

## Eph 4:25-32 — Dressed for Success: Clothed in Christ's Righteousness (1-23-22)

Every day we wake up some of us have a cup of coffee, a morning devotion, children to care for, there are a few hard-chargers who have a morning workout, but there is one thing that we all have to do, we have to put on clothes for the day ahead. For sure, what a person puts on for work, impacts the professional relationship with their supervisors, co-workers and customers. In this business context comes the expression "dressed for success" which is the modern equivalent of the Middle Ages proverb "clothes maketh the man"--that is, it articulates the belief that what you wear matters in everyday life. By the way, that proverb actually originated in the works of Erasmus, a Catholic priest and theologian. So, there may be a spiritual connection to "dressing for success" with the Christian's "sanctification success" that comes from God, clothing us in Christ's righteousness through faith in the gospel. Now that's good news to help us start every day...way better than coffee.

Stay with me on this, as I transition from the clothes closet to the "clothes righteousness" we have in Christ. There is appropriate clothing for specific contexts. Military personnel have to wear a uniform in a specific manner. It's part of their military identity. Police personnel, and even prison inmates, also have a specific uniform that communicates an identity. Ten years ago, I was involved with prison ministry and I recall thinking about things that some of the inmates looked forward to when they re-entered the free world. I imagined that one thing was wearing clothes of their own choosing and probably not an orange-colored jumpsuit. The orange uniforms identified them as prisoners but as free-men they wouldn't want to be reminded of their old identity. Ministering the gospel to these men helped some of them grow in faith with a new identity in Christ. *Ephesians 4:24* "put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." Because of God's grace, these Christian brothers grew in assurance of salvation, and in God's promise that their true identity was in Christ, and not on anything else, especially their clothing.

Friends, if you are a believer in Jesus as Lord, you are a new creation, with new clothes. By God's grace and the indwelling Holy Spirit, you have been made holy in Christ. God has put off your old "corrupt" self and put on your new "Spirit-filled" self, created after the likeness of Christ. Thank you, Lord!

As a follower of Jesus, what you wear matters in everyday life. So, make every effort to walk by the Spirit's power to put off the old clothes and put on your new clothes—robed in Christ's righteousness. Amen.

Praise God for his promise of the Holy Spirit working our sanctification process of growth in holiness. The Spirit empowers us with persevering grace in this “lifetime holiness journey.” But even though we believe this to be true, growing in holiness can be difficult for gospel people.

In this week’s Grace email, Pastor Drake said that many of us, having "put off" seemingly outward sins like anger or laziness, are given over to think that holiness is not so difficult after all, that it's manageable with a little grit and discipline. Outward success in the workplace, the home, or the classroom is praised, and it's easy to attribute that success to our own habits of self-discipline and moral purity. But holiness is not the kind of attribute that we easily sense or notice right away. It's more like a deep well of imputed righteousness we draw water of purity from, not a moral coat we put on each day. Holiness requires real effort, but that effort is not about trying hard to be nice or doing good deeds; it's about looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith—it’s about believing, learning, confessing, repenting, and enjoying God’s pleasure...more than sin’s pleasure. Enjoying God’s pleasure...more than sin’s pleasure.

Friends, we are no longer prisoners to sin, as if wearing orange jumpsuits of a former identity. Since God has already fashioned us in divinely tailored new clothes, why would we ever want to put back on the old corrupt clothes. That would be, as Paul would say, “total futility!” But sadly, every one of us, because of the weakness of our flesh, find ourselves slipping back on the old clothes. Paul struggled with that as well.

Paul tells us in *Romans 7:19-25*, “*For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.*

Here in Ephesians 4, Paul is encouraging not only his fellow believers, but also himself, with the promise, that God, through Christ, has freed every believer from the old self and given them a new-self in Christ! Thanks be to God!

Last Sunday, Pastor Drake showed us that through faith in the gospel, God has disenrolled us from the “school of futility,” marked by our old-self, being dead in sin—and enrolled us in the “School of Christ,” marked by being alive to our new-self. By God’s grace, our new clothes are gifted to us in Christ’s righteousness, and already adorn our backs and hearts!

So, this morning, welcome to the School of Christ. Because of Jesus, you are officially a lifetime student. Unlike Texas A&M, there are no “former students.” In Christ’s School, the Holy Spirit has given you a new school ID, new uniform, and new class assignments on how to live like Christ. God has initiated your invitation to the transfer portal from the school of futility, and applied his official Spirit-given seal on your future graduation. You are no longer like the Aggies; I mean the Gentiles. Jesus has transferred you from the futility of your minds, to being new creations whose lives are full of meaning, hope and joy. Your graduation school ring, emblazoned in heavenly gems of “gold” and “emerald green” awaits you when walk across the stage of Heaven. Sic ‘em, that is, amen. Be patient, I’m still working on putting off the lame jokes.

