; righteous passions, verses 26 and 27; hardworking generosity in verse 28; the content of our speech in verse 29 and then a heart of graciousness, we could summarize verse 30-32 in that way. In each of those cases, Paul is telling us there what to put off, what to put on, and he's telling us the spiritual reason why to do that. What to put off, what to put on, and the reason why.

For the sake of time, I just want to take one of those as an illustration. Verse 29, a very common struggle for us is how do we use our mouths. What comes out of our mouth. It says, 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 we may give grace to those who hear." What do we need to put off? Corrupting talk, corrosive speech, speech that tears down, speech that corrupts the atmosphere. It's all that stuff we used to joke about and talk about, was the subject of

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all of our conversation as we were worldlings, non-Christians. We're to put that off.

What do we need to put on? Speech that does the opposite, it builds up, it strengthens, it edifies, it imbues strength and courage, power into other people. I'm not talking about some kind of mystic power, I'm talking about the power of the word of God through the Holy Spirit, in the life of people, coming out of our mouths. And it's edifying speech that's fit for the occasion.

What's the spiritual reason for this putting off and putting on? In order that what comes out of our mouths gives grace to anyone who hears it. Our mouths, like every other part of our body, is to be used as a conduit of grace for other people. Have you ever thought about that? Your body is an instrument, a weapon of righteousness in the hands of God. Your body, every member of it, is to be used for the purpose of other people. It's to be a conduit of grace that flows to other people.

Some people think, yeah, my body may be used that way, but what goes on here in my mind, that's just between me, myself and I. Not true. Your imagination, your thinking, your desires, your ambitions, all of that is a gift of God for you, as well. So whether it's your physical

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members, or whether it's your spiritual members, your thinking, all of it, conduit of grace for other people. Paul uses the mouth as one example, the mouth. "Out of the overflow of the mouth, the heart speaks," right? In other words, we need to see the repentance is not complete until we're motivated by spiritual concerns. We can't fight the flesh with the flesh. We can't fight spiritual sins and issues in our lives with fleshly means. We must be motivated by truth, by righteousness, by spiritual concern.

So we want to love and please the God who gave us our mouths for a good and holy purpose. That's what drives us to put off corrupting speech, put on edifying speech. We want to bless and love others by what comes out of our mouths, so we want to put off corrupting speech that tears them down, put on edifying speech that tears them up. That's what true repentance looks like. What to put off, what to put on, a spiritual reason why.

Now that you get that idea, we can, you can go through and take that pattern from verses 22 to 24 and apply that through every example that Paul lists there in verses 25-32. You can see how walking in a manner worthy of our calling means we are people who are always repenting, aren't we? We're repenters. We're those who continue to take sin seriously; continue to put it off, put it on for godly motivations.

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So we do that together as Christians in a local church and we do that in humble sincerity. We're very sincere about it and we're humble and meek about who we are. We're humble and meek because we know we've not arrived. We gotta long way to go. And such joy in doing this, by the way. We think there's happiness in sin, and there is not. It's degrading, it's sad, it brings us sorrow and sadness. There's joy in righteousness. So repenting is joy. Repenting, putting off, putting on for the right reason is such joy.

Walking together as a church means we mature together, first, mature together in doctrinal unity. Secondly, we do that together, repenting together in an attitude of humble sincerity. Third thing, number three, we love one another in holy purity. We love one another in holy purity. This is another deep, deep joy, satisfaction for us. Ephesians 5:1-2, Paul says, "Therefore," coming out of what he just said. "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love."

So we're going to imitate God as his children. We're going to do what he does. What does God do? He loves. In fact, why did he send his only begotten Son? Because of love, right. We're going to imitate God as beloved children. We're going to "walk in love as Christ loved us,

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gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." So Christ paid the ultimate price of his life. This, as a sacrificing love, but it's also a holy love because his love, laid on the altar before God, was a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. When God smelled that sacrifice, so to speak, he was well-pleased because of a holy perfect sacrifice. He's the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world.

