

Friends – Episode 4: To Bee or not to Bee

June 11, 2023

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BIG IDEA – Be a bee, not a fly.

scripture focus - “Do not let any **unwholesome talk come out of your mouths**, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.** Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Ephesians 4:29-32 NIV

One of Shakespeare's most famous quotes out of the play he wrote called Hamlet. He wrote the [first quarto](#) in 1606, but it wasn't discovered until 1823. The character, Hamlet says, “To be, or not to be, that is the question.” I learned about it from a Gilligan's Island rerun in the 70's – [Season three, episode four – The Producer](#). I state a different version based on the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesians. **“To be a bee or to not be a bee, that is the question!”**

We have spent a few weeks talking about friendships; why we need them, how to get them and how to keep them. This next couple of messages we'll talk about some church-wide ground rules for how we behave together, as we move into a new direction for our church here on Candlewood.

The church in Ephesus was having some issues and Paul's letter to the churches is answering questions and correcting. Paul is clearly preparing and challenging the church to “grow up,” and “mature. He is either getting ready for sending Timothy to pastor the group or giving some fatherly correction to help his “son in the faith,”

This is some tough talk in a permanent letter we are still being challenged with today.

He boldly addresses the church to stop living in the past and start living Christ. **“So, I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.”**
Ephesians 4:17 NIV

Vs 18. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the **ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.**

So, beloved Church, I remind us of this “We must no longer live as the Los Angelino’s or the So-Californians in the absolute nonsense of the cultural thinking.”

The friendships we foster going forward should be shaped by Christ and Christ alone. Our model for relationships is not what blows through social media but it’s what the Spirit of God blows across the Bible as the final authority in our lives.

Paul gives this template of change in our behaviors, and how to trade out old for new.

Like clothing styles that change with each generation, Paul says, “take off the old self and put on the new.”

We are looking at Chapter four of Ephesians, under the topic of Christian Living.

One commentator said of our beliefs and behaviors, **“It seems our mouth is directly connected to our heart.”** I know, Jesus said it like this while calling the religious leaders a bunch of snakes, in **Matthew 12 :34, “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”**

Here’s Paul again in 4:21-24

“when you heard about Christ and **were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with**

regard to your former way of life, to **put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires**; to be **made new in the attitude of your minds**; and to **put on the new self**, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

Paul tells us this: **our HEART shows up in our MOUTH which produces our BEHAVIOR. We say what we really believe, and we behave based on what we said.**

Our mouth really is a mirror into our soul!

What does Paul mean when he writes, "**our old self is being corrupted by its deceitful desires?**" Do I have deceitful desires? Do I want things that are not good for me? Are my desires of self-will or self-determination SELFISH? And **are these desires of mine lying to me?**

What I want and what is good are not always compatible! What I desire is not always helpful or healthy! **The biggest lie, the best concealed con-job is that we should get or go after everything we desire!**

Holy Spirit, check me before I wreck me!

The desert fathers (the followers of a Jesus who went out to the desert places, like John the Baptist, to spend time alone with God) referred to these as the "**disordered desires**" or our heart. **Augustine used the phrase, "Disordered Love,"** Nick Cady writes, "**Sin, Augustine said, is ultimately a lack of love, either for God or for your neighbor. He famously stated that "The essence of sin is disordered love."** Disordered loves means that we often love less-important things more, and more-important things less than we ought to, and this wrong prioritization leads to unhappiness and disorder in our lives." Augustine's Confessions, his perspective on disordered desires, how every act is the shadow of an act rooted in good yet turned inward on the self and so privated of good.

And maybe the desire is based on a deep need or response to pain or brokenness, but we become obsessed with pursuing cheap knockoffs, with fake and fleeting experiences. C.S. Lewis said, "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world"

Paul sets these ideas in the verses that help us with practical application of staying clear of our old self and putting on the new in Jesus.

Ephesians 4:29-32 NIV

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

Paul specifically, emphatically uses the phrase, "stop spewing rotten words" towards each other!

corrupt - saporós – properly, rotten (putrid), over-ripe; (figuratively) over-done (ripened); hence, corrupt. "4550(saporós) is (akin to sēpō, 'to rot'), primarily, of vegetable and animal substances, expresses what is of poor quality, unfit for use, putrid".

