



## **Why Are You the Way You Are?**

**Ephesians 4:1-3**

Lake Arrowhead Church, Waleska, Georgia  
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## **WHY ARE YOU THE WAY YOU ARE?**

### **Ephesians 4:1-3**

*Why are you the way you are?* That's a loaded question. And that may be the question your spouse has been asking for the last 40 years. Why are you the way you are?

Family background and how you were raised has a lot to do with it. So does your personality. And so do life experiences, both good and bad. But if we're honest, it's hard to answer the question because we all have blind spots. And, by definition, a blind spot is the inability to see the truth about yourself which is so obvious to everyone else.

Jesus had something to say about blind spots in the Sermon on the Mount, when He said, "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ... You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye!" (Matthew 7:3-5, NAS). Again, a blind spot is the inability to see the truth about yourself.

Self-awareness is hard. It's impossible to be objective about ourselves. That's why we need the Holy Spirit. To take an honest look in the mirror we must invite the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth about us and allow Him to sand our rough edges. That's how spiritual transformation works.

So, in this two-part series, we're going to invite the Holy Spirit to help us answer the question – *why are you the way you are?*

Before analyzing each other, I want to start by being sympathetic. Perhaps you're the way you are because of past wounds, past abuse, or lingering grief. Perhaps that wound has yet to heal, and it affects you every day. I'm so sorry about that. And I want to acknowledge that so much about our personalities and our emotions and our coping is due to past hurt. And we need to tenderly acknowledge that about each other.

On the other hand, when it comes to change, we're tempted to say, "That's just the way I am." Or resigned to say, "I'm too old to change now." But the Bible refuses to allow us to say that. Romans 8:29 says He "predestined us to become conformed to the image of His Son." Our destiny is to become more and more like Jesus. To think like Him, to love like Him, and to act like Him in every way. As the potter shapes the clay, so the Lord shapes us. And He's not finished with us. I love what Max Lucado writes, when he says, "Jesus loves you just the way you are, but He refuses to leave you that way. He wants you to be just like Jesus."<sup>1</sup>

And if we want to be more like Jesus, and if we truly want to honor Him with who we are and how we live, we will submit to the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. We will invite Him and submit to Him as He sands the rough edges of our character.

### **COMMON BLIND SPOTS**

Since a blind spot is an inability to see the truth about ourselves that also means we're often unaware of how we come across to other people. Our blind spots affect our relationships. That's

where they show up and that's where they cause problems. So let's consider some common blind spots that many of us have and how those blind spots affect how we come across to other people.

- Perhaps you tend to worry or struggle with anxiety
- Perhaps you tend to be fearful and overly cautious
- Perhaps you lack confidence and tend to be insecure
- Why are you like that?
- Perhaps your blind spot is pride, and you don't realize that sometimes you come across as arrogant and conceited
- Perhaps you tend to be harsh and rude, and don't even realize it
- Perhaps you have a stubborn streak and think you're always right
- Why are you like that?
- Perhaps you've been betrayed in the past, find it hard to forgive, and carry a lot of bitterness, yet you don't realize how that spills over into your relationships
- Perhaps you're impatient and easily annoyed and irritated
- Perhaps you're quick to get angry, and as the saying goes, those around you feel like they are walking on eggshells, never sure when you might explode
- Why are you like that?
- Perhaps you tend to be pessimistic and cynical
- Perhaps you're quick to criticize, quick to point out what's wrong with everyone else
- Perhaps you tend to be selfish, and most of your arguments are you fighting to get your way
- Why are you like that?
- Perhaps you tend to be defensive, feel threatened by feedback, and quick to make excuses or blame others, and you don't realize that you come across as unteachable
- Perhaps you're theologically strong, but relationally weak. Paul David Tripp was counseling a man whom he described as "a theological gymnast" but "a relational paraplegic."<sup>2</sup>
- Perhaps you have a long list of broken relationships, or surface relationships, why is that? Why do people tend to keep you at arm's length?
- Do you realize how you come across to other people?
- Do you tend to dominate conversations and talk too much? Why do you do that?