You realize, by the way, it's impossible for us to fulfill this mandate to walk the worthy walk by livestream? It's impossible to do this if you're not attending church. It's impossible to do this if you're staying away from other people, if you're living in isolation from others. Imitating God as beloved children, following Christ's example of self-sacrificial love, we've gotta do that in the company of other people. You don't love by yourself in your room. You love with other people, in the company of other people.

Christ paid the ultimate sacrifice to save us from our sins. He was a holy offering to purchase a people, holy unto God. So when we imitate God and when we follow Christ, we do that by mortifying the flesh, by turning from all idolatry in order to love God and others in holy purity. To this age of modern idolatry, devoted as it is to self-worship, pandering after the sensual and the pornographic, dedicated to the removal of all restraint, for the liberation of the self,

responding to every fleshly impulse, trying to satiate every lust, feeding the consuming fire of covetous greed, resulting in divine wrath and human shame.

Paul writes this to our culture, verse 3, Ephesians chapter 5. "Sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not be even named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolator), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."

Listen carefully, that is our culture. That's what we were saved out of. That's what we must put off. We must never let these sins be named among us. Sexual sin is the very antithesis of biblical love. Biblical love is others-focused. Sexual sin is self-focused. That's why Paul tells us the sexually immoral don't go to heaven. That's the way the world lives. That's not the way Christians live.

Sexual sin obviously has no place in the lives of the members of the body of Christ, not even to be named among us, let alone become the

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subject of public scandal, as we've sadly seen far too often in the broader evangelical world. Headlines have been made, being made this last week by yet another so-called evangelical leader falling in public scandal. "Therefore," verse 7, "do not become partakers with them; for at one time, you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret."

Listen, walking in love means the sacrifice of self. It means sacrificing self in order to give the self for the worship of God and the good of others, no longer for the self. Walking in purity means leaving the darkness behind. It means exposing evil deeds. It means living in the light. So works of love, generated by God himself, holy purity, the fruit of light found in all that is good and right and true, those works, old works die in the light. They thrive in the darkness, but they die in the light. So we come to light in order that our works may grow and thrive in the light, works of goodness and righteousness and truth.

Now, we mature together in doctrinal unity, we repent together in humble sincerity, we love one another in holiness and purity, it's a

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truth that produces repentance and love and holiness. It's a truth that thrives in, and then rejoices in the light and that becomes manifest in the way we live publicly.

So fourth point, we manifest together, number four, we manifest together a practical Christianity, practical Christianity. There's some people, I've heard it throughout my ministry for many years, there are people who disparage the study of truth. They talk down about churches that are committed to doctrine, committed to studying doctrine, and it's called enmired in old musty, dusty, stale theology that produces a dead orthodoxy.

Listen, if it's a dead orthodoxy, then it's not truly orthodox. This, you don't find dead orthodoxy in the Book of Ephesians. Ephesians is a doctrinal, a doctrinal treatise from the Apostle Paul. It is deep, profound truth and it leads to repentance, which is dynamic; it's never static, it's never not moving. It's always producing the fruit of love and holiness and purity and that's what God intends for the church as his manifold wisdom is put on display. Truth does not stay hidden. It's manifest, it's seen, it's known.

So as we Christians, as we leave the doors of the church, as we go out of the place of meeting, we bring the truth with us, don't we? There's

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a good deposit that's been placed in us and we take it out there. We gather to disciple and train one another, but we scatter to evangelize and share the truth. As we leave the church meeting place, we live, we work, we raise our children, we conduct our lives out there in the world.

Ephesians 5:15 says, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil. Therefore," verse 17, "do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." How do we do that? This is where truth and virtue come together to produce wise living. Verse 18 says, "Do not get drunk with wine for that's debauchery, but be filled with the spirit." Be filled with the Spirit.

Christians, covenanted together in the local church, they no longer numb themselves with wine, no longer numb themselves with the various opiates on offer from the world, whether it's wine or in our state, marijuana, or worse, whether it's prescription medication, whether it's binging in whatever form: food, drink, entertainment, distraction, Christians do not self-medicate. They don't live under the world's influence, the world's constant control.