Paul makes it sound like we've got **bad breath** of the soul! And we should stop speaking words that tear down, breakdown or putrefy each other and instead speak to build up - he uses the Greek word for building a house. oikodomé: (the act of) building, a building.

He uses a quick word to communicate how bad we get when our heart, mouth and behaviors tear down rather than build up - we grieve the Holy Spirit.

Paul lists six behaviors that come from our words, which we know come from our heart. Remember, **our HEART shows up in our MOUTH and our words produce our BEHAVIOR.**

I can't go into each word, but they are in my notes. These six behaviors seem to fit under one BIG heading: BITTERNESS

- **Bitterness** – we have allowed or invited a sharp malignancy in
- **Rage** – An expressed passion of personal and intense venting of anger. We are no longer in control of our emotions, they control us.
- **Anger** – From the word, Orge, swelling up, rising up from an ongoing opposition. A seething, stewing buildup over time.
- **Brawling** – oddly this does not mean a street fight or a WWE match. It is **kraugé**: from krázō, "**cry out**" – loud crying, clamorous screaming (shrieking) like a wounded person emitting "unearthly" (non-human) types of sounds.
- **Slander** – Again, strange that Paul uses one of the words for blasphemy – Blasphēmía – literally, slow (sluggish) to call something good (that really is good) – and slow to identify what is truly bad (that really is evil). "**switches**" right for wrong (wrong for right), i.e. **calls what God disapproves, "right" which "exchanges the truth of God for a lie"** We become more like Satan, who is called the slandered, the liar and deceiver and less like God.
- **Malice** – That is we become the complete and total bitter soul with "a wicked disposition."

These are six nasty attributes and attitudes that start in our heart, spew out of our mouths, and eventually become a total lifestyle!

No wonder Paul says "get those awful, stinky, old man clothes off and put on the clothing of Christ!"

What would Jesus wear?

Here, Paul says wear one of Jesus' favorite outfits: Kindness, compassion and forgiveness. Throw the bitterness outfit in the trash and get dresses in Jesus-wear.

In closing, I state this again: **“To be a bee or to not be a bee, that is the question!”**

Let me tell you a little story about the Fly and the Bee. I hate flies!
And I love bees 🐝!

As soon as I discovered that Paul used the word, “unwholesome” and it means putrid or disgustingly corrupt, I thought of the fly.

The fly - Disease Carrier: The House Fly is often a carrier of diseases. The fly transmits diseases by carrying disease organisms onto food. It picks up disease organisms on its leg hairs or eats them and then regurgitates them onto food (in the process of liquefying solid food).

Do houseflies really poop when they land on our food? Yes, chances are they do. See the notes.

What about the Bee?

Bees are our friends! They are productive and cute and super helpful to us! Western honeybees are often described as **essential to human food production**, leading to claims that **without their pollination humanity would starve or die out. Apples, blueberries and cherries, for example, are 90 percent dependent on honeybee pollination.**

A poem: **To Bee or not to Bee**

**One day in my own backyard
I discovered a wonder right under my nose**

**Two creatures buzzing all around
Bringing questions, my mind to pose**

**So still I sat and watched them work
Their deeds respectively**

**The distasteful fly with sticky feet
And the most honorable honeybee**

The fly he did what every fly does,
He crawled all over my plate

Helping himself to whatever he found.
He turned it all to waste

The ways of a fly I wish not to speak,
The ends, the outs of food

To do his deed he regurgitates
I told you, it was crude

But busy in the same backyard
The bee zoomed here and there

From bud to bloom he set his course
Moving quickly through the air

He had a plan, he had a goal
It's honey he would make

All the while as he worked
He'd also pollinate

So, what of these two.
These creatures found flying in my own backyard.

Are there lessons to learn? Conclusions to draw.
The answers aren't too hard

Which will I be in my own world?
As I race around in haste?

Is it disease I'll spread among my own?
Or nectar sweet to taste?

