

Ephesians Series – Part 4 – We Are the Bride of Christ

Ephesians 4:17-6:10

Pastor Brian Flewelling – July 25, 2021

Intro: Week 4 of our study on Ephesians.

How many of you appreciated having Dr. Theresa open the word for us?

Slide: Outdoor Baptisms (Jesus is still transforming lives.)

Ephesians 4.

There's a clear break from the first half of the book of Ephesians. Paul had his head in the clouds. He was giving us lofty theology and ideals. And in chapter 4 he swivels. And he gets really practical. And it's as if he's saying, now your life has to change because of this.

Start doing the hard work of applying this to your lifestyle.

“Everyone who hears these words of mine, and puts them into practice, is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” Matthew 7:24

I'm continually struck by how simple and elegant these ideals are.

[Ephesians 4:2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient...](#)

You don't need a degree to understand what love is. My 3-year-old knows what patience is. He doesn't practice it.

Love is simple to understand and difficult to practice. Right after a sermon on patience I can go out to the children's pickup line and cut in front of somebody.

The Golden Nugget for this morning:

1. **How do we massage these nice sounding ideals down into our daily habits and conversations?** True spirituality is being transformed into perfect love!

Ephesians 4:17-24 (NLT)

With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused. 18 Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him. 19 They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity.

20 But that isn't what you learned about Christ. 21 Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, 22 throw off (cast off, put away, put aside) your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. 23 Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. 24 Put on (NRSV - Clothe yourselves with) your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

Simple analogy: Throw away the old wardrobe and put on your new clothes.

How long is too long to hold onto some of your clothes. 10, 20, 40 years old?

Slide: Do you remember these? – pictures of 80's clothes (if you're my age or older)



If this is still hanging in your closet, the Bible says to throw them away.
There's a reason the 1980's is dead. Don't try bring 'em back. (I survived once)
There's a reason skinny jeans are dying.
Throw away the old wardrobe and put on your new clothes.

Slide: What is your old wardrobe?

- V.18 your mind full of darkness
- V.19 lustful pleasure
- V.19 practicing impurity
- V.22 the old sinful nature
- V.22 lust and deception

Slide: What is the new wardrobe?

- V.23 Let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.
- V.24 created to be like God
- V.24 righteous and holy

It takes practice to put on the Spirit. Don't go out of here and just try to be a gentle person, a patient person. Patience without the Spirit is humanism. It's not bad, but it's not full of power.

The law can only tell us what we can't do. The Spirit gives us the appetite and the power to do what we should do. Religious communities without the Holy Spirit so often sink into form of humanism. We try to do on our own effort what we need the power of the Holy Spirit to do through us.

I have to practice clothing myself with the Holy Spirit. Being baptized, filled, renewed, praying in the Holy Spirit.

2. When and how are you clothing yourself with the Spirit?

So Paul sets up this metaphor of throwing away the old wardrobe and putting on the new wardrobe, and now he's going use it over and over again in the next 30 verses.

Ephesians 4:25 (NRSV)

So then, putting away falsehood (that's the old wardrobe), let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors for we are members of one another. (that's the new wardrobe)

- *Boy with his Fitbit.* "My mom wants me to walk more, so I'm getting my steps in."
- This is the human heart warped with self-deception.
- Always nibbling away at the edges of what is truth.
- Never telling a lie, but never loving the whole truth.
- We may treat you one way to your face, but in the company of others our sarcasm...
- Exaggerate impact or statistics to our boss so that we look more valuable.
- Confess to people our mistakes or addictions, but inwardly we're afraid to tell you how bad the situation really is.
- We lie to ourselves.
- We cocoon ourselves in explanations. It's always someone else's fault...because of this...
- Paul says, take off the old wardrobe that's decomposing with deception.
- Put on the new wardrobe of the Spirit that loves the light, even when it hurts.

Ephesians 4:26-27 (NRSV)

Be angry but do not sin; (sinning in your anger is the old wardrobe) do not let the sun go down on your anger and do not make room for the devil (that's the new wardrobe).

- Anger management without the power of the Holy Spirit is like trying to stuff the lava back into an erupting volcano. That doesn't work.
- So we need to process what we are feeling.

- But we don't just want to destroy everyone in our path. You can lose friendships, marriages.
- History tells us in 79 A.D. 16,000 people perished in the city of Pompei when Mt. Vesuvius erupted.
- Find healthy ways to express what we are feeling that doesn't destroy.

Ephesians 4:28 (NRSV)

V.28 Thieves must give up stealing (that's the old wardrobe. Notice, this time how Paul applies this to a very specific situation in their community.) rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy.

- Rabbi Paul is taking the 10 Commandments, the moral law and he's applying them to detailed situations in their living rooms in house church.

Ephesians 4:29 (NRSV)

29 Let no evil (rotten) talk come out of your mouths (old wardrobe, and here's the new wardrobe), but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.

- Imagine if in every conversation with your co-worker, or customer or a child: imagine you had to talk through a translator. And that translator had to repeat everything you said, with the tone that you said it. Now imagine that translator is Jesus.
- Would he be embarrassed at your tone of voice? Would he be repulsed by your judgmental attitude or your unbridled impatience?
- What would it look like for Jesus to change your attitudes and responses to reflect how he feels instead of how you feel?

You're getting the idea. Paul does this for 30 verses. Take off the old wardrobe. Put on new. Let's pick up two last important verses to finish our theme.

Ephesians 5:1-2

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

- It's not enough to know God. Imitate him.
- "The greatest gap in the world is the space between knowing and doing."
- *Ill: changing the door swing on cabinet*
- *Driving 45 in a 35 (I'm not going to ask for a show of hands so just relax)*
- Be imitators of God... get into the habits of living in love.

Ephesians 5:22-6:9

Slide: Practical Instructions to Practice Love in...

- Marriage (Ephesians 5:22-33)
- Parenting (Ephesians 6:1-4)
- Business relationships (Ephesians 6:5-9)

Paul doesn't just want me to come to church and talk good and preach good and worship good and go home and Jesus is nowhere to be found in the way we treat each other in the home.

Paul is giving practical instructions to import the love of Jesus into...

Perfect love has to be practiced in our marriages. Practiced in our parenting. Practiced in our business relationships. Jesus becomes the filter that stands between me and everyone else.

3. What are habits of love our family can practice? (think small)

- Whether you're single or married, grandparents, or children
- Don't think devotional times
- Think...smile, speaking courteously, say I'm sorry, fold laundry, touch on the shoulder, kiss on the cheek
- Think...be quick to listen, slow to speak
- Think...in the middle of an escalating conflict...taking a deep breath, tone down...
- If the Church wins in government and loses in the family, we've lost.
- God's kingdom starts in the family. And builds out of the family.

Ephesians 5:31-32

'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the Church.

Jesus is perfecting the practice of love in his people so that we can be equally yoked with Jesus. He wants a union with his Bride, so he's not dragging us around, but we are in dynamic choreography. We love who he loves. We love to do what he's doing.

Slide: Ministry Prayer

Let the Spirit of love fill your relationships.
Let his words of life shape your conversations.
Let his compassion expand in your heart.
Let his peace bring reconciliation to your conflicts.
Let his light bring truth to lies, and his forgiveness cover your sins.

Let his joy lift your spirit.
Let his purity guard your thoughts.
Let his purpose drive your calling.
Let his power perfect your habits.
Let his love transform your character.
Let Christ be all around you and be formed in you,

In Jesus name, Amen.