John Piper said this about experiencing eternal life, “We have eternal life NOW, not just in the future. In *John 5:24* Jesus says, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word, and believes him who sent me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.*” Eternal life is not something you wait for after death. It is something you have NOW if you belong to Jesus by faith in the gospel.” Friends, you have been clothed in Christ, you have his life now. And his life is eternal.

What is the first thing Jesus says to us when we enter his school? His answer is in **Ephesians 4:22-24**, “*put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*”

And so, after you hear the voice of Christ, and become alive in him, you enter into his school of holiness, and the first thing he says to you is: “change your clothes.” Take off the old person and put on the new person.

Last Sunday’s message was part 1 about our old futility, or old corrupt self, and, that God has enrolled us in the School of Christ and is teaching us how to get used to it, that is, how to know Jesus, our holy and gracious Headmaster and Teacher, and imitate his life.

The Jesus School topic for this morning is part 2, where we will see from **verses 25-32**, some of the practical lessons that Paul teaches us about growing in holiness. Friends, every day by God’s grace we can live by the power of the Spirit, whether we have our morning coffee or not. Well, some might still need a cup or two of the heavenly nectar, for a jump-start in Jesus. I know I do.

My aim today is to help us continue answering the question “how do I move from one school to the other, put off the old self, put on the new self, and get used to it?”

Remember, we don't become holy by acting holy, but rather act in holiness because God has made us holy in Christ. Amen.

So, how do we put on our new clothes and act holy? Well, the simple answer is Jesus! Because in Christ we can put off deceitful desires and put on Spirit-led desires, and act like Christ. But even with that good news, we all know the daily challenge to imitate Jesus, is not so simple—because we are still clothed with this “skin-suit” of corrupt flesh and live in a world full of sin where we face constant temptation, not only from inner deceitful desires, but also from Satan.

To defend the attacks of the devil, we must speak the gospel to ourselves – daily – that we are clothed in Christ. We must stay alert, because the devil will challenge our divine identity just like he did with Christ himself. Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness to follow his schemes rather than trust God. Satan said, “If you are the Son of God... (then use your power to do as I say).” The devil chose a time when Jesus was physically weak and hungry to attack his identity and disrupt his obedience to God. Friends, Satan does the same with us. To make his schemes more effective, he hits us during a crisis or a spiritual struggle, and in our flesh, we hear our own voice say, “If you were really a child of God, this problem wouldn’t happen. If you were actually a Christian, God would help you right now in your pain and not make you wait.”

We need to always speak gospel truth to ourselves and to each other, so we can drown out the lies that we hear in our minds, and re-mind ourselves, we are clothed in Christ’s righteousness! We must stand firm in faith against the enemy’s attacks that causes us to doubt our true identity and doubt God’s character. And we need to see ourselves as soldiers in Christ, who are clothed in the armor of God. Amen.

Ok, it’s time to get to class in the School of Christ, wearing our “new-self uniform” so we can live out the holy habits of our true identity.

**(SLIDE) School of Christ – Clothed in Christ’s Righteousness to Grow in Holiness**

Here in **verses 25–32**, we see how God enrolls us in “holiness training” so we can dress in Spirit-led power. Let’s look at the lesson plan for today.

**(SLIDE) School of Christ (25-32): Overall Objective— Clothed in Christ’s Righteousness to Grow in Holiness**

**Three Learning Objectives — 1. Growing in Holiness is Relational: We are members of one another who do life in Community -- 2. Growing in Holiness is Actional: Learning to say NO to act in sin & say YES to act in Christ -- 3. Growing in Holiness is Theological: As Members of Christ's Body, the Church, we Disciple one another to Grow in Holiness!**

Fellow disciples, the School of Christ involves faith-filled action, replacing sinful habits with holy habits of Christlike virtues. Let's consider three learning objectives. The first learning objective is that the holy habits are **relational**. In **v 25**, speaking the truth is relational because we are members of one another, and our new identity changes the way we love and live in community. Just as our sin affects others negatively, our righteousness will bless others positively. The second objective, is that the holy habits are **actional** with a negative action stated first (put off), and then a positive action (put on). Holiness is not just saying no to sin; it is also saying yes to God and acting like Jesus. Amen. And the third objective gives a **theological** reason. For example, in **v 25**, Paul does not simply say, put away falsehood; but related it to the doctrine of the church. We belong to each other. We are Spirit-led brothers and sisters in Christ's body, the church, who disciple one another to grow in holiness. Here at Grace Church, I'm always encouraged to hear how our members praise God for leading them to a church that is passionate and committed to make Jesus known to each other, to the city, and to the world!