There's power in the words I speak
I have life or death in me

Since honey is so sweet to taste
I'm learning from the bee

NOTES

Scriptures

Ephesians 4:17-18 NIV

“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that **you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.** They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the **ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.**”

Ephesians 4:21-24 NIV

“when you heard about Christ and **were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self,** created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Ephesians 4:29-32 NIV

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

Proverbs 18:21 NIV

“The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”

James 3:6-10 NIV [verses 3-12 give a whole soliloquy on the tongue!]

“The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.”

But Paul, what “deceitful desire” is at work when I am bitter, enraged, brawling, slandering and spreading malice?

Questions

Q: How do you have ideas and find those ideas coming out of your mouth?

Q: Do you believe our words effect our behavior? How or how not.

Q: Do you feel that your words sometimes betray your heart, wishing you had not spoken things?

Q: What do you think about this phrase “disordered desires”?

Q: What about Augustine’s phrase, “disordered love”?

Q: Have you struggled with Paul’s “bitter” list of behaviors? How so.

Q: Care to share about when you were a fly instead of a bee? How about the reverse, when you were a bee and not a fly?

COMMENTARY REFERENCES

Strong’s Concordance

Ephesians 4:17 futility- mataiotés: vanity, emptiness vanity, unreality, purposelessness, ineffectiveness, instability, frailty; false religion. **Useless.**

Ephesians 4:18 darkened - skotóō – to darken; (figuratively) to produce a condition of **moral, spiritual darkness** (obscurity, blindness).

Ephesians 4:18 – alienated - apallotrió: to alienate, estrange

Ephesians 4:18 - ignorance - agnoia: inadvertence, sometimes with the **idea of willful blindness.** [Glenn: not wanting to know or see]

Ephesians 4:18 – hardness - pórósis: a covering with a callous, fig. blindness - a covering with a callous, blindness, hardness of heart, obtuseness. Root word: **póroó: to petrify, i.e. to harden.**

Ephesians 4:22 – corrupted - phtheírō (from phthiō, “perish, waste away”) – properly, waste away, corrupt (deteriorate); (figuratively) to cause or experience **moral deterioration – i.e. decomposition** (break-down), due to the **corrupting influence of sin.** [This root (pht-) literally means “waste away” (degenerate), “moving down from a higher level (quality, status) to a lower form.]

Desires of deceit

Ephesians 4:22 – desire - epithymía (from 1909 /epí, "focused on" and 2372 /thymós, "**passionate desire**") – properly, passion built on strong feelings (urges). These can be positive or negative, depending on whether the desire is inspired by faith (God's inbirthed persuasion). Root: **epithumeó: desire, lust after**.

Ephesians 4:22 – deceit - apátē – deceit, deception, deceitfulness, delusion. a false impression, made to deceive or cheat – i.e. **deceit motivated by guile and treachery** (trickery, fraud).

C. S. Lewis, "**If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world**" (Lewis, C. S. A Mind Awake: An Anthology of C. S. Lewis, ed. by Clyde Kirby. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World. 1968.)

Ephesians 4:29 – corrupt - saprós – properly, rotten (putrid), over-ripe; (figuratively) over-done (ripened); hence, corrupt. "4550(saprós) is (akin to sēpō, 'to rot'), primarily, of vegetable and animal substances, expresses what is of poor quality, unfit for use, putrid". [Glenn: Like **bad breath of the soul!**] James said, life and death are in our tongue.

Paul's phrase "good for building." The only words, the only proper talk towards one another is **Good Talk for building up.**

Ephesians 4:29 – build up - oikodomé: (the act of) building, a building.

Ephesians 4:31

The six behaviors that come from putrid words

1. **pik-ros': bitter**, sharp, acrid, malignant.
2. **Thymós: "expressed passion"** is used of people it indicates rage (personal venting of anger, wrath). This flaw is completely absent of the Lord expressing (inspiring) intense anger.
3. **orgé:** from orgáō, "to teem, **swelling up** to constitutionally oppose") – properly, settled anger(opposition), i.e. rising up from an ongoing (fixed) opposition. proceeds from a internal disposition which steadfastly opposes someone or something based on extended personal exposure, i.e. solidifying what the beholder considers wrong (unjust, evil).
4. **kraugé:** from krázō, "**cry out**" – loud crying, done with pathos (great emotion); clamorous screaming (shrieking) that is extremely boisterous, like a wounded person emitting "unearthly" (non-human) types of sounds.