Instead, Christians are committed to the Spirit's ministry of teaching and influence and control. Many have noted the parallels between the

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effects of being filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18, and the effects in Colossians 3:16 of letting the word of Christ dwell richly within you. That's the expression there. It's worked out in the members of the church by teaching, admonishing one another in all wisdom. This affects the entire culture of the church.

And I've got to tell you, we've seen over the past five, six years in this church, a culture change. It's been so beautiful to see what God is doing in this church by the Word, by the Spirit, in changing the way we speak with each other. The way we, the topics of our conversation, the concerns we have expressed in, in attitudes toward one another in, in even asking hard questions sometimes. It's, it's a beautiful thing.

This is affecting the, the culture of the church. It sweetens the fellowship. Look at Ephesians 5:19-21. It says there, we're "addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, we're singing and making melody to the Lord with our hearts." Verse 20, "we're giving thanks always and for everything to God the father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we're submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." That is a beautiful culture in a local church. And that is the very product of being filled by the Spirit. That is the very product of letting the word of Christ dwell richly within this church.

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I hear it all the time, how we're addressing one another in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs. It's not just what we do in Dr. Merry's ministry and all the people who join him in the music ministry. It's not just there. It's also in the, the speech that we have with one another all during the week. We're making melody to the Lord with our hearts. We're, I'm hearing people give thanks always and for everything.

Did you hear in the waters of baptism two people telling us about cancer? That being what has led them to great rejoicing and giving of thanks. That's other-worldly, isn't it? Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. That's other-worldly, that's completely cross-culture, going against the grain of this culture that says, "I submit to no one, but me." Not here in the church. Here in the church, Christ. We submit to Christ and we submit to one another in our various roles out of reverence for Christ.

A Spirit-filled, Word-saturated church, one that is under the Spirit's influence and the Word's power, this does not stay here. It doesn't stay in the church building. It doesn't stay cloistered in the walls of this church. It goes outside. The wisdom of God is manifest outside the church as the church shapes all of our lived-out experience, our

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practical life. Wisdom, you could say, is the true knowledge of God that is lived out with skill and experience. That's what people see.

And the wisdom of God in Ephesians 5, it starts, you can see different categories there. It starts in the family. It governs the Christian home. So the Spirit of the Word, in the Word directs the relationships within the family, wives submitting to husbands, husbands loving their wives, Ephesians 5:22-33. Kids obeying parents and parents raising their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, Ephesians 6:1-4. God's wisdom is on display in the Christian home between wives and husbands, between parents and children.

The wisdom of God then moves through the home, from the church, through the home and out into the marketplace as God's Spirit, by the Word, governs relationships between slave and master, Ephesians 5, 6:5-9. So divine wisdom doesn't remain tucked away in the church building. It breaks out in the world. When it breaks out into the world, get this, Satan gets rather antsy. He doesn't like seeing it come out. He loves to see, he doesn't love the, the church or the truth at all, but if he's got to have a church preaching truth, he wants to see the church just keep it to themselves, privatize their religion.

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Let's make a radical separation between church and state, such that you keep everything churchy in the church. Don't bring it out there. Don't you dare infect our marketplace. Don't you dare infect our place of ideas. Don't you dare, keep it out of politics. Satan loves it when we just keep it to ourselves, but he gets really, really antsy when we dare to take it out. That's what we do.

So we mature together in doctrine as we work out repentance together, as we love one another in holy purity, you know what the wisdom of God does? It shapes everything. It shapes our thinking. It shapes our relationships in the family and in the workplace, calls for really a heads-up attitude when we get out there, doesn't it? We're to be on our guard. We've got to have our head on the swivel kind of mentality, always watching. The enemy sniper is, is in the wire. Where is he shooting from? That's the only question. "The devil prowls about like a roaring lion."