In **v 25-32**, Paul teaches five holy habits of the new-self in Christ. These holy habits result in five learning outcomes of putting on Christlike virtues. (Check to see slide).

**(SLIDE) Five Holy Habits & Learning Outcomes**

- 1. Put OFF Lying & Put ON Truth (v 25)**
- 2. Put OFF Anger & Put ON Peace (v 26-27)**
- 3. Put OFF Stealing & Put ON Work & Generosity (v 28)**
- 4. Put OFF Corrupting Talk & Put ON Upbuilding Speech (v 29)**
- 5. Put OFF Grieving the Spirit & Put ON Christlikeness (v 30-32)**

Amen! Every good teacher knows that a subject's learning outcomes are based on learning objectives that are concise, clear, and specific statements of what learners will be

able to do at the end of a lesson. So, I ask you fellow students, turn off any distraction, and turn on a listening ear and open heart, as we learn from Jesus through his Word.

Now that we have some class structure, here's some homework to help us grow in holiness. John Stott, D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, and other theologians point out that in most of our Bibles the verbs of **verses 25-32**, put off and put on, are translated as though they were imperatives, that is, commands: put off your old nature and put on your new nature. But because the verbs are aorist participles, spelled aorist, it actually means that something has "already happened," not something to be done. As believers, God has already clothed us in his likeness, so we can imitate Christ's character.

Let's look at Paul's parallel passage in Colossians 3, that is similar to Ephesians 4.

**(SLIDE) "Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Colossians 3:9-10).**

Paul is saying that the clothes of our new gospel identity are already gifted to us in Christ's righteousness, and already adorn our backs and hearts! Amen.

Now, let's go back to *Ephesians 4:25* in your Bibles, "*Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.*" The first four words, "*Therefore, having put away*" indicates that the application is to be found at that point.

This is such an important point—which I why I have mentioned it several times so far. Paul is not urging us to become better by moral persuasion or to put on a moral coat. Something else is going on here other than "do better." Rather, Paul is exhorting a godly form of behavior because we are new in Christ! That is why we should, must, and want to act like Christ. Amen.

Although the journey of "holiness" is time-less, we are time-bound in this sermon, so "let's go!! Let's look at the first holy habit in v 25. Paul does not simply say, put off lying and put on truth; but he relates it to the doctrine of the church. And because we are members of Christ's body we can--Put OFF Lying & Put ON Truth with each other.

## **(SLIDE) 1. Put OFF Lying & Put ON Truth (v 25)**

*“Having put away falsehood, let each of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another (v 25).*

Paul may have in mind that the believers at Ephesus had turned from false gods, idols, Satan, and turned to Jesus. Because they are already new creations in Christ, they should now put off lying entirely and speak truth to one another. So, what does it mean to put away falsehood? We can, of course, lie deliberately. Slander is a lie. A statement intended to mislead another person is a lie, particularly when the misleading is for our advantage. But we also lie unintentionally, because we are not in the habit of cultivating truth. Lying unintentionally, includes exaggeration, embellishment, and adding our own spin to the truth. If someone spins a story, they give you an account of something that may be untrue or only partly true. I would guess that all of us struggle on occasion with lying when we exaggerate something we accomplished, or put a spin on a personal story to validate our worth.

Paul taught us that speaking the truth is relational because we are members of one another, and our new identity changes the way we love and live in community. Just as lying affects others negatively, truthful speech blesses others positively.

William Barclay quotes some wise words from Samuel Johnson about truthfulness, spoken while urging parents to teach children to be accurate in what they say. On this next slide, Johnson said this...

**(SLIDE) “It is more from carelessness about truth, than from intentional lying that there is so much falsehood in the world. This is all the more reason why we should cultivate accuracy in speaking truth, seeing this as an essential ingredient of our lives.” Samuel Johnson**

Of course, there are other intentional ways we deal falsely, like cheating on our taxes...neglecting to give to the Lord's church...making foolish promises that we can't keep...betraying a confidence...making false excuses why we didn't do something that we said we'd do...or giving untrue reasons why we can't be at work, or at church, or

meeting someone. I think there's something in that list for all of us to prayerfully consider, starting with the person in the mirror, me, and you.