5. **Blasphēmía:** from blax, "sluggish/slow," and phémē, "reputation, fame") – blasphemy – literally, slow (sluggish) to call something good (that really is good) – and slow to identify what is truly bad (that really is evil). "switches" right for wrong (wrong for right), i.e. calls what God disapproves, "right" which "exchanges the truth of God for a lie"
6. **Kakía:** from kakopoiéō, "a **wicked disposition**" – properly, the underlying principle of evil (inherent evil) which is present, even if not outwardly expressed.

Bad talk for tearing down

But Paul, What “deceitful desire” is at work when I am bitter, enraged, brawling, slandering and spreading malice?

Elliott’s Commentary for English Readers

Ephesians 4:29

Let no corrupt communication . . .—The word rendered “corrupt,” is a strong word, signifying “rotten”; used in [Matthew 7:17-18](#), and elsewhere in the literal sense, here alone in the metaphorical. By the corrupt word, probably, here is meant especially the foul word, which is rotten in itself, and spreads rottenness in others.

The use of edifying.—This is a mistranslation, by inversion, of a difficult expression, “the building up of the need”—that is, the supplying by suggestion of good the peculiar “need” or defect of the hearer’s spiritual state. Perhaps, as before, the word “good” may be taken for *gracious* and full of sympathy, noting by the quick insight of love what each man’s need is, and hastening to speak accordingly, so as to “give grace” or blessing to meet that peculiar need. The same use of the word “grace” is found in [2Corinthians 1:15](#) (“that ye might have a second benefit”). The same idea is found in [1Thessalonians 3:10](#), “to perfect that which is lacking in your faith.”

Benson Commentary

Ephesians 4:29

Let no corrupt communication — Or discourse, dictated by corruption in the heart of the speaker, and tending to corrupt the minds or manners of hearers; *proceed out of your mouth* — At any time, or on any occasion. **The original expression, λογος σαπρος, is literally, rotten or putrid speech; that is, speech offensive to the hearers, or calculated to infect them with sin; and is in direct opposition to that which is seasoned with salt, and is recommended**

(Colossians 4:6) as tending to preserve persons from corruption. The apostle does not merely include in this expression obscene discourse of every kind, **but also all flattery, calumny, railing, boasting, tale-bearing, backbiting, commendations of vice and impiety, profane jestings on religion, its ministers and professors, trifling conversation;** and, indeed, all discourse that is not either about necessary business, or, as the next clause expresses it, is not *good to the use of edifying* — Calculated to instruct, direct, reprove, encourage, excite to duty, comfort, or in some way edify and *minister grace to the hearers*.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible

Ephesians 4:29

(1) that such obscene and filthy conversation prevailed everywhere, and does still among the pagan. So general is this, that at almost every missionary station it has been found that the common conversation is so corrupt and defiling that missionaries have felt it necessary to send their children home to be educated, in order to secure them from the contaminating influence of those around them.

(2) those who have had the misfortune to be familiar with the common conversation of the lower classes in any community, and especially with the conversation of young men, will see the importance of this admonition. Scarcely anything can be conceived more corrupt or corrupting, than that which often prevails among young men - and even young men in the academies and colleges of this land,

(3) its importance will be seen from the "influence" of such corrupt communications. "The passage of an impure thought through the mind leaves pollution behind it;" the expression of such a thought deepens the pollution on the soul, and corrupts others. It is like retaining an offensive carcass above ground, to pollute the air, and to diffuse pestilence and death, which should at once be buried out of sight. A Christian should be pure in his conversation. His Master was pure. His God is pure. The heaven to which he goes is pure. The religion which he professes is pure. Never should he indulge himself in an obscene allusion: never should he retail anecdotes of an obscene character, or smile when they are retailed by others. Never should he indulge in a jest having a double meaning; never should he listen to a song of this character. If those with whom he associates have not sufficient respect for themselves and him to abstain from such corrupt and corrupting allusions, he should at once leave them.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Ephesians 4:29–32. Believers are not to speak unwholesome (*sapros*, "rotten") words (cf. 5:4), but helpful (*agathos*, "good, beneficial"; cf. 4:28) words for the purpose of edification. Good words benefit (lit., "give grace" or enablement to)

the hearers. One's words are to be true and pure and also are to contribute to benefiting others. Besides one's conscience, the Holy Spirit also helps guard a believer's speech. The fact that the Holy Spirit may be grieved points to His personality. His seal of a believer remains until the day of redemption, the time that a believer receives his new body (cf. 1:14; Phil. 3:20–21).