And so, here's the fifth point, we fight together, not together with each other, but we, as together, as a group, we fight in godly sobriety. We fight together in godly sobriety. As I said, the holy angels, as they observe our fellowship, as they watch over us seeing how we live in the church, the home, and the world, they look on and rejoice. They see God's manifold wisdom on display in redeemed lives in and through the church, going outside the church. There are other

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angelic watchers, unholy ones, who take notice as well. They feel the sting. They feel the burn. They feel the threat of godly Christians and they start firing back at us because we are on the march as we live this way.

Look at Ephesians 6:10-13. Paul says there, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." Paul told Timothy that when we become Christians, we are all enlisted in Christ's army by virtue of his salvation. So Paul says we are "to share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus."

So what do soldiers do? They say, goodbye to the world around them. They say, I am now owned by the US Army, or in the case of our friend over here, the US Marine Core. The Marine Core owns you. Christ owns us as good soldiers. We belong to him. So we don't think like civilians anymore. We don't grow our hair the way, any way we want to. We don't wear whatever clothes we want to. We dress in his robes of righteousness. We dress in his armor. We do and march according to his drumbeat. We don't get entangled in civilian pursuits. We don't do

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what the world does around us. Our aim is to please the one who enlisted us as soldiers.

We recognize this is no flesh and blood enemy who fights a flesh and blood war. This is spiritual warfare against an unseen, deadly enemy. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh," 2 Corinthians 10:4. "For the weapons of warfare are not carnal, they're not fleshly. They're mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God and we bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

So that's why every day when we get up, we get dressed for battle. We put on the full armor of God. Paul says there in Ephesians 6:14 and following, "We stand, having fastened on the belt of truth. We put on the breastplate of righteousness. As shoes for your feet, we stand in the readiness given by the gospel of peace." We have full assurance. We can move freely because the Gospel has saved us. "In all circumstances, we take up the shield of faith, with which we can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one." He is the sniper in the wire. He is trying to burn us down with temptations to sin.

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"We take the helmet of salvation by which we're fearless." We go in there; we don't fear any mortal wound to our head because we're covered in salvation. We go with the sword of the spirit wielding the Word of God, slaying spiritual forces, slaying false doctrines, "praying at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication." What a privilege it is, isn't it, that we get to do this together?

We get to mature together in doctrinal unity. We get to repent together in humble sincerity. We get to love one another in holy purity. We get to manifest together a practical Christianity that puts the devil on the run. Then we get to fight together as he tries to fight back. We get to fight together as Christ's well-equipped army. We suffer together as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. We help our casualties. We pick up the wounded. We bring them to first, to the aid tent and help them get patched up again.

There may be even some of us who are granted the privilege of dying together for the testimony of Christ. But short of that, as we suffer as good soldiers of Christ Jesus, we have his promise from John 16:33, "In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart, I've overcome the world." Amen.

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Beloved, that's what makes Grace Church, Grace Church. That's what makes this such a special place to be. And for you new members who are coming in to join us, we are so glad to have each and every one of you because each and every one of you is a gift of Christ to this church. And for those of you who are just visiting, don't be just visiting anymore, join with us because we need you to fight this good fight. Amen.

Let's pray. Our Father, we thank you so much for the truth of the Book of Ephesians. This is really what has come to define us as we think about ourselves. This is what we want to characterize us through and through. We just pray that you'd help us to be ever and increasingly faithful to you. We can't do that on our own, we do that, Lord, because of the name of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We do that because your grace has been shed upon us. We do that because the power of your Holy Spirit fills us with strength and courage, that we can stand and fight the fight of our day. We ask, dear Father, that you would continue to make us powerful, holy. Help us to fight the good fight. Help us to speak the truth in love. Help us to grow and mature in doctrinal unity, continual repentance, loving one another in holiness and purity, manifesting a practical lived-out Christianity to show your manifold wisdom, put it on display out there in the world. And as we are attacked because we know we will be, let us stand

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together as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. We love you and thank you  
in Jesus' name, Amen.