Paul's reasoning for such a holy habit of speaking and acting truthfully, is that God has chosen us to be members one of another. Back in **Ephesians 4:15**, Paul spoke of the unity and health of the body when he said, *"speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ."*

Friends, even with your desire to always speak the truth to one another, you will fail. But by the power of the Spirit, you will be convicted of sin, and through the gospel of Jesus, receive grace to be forgiven. So, you must stay immersed in God's Word and in prayer, and if you speak falsely, repent to the Lord, repent to others you've lied to, and seek godly accountability in your community group and discipleship group. For God's sake, the church's sake, and your sake in Christ.

Jesus, the incarnate Word of God (John 1:1), is the source of all truth. He is truth, embodied, God in flesh. Jesus always spoke the truth, even while being slandered, tortured and crucified to pay the penalty for our sin. Friends, Jesus clothed himself in our sin at the cross, so we could be forgiven of sin and clothed in his righteousness. Being in Christ, we can walk with Jesus in truth, and with each other in truth. Amen.

Paul reminds us in *Galatians 5:16*, *"walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."* As an outcome of walking by the Spirit, we can practice the second holy habit to—Put OFF Anger & Put ON Peace.

## **(SLIDE) 2. Put OFF Anger & Put ON Peace (v 26-27)**

*"Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil." (v 26- 27)*

Paul's second "holiness virtue" doesn't have a specific positive side, but we are to understand this holy habit as referring to controlled or righteous anger, as opposed to an uncontrolled, selfish, or sinful anger.

But when we do find ourselves stuck in sinful anger, God's word teaches us to seek forgiveness and put on peace so we may be reconciled. Paul tells us in *Romans 12:18*, *"If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."*

Anger itself is not sin. Jesus was angry on several occasions, and even we can experience righteous anger. That's why Paul introduces the subject by a quotation from *Psalms 4:4*, *"in your anger do not sin,"* which makes a distinction between sinful and sinless wrath.



But our trouble is not usually in that area. It's as wrong not to be angry in a situation that calls for righteous anger, such as gross injustice or immorality, as it is to be angry at the wrong time and for the wrong reasons. It's because of our pride, and insecure self-image that we get wrapped up in angry reactions to others. So, how do we deal with this? Paul says that we must deal with anger quickly, that is, before the sun sets on our anger. To allow anger to fester is dangerous, because it gives the devil a foothold, which can lead to bitterness, slander or a desire to do evil to another. Brothers and sisters in Christ, seek forgiveness and reconciliation quickly so you don't use anger as an opportunity to become resentful and divisive. Jesus tells us in his Word to confess our sin to him and get it into the light as quickly as possible.

*In 1 John 1:6-9, "If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Amen.*

But even in the case of righteous anger, due to gross evil, we should be slow to become angry, In *James 1:19-20*, "...my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God."

In relation to a Christian's Spiritual Armor—I see a connection between putting off anger, and putting on "shoes of peace," that leads to forgiveness and reconciliation. Paul says in *Ephesians 6:15*, "as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace." Peace is a gift from Jesus to those who trust in him and who are clothed in his righteousness. Church, we can be prepared against giving the devil any opportunity to cause division in family relationships, friendships, or in the church. Being clothed in Christ, we can adorn our feet with the shoes of peace.

Husbands, we have to be on guard when Satan attacks us with a flaming missile of doubt and anger, such as, "If your wife really loves and respects you, she wouldn't be treating you as a child. You've got a right to be angry, go sleep on the couch, get up early and head to work and avoid her." When something like that happens, and it will, you can dig your "shoes of peace" into the turf of God's Word in *Ephesians 4*, and say, "Jesus tells me: *"do not let the sun go down on my anger"* (v 26). *"Let all bitterness and anger be put away from me, and be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving my wife, as God in Christ forgave me"* (*Ephesians 4:31-32*).

Husbands, dig in further, and say, *“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... he who loves his wife loves himself” (Ephesians 5:25, 28).* And one more, *“I must live with my wife in an understanding way, showing honor to her, since she is an heir with me of the grace of life, so that my prayers may not be hindered” (1 Peter 3:7).*

Men, if you didn't write down those verses, I'm sure your wife did. Here they are again... Ephesians 4:26 & 31-32; Ephesians 5:25 & 28; and 1 Peter 3:7.