Ephesians 4:31–32. Believers are to get rid of the six vices of bitterness, rage (thymos, “outbursts of anger”), anger (orgē, “settled feeling of anger”), brawling (kraugē, “shouting or clamor”), slander (blasphēmia), and malice (kakia, “ill will, wickedness”). Several of these vices are also listed in Colossians 3:8. The positive commands are three: (1) be kind (chrēstōi, lit., “what is suitable or fitting to a need”); (2) be compassionate (eusplanchnoi; used elsewhere in the NT only in 1 Peter 3:8; cf. splanchnoi, “inner emotions of affection,” in 2 Cor. 6:12; 7:15; Phil. 1:8; 2:1; Col. 3:12; Phile. 7, 12, 20; 1 John 3:17); (3) be forgiving (lit., “being gracious,” charizomenoi, the participle from the verb charizomai, “to give freely” or “to give graciously as a favor”). The reason for these positive commands is that in Christ God is kind (Eph. 2:7), compassionate (Mark 1:41), and gracious (Rom. 8:32) to believers.

The Bible Exposition Commentary

The Bible was written to be obeyed, and not simply studied, and this is why the words “therefore” and “wherefore” are repeated so often in the second half of Ephesians (4:1, 17, 25; 5:1, 7, 14, 17, 24).

Corrupt speech (v. 29). **The mouth and heart are connected.** “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34). We expect a change in speech when a person becomes a Christian. It is interesting to trace the word mouth through the Book of Romans and see how Christ makes a difference in a man's speech. The sinner's mouth is “full of cursing and bitterness” (Rom. 3:14); but when he trusts Christ, he gladly confesses with his mouth “Jesus Christ is Lord” (Rom. 10:9–10, niv). As a condemned sinner, his mouth is stopped before the throne of God (Rom. 3:19); but as a believer, his mouth is opened to praise God (Rom. 15:6). Change the heart and you change the speech. Paul certainly knew the difference, for when he was an unsaved rabbi, he was “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1). But when he trusted Christ, a change took place: “Behold, he prayeth” (Acts 9:11). From “preying” to “praying” in one step of faith!

The word corrupt, used in Matthew 7:17–18, refers to rotten fruit. It means “that which is worthless, bad, or rotten.” Our words do not have to be “dirty” to be worthless. Sometimes we go along with the crowd and try to impress people with the fact that we are not as puritanical as they think. Peter may have had this motive in mind when he was accused by the girl of being one of Christ's disciples. “Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, ‘I know not the man’ ”

(Matt. 26:74). The appetites of the old life sometimes show up when we permit “filthy communication” out of the mouth (Col. 3:8). Remember, before we were saved, we lived in spiritual death (Eph. 2:1–3) and, like Lazarus, our personal corruption produced an odor that was not pleasing to God. No wonder Paul wrote, “Their throat is an open sepulchre” (Rom. 3:13).

Bitterness (vv. 30–32). These verses warn us against several sins of the attitude and amplify what Paul wrote about anger. **Bitterness refers to a settled hostility that poisons the whole inner man. Somebody does something we do not like, so we harbor ill will against him.** “Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them” (Col. 3:19). Bitterness leads to wrath, which is the explosion on the outside of the feelings on the inside. Wrath and anger often lead to brawling (clamor) or blasphemy (evil speaking). The first is fighting with fists, the second is fighting with words. It is difficult to believe that Christians would act this way, but they do, and this is why Paul warned us, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Ps. 133:1).