Wives, the devil will take opportunities to deceive you with something like this, *“You don't have to respect your husband. Stay angry. Put up a wall until he starts showing you love, tenderness and helps out with the chores.”* When something like that happens, and it will, you can dig in with the *“shoes of peace”* and say, *“Jesus tells me: “do not let the sun go down on my anger” (v 26). “Let all bitterness and anger be put away from me, and be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving my husband, as God in Christ forgave me” (Ephesians 4:31-32).*

Wives, dig in further, and say, *“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord... and respect him.” (Ephesians 5:22, 33),* and also say, *“God's Word tells me: let my adorning be the hidden person of my heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves” (1 Peter 3:4-5).*

Of course, when any of us find ourselves in conflict and anger, we are to speak the truth in love and *“let no corrupting talk come out of your mouth, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear” (Ephesians 4:29).* On a practical note, try not to use the words, *“you always or you never”* which in most cases is an exaggerated lie. And keep in mind, that many arguments are not based on right and wrong, but on personal preferences and opinions.

Friends, give *“no opportunity to the devil.”* Be ready when Satan attacks you with a flaming missile of doubt, such as, *“If God really loved you, he wouldn't let you be in this much pain.”* When something like that happens, and it will, you can dig in your *“shoes of peace”* and reply, *“All things work together for the good to them who love God and are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).* And when Satan stabs you from behind with *“Remember what you did? You've done it so many times, you can't be forgiven. It's hopeless.”* When something like that happens, and it will, you can dig in more deeply and reply, *“It is written: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).* Amen.

Paul tells us in *Ephesians 6*, “having put on the breastplate of righteousness and taking up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.” Because, we are clothed in Christ, we have already put on the armor of God and we can stand firm against Satan’s schemes.

Jesus is working in each of us by teaching us to put off anger and put on peace, so we don’t give the devil a foothold. In the next holy habit, God is working in us good stewardship and generosity, so we can labor in our work and have opportunities to love and share with others. The third holiness virtue is to—Put OFF Stealing & Put ON Work & Generosity.

### **(SLIDE) 3. Put OFF Stealing & Put ON Work & Generosity (v 28)**

*“Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need” (v 28).*

There are many different ways that we can steal. We steal from an employer if we don’t give our best work that we are capable of, or if we waste time or consistently leave work early. If we are in a business context, we can steal by overcharging for the service we provide. And with our own property, we steal if we sell something inferior, pretending it is better than it is. We steal by borrowing and not repaying. We can also steal from God if we fail to worship and submit to him as we ought and if we set our own interests before his holy interests. We steal by damaging another’s reputation if we slander. We steal from ourselves if we waste the time, talents, or resources God has entrusted to us.

But in **verse 28**, Paul has in mind taking things or money that doesn’t belong to us, or doing nothing so that others have to take care of us when we are capable of caring for ourselves. Paul’s contrast to such a dishonest or lazy attitude is to work faithfully, doing something useful. Paul does not say, work hard because it builds self-esteem or provides the ability to buy things you want and enjoy the good life.

Work is a gift from God and we are to do honest work so we may have something to share with anyone in need. Because we are created in the likeness of God, we can put off stealing and put on work and generosity.

Fellow Christians, and ambassadors of Jesus, our work and charity of giving, reflect Christ. And as messengers of the gospel, our speech must always reflect the Lord’s holy character, and so we must pursue the holy habit to—Put OFF Corrupting Talk & Put ON Upbuilding Speech.

### **(SLIDE) 4. Put OFF Corrupting Talk & Put ON Upbuilding Speech (v 29)**

*“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear” (v 29).*

The Greek word corrupt is used of fruit that is rotting or spoiled. This is what sinful unwholesome speech does. It doesn't nourish you; it makes you sick. Sinful talk includes obvious things: lying, abusive language, vulgar references, and unkind words. But we also have to watch out for subtle sinful talk, like gossip, slander and sarcasm. So, if your disposition is cynical and critical and there is no warmth and encouragement in your words, you will not reflect Jesus – in your job, in your church, and even in your family.

Paul's teaching on upbuilding speech reminds us of the Apostle James teaching of the tongue problem in his epistle. The point he makes there, which Paul would echo, is that speech is a powerful tool either for good or for evil. In *James 1:26*, *“If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless.”*

Friends, given the weighty consequences of our words—even our “careless” ones—we must learn to yield our tongues to the control of the Spirit. Because we are clothed in Christ, we can put off critical and sarcastic talk and put on well-chosen, Jesus-honoring speech that builds up others, and gives grace to those who hear. Amen.