Internet Links

[How do I handle disordered desires?](#) – John Piper

[The Destructive Power of Disordered Love](#) - Jeff Warren

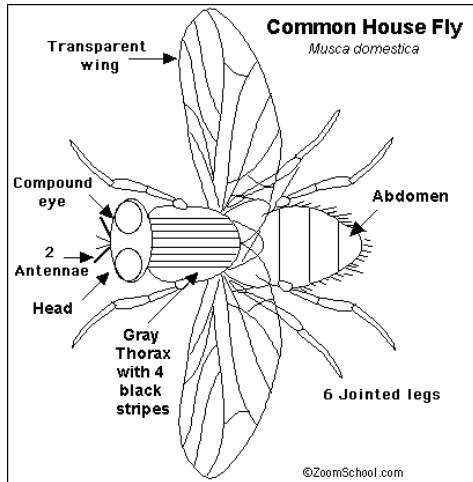
[Do House Flies Poop?](#)

[Do they really poop? The fecal facts.](#)

[To bee or not to bee Powerpoint](#)

The difference between a fly and a bee

FLY OR BEE

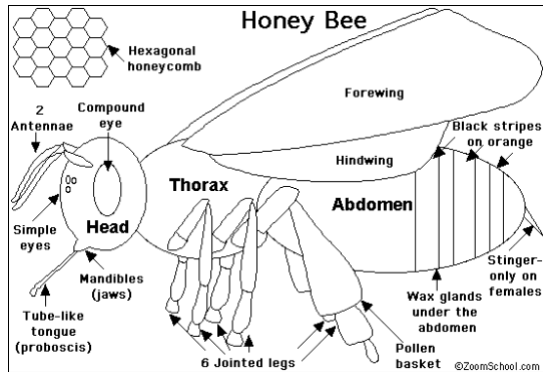


Anatomy: Like all insects, the house fly has a body divided into three parts (head, thorax, and abdomen), a hard exoskeleton, and six jointed legs. Flies also have a pair of transparent wings. The house fly can taste using its feet and with its mouthparts. Adults are about 1/4 to 1/2 inch (6 - 9 mm) long with 13 - 15 mm wingspan. House flies are dark gray, with four dark stripes down the top of the thorax. They have sponging mouthparts (they cannot bite); house flies can only eat liquids, but they can liquefy many solid foods with their saliva.

Reproduction: The complete life-cycle of a house fly takes from 10 to 21 days. On the average, 12 generations of house flies can be produced in one year. Adult females lay 120-150 tiny white eggs, usually in manure or other warm, moist, decaying organic matter. A female lives for about 2 1/2 months and can lay up to 1,000 eggs in her short life. The eggs are only about 0.04 inch (1 mm) long and hatch into white, worm-like maggots in about 12 hours. The maggots grow to be about 1/2 inch (12.5 mm) long. When they are this big, they burrow into the ground to pupate. An adult will emerge in about 5 to 6 days (in warm weather) or about a month (in cold weather).

Disease Carrier: The House Fly is often a carrier of diseases, such as typhoid fever, cholera, dysentery, and anthrax. **The fly transmits diseases by carrying disease organisms onto food. It picks up disease organisms on its leg hairs or eats them and**

then regurgitates them onto food (in the process of liquefying solid food).



Honeybees are social insects that live in hives. They eat **nectar** (a sweet liquid made by flowers) which they turn into honey. Bees fly about 15 mph (24 kph). There are three types of Honey Bees: The **queen** (who lays eggs), **workers** (females who gather food, make honey, build the six-sided honeycomb, tend eggs, and guard the hive) and **drones** (males who mate with the queen). All the members of the hive are related.

Western honey bees are often described as essential to human food production, leading to claims that without their pollination humanity would starve or die out.^{[39][40]} Apples, blueberries and cherries, for example, are 90 percent dependent on honeybee pollination.^[41] Albert Einstein is sometimes misquoted as saying "If bees disappeared off the face of the earth, man would only have four years left to live".^[42] Einstein did not say this and there is no science to support this prediction.^[43]

Many important crops need no insect pollination at all. The ten most important crops,^[44] comprising 60% of all human food energy,^[45] fall into this category: plantains are sterile and propagated by cuttings, as are cassava; potatoes, yams, and sweet potatoes are root vegetables propagated by tubers; soybeans are self-pollinated; and rice, wheat, sorghum, and maize are wind-pollinated, as are most other grasses.^[46]