The Christian life, especially in our own families and church family, involves the constant encouragement of others. Sam Crabtree, who pastored with John Piper, in his book *Practicing Affirmation*, says this, “We can sin by failing to commend the commendable.” He goes on to say, that generally, it is easier to practice affirmation early in a relationship as it can get harder to do later. This is true in marriage or in church. So, how are you doing with commending and encouraging others? Husbands, what would your wife say about being encouraged by you? Wives, what would your husband say about you? Friends, what would your fellow CG members say about being encouraged by you?

If commending and encouraging is hard for you, it may be that you are struggling with unholy habits and a hard heart. If so, speak the gospel to yourself, that Jesus died for all your sins, he has forgiven you, he will bring healing to your heart through confession, repentance and possibly professional counseling. Dear friend, you are clothed you in Christ and he is refining your character in his image. Amen.

There are many occasions each day, to take initiative to build up others in love and encouragement. In the CG that I lead, we have a GroupMe, and our members love to text words of affirmation to each other. Jesus loves it too!!

We would do well to start every day with prayers like King David's, *"Set a guard over my mouth, LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips"* (Psalm 141:3). *"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer"* (Psalm 19:14). And throughout the day, ask yourself this question: will what I'm about to say or do, please the Lord, or grieve him?

As we move from the school of futility to the School of Christ, Paul, reminds us in **Ephesians 4:30** that our old sin habits grieve God, causing him sorrow and bringing him dishonor. In **v 30**, *"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God."* This warning is tied to **verse 29**, though all of the sins mentioned in this section grieve the Holy Spirit. Fellow believers, who are made in God's image, our heart's desire is to bless and honor the Lord, not grieve and dishonor him, which leads us to the 5<sup>th</sup> holy habit.

**(SLIDE) 5. Put OFF Grieving the Holy Spirit & Put ON Christlikeness (v 30-32)**

*"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you"* (verses 30-32).

When we sin against God, we *"grieve the Holy Spirit."* Anything inconsistent with our new-self holy habits, dishonors God, such as, grieving God when we show worldly sorrow and act defensive about our sin and attempt to justify it or explain it away; whereas godly sorrow causes us to own our sin, confess our sin, and seek to repent by putting off the old corrupt self. Because of the gospel, even when we put back on the old-self, godly grief continues to lead us to repentance and renewed joy that we are forgiven in Christ. Amen.

The last of the five holy habits in **verses 31-32**, is a summation of what Paul just taught. Every effective teacher knows the importance of summarizing a lesson and repetition. On the one hand, Paul teaches us to put off the unholy habits of lying, sinful anger, stealing, corrupting talk, bitterness, wrath, clamor, slander, along with all malice. On the other hand, Paul teaches us to put on holy habits of speaking truth, sharing peace, working to be generous, speaking grace and building up, being kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave us. Amen.

Our Lord Jesus is the true Headmaster of our school, the true Teacher of growing in holiness, and the true Evaluator of how we live for him. In *Romans 14:10-11*, Paul tells us,

*“For, it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” 12 So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.”*

Church, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God, for how we live for Christ. And the good news is that Jesus not only began the work of holiness in us, he will complete it, all the way to heaven. Amen. The last thing I’ll leave you with are the final five words of v 32, *“God in Christ forgave you.”* If you are a believer in Christ as Lord, God saved you through the death of Christ on the cross to pay for and forgive your sins. God made you a new creation in Christ, clothed you in his likeness, in true righteousness and holiness, poured out his love into your hearts through the Holy Spirit, and sealed you for the day of eternal redemption in Heaven. God did all of this, not because you deserved it, but because of his grace. But if you have never placed your faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, that same gospel message is for you today, that Christ died for your sins, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. Today, Jesus offers you salvation as a free gift, that can only be received by faith, apart from any works or merit on your part. God’s Word promises, *“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).* This is the promise of salvation to all who believe in Christ. May God in Christ forgive you and save you today! Amen.

*Join me in prayer: Lord God, by the power of your Spirit, make us want holiness more than we want impurity. Make us eager for what is pure, and dissatisfied with what is evil. We pray in faith, and trust that you will answer according to your purpose to grow us in holiness. Thank you, Jesus, for your gospel work on the cross to save us through faith in you as Lord, and creating us anew in true righteousness and holiness. May we put on our holy wardrobe every day and get used to it, as we joyfully reflect your holy character. Amen.*