- Do you tend to quote your resume, list your accomplishments, and unconsciously try to prove yourself? Why do you do that?
- Do you tend to brag? Telling people about your new car or your new curtains or your next vacation? Why do you do that?
- Can your compliments sound like insults? “Wow, you’ve lost weight. You look so much better. I didn’t want to say anything, but you were really fat.” Is that a compliment or an insult? Do you realize how you come across to other people?

Going through a list like this feels overly negative. Of course, we all have a thing or two we need to improve, but this seems like overkill. So why deal with it?

For two reasons. One, because blind spots are dangerous. A blind spot in your rearview mirror while driving 70 mph down the highway is dangerous. So are blind spots in our relationships. If we don’t identify them, our blind spots can cause damage in our relationships.

And two, we must deal with our blind spots because we are called to be like Jesus. Again, Romans 8:29 says He “predestined us to become conformed to the image of His Son.” To be more like Jesus. As the potter shapes the clay, so the Lord shapes us. And He’s not finished with us. And He’s not finished with you! As Max Lucado writes, “Jesus loves you just the way you are, but He refuses to leave you that way. He wants you to be just like Jesus.”<sup>3</sup>

Now to Scripture. The New Testament is filled with descriptions of Christlikeness. And I want to focus on four of the hardest commands in Scripture. Four areas which help us conquer our blind spots. Four areas which lead to Christlikeness are humility, patience, forgiveness, and love.

## HUMILITY

In Ephesians 4, Paul says, “I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, **with all humility** and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love” (Ephesians 4:1-2, NAS). ***Humility, because you’re not always right.***

Proverbs 21:2 says, “Every person’s way is right in his own eyes, but the Lord examines the hearts” (NAS). We can’t help it. We think we’re right. We can see the error in others, but we can’t see it in ourselves. It’s hard to admit that we could be wrong. That’s why humility is so important. It’s realizing that you’re not always right.

Humility was despised in Greek culture. Aristocratic Greeks looked down on the humble, on the lower class. They despised the servant and the slave. But Jesus turned humility into the highest virtue.<sup>4</sup> The most humbling step ever taken was taken by Jesus. He stepped down from heaven to earth, from majesty to a manger, from comfort to a cross. That’s why Paul said, “Put on the Lord Jesus” (Romans 13:14, NAS). That’s why Peter said, “Clothe yourselves with humility” (1 Peter 5:5, NAS). Dress yourself in humility. Put on Jesus Christ.

What is humility?

- Humility is realizing that you're not always right ... and not always having to be right.
- Humility is admitting our flaws and failures.
- Humility embraces the humanity of other people, accepting their flaws and failures without judging them.
- Humility is being aware of our sin and how offensive it is to God.<sup>5</sup>
- Humility is being open and teachable to the advice and correction of others.

Humility is key to conquering the blind spot of thinking we're always right. Philippians 2 says, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves ... Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:3-5, NAS). Humility, because you're not always right.

## PATIENCE

A second quality of Christlikeness is patience. *Patience, because you're weird too.* It's not just your Uncle Fred or your mother-in-law, you're weird too. That's why Paul said, "I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, *with patience*, showing tolerance for one another in love" (Ephesians 4:1-2, NAS).

When God created Adam, He said, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18, NAS). God created us with a need for relationship. But when Adam and Eve sinned, their sin trickled down throughout history to every human heart. Sin and selfishness are now our default. So, every relationship is two sinful, selfish people trying to get along. What could possibly go wrong?

We say things we shouldn't. We do things we regret. We annoy each other. We let each other down. And too often, we hurt those we love the most. Again, that's why Paul emphasized patience.

The Greek word for "patience" means long-tempered. It's being slow to anger. And that's how the Bible describes God. David said, "You, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" (Psalm 86:15, NIV). And that's why Paul urges us to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling." We are to imitate God. We are to show the same patience to others that He has shown to us.

Patience means "showing tolerance for one another." Tolerating. Enduring. Putting up with. It doesn't mean ignoring sin or injustice, but it does mean being slow to anger and extending grace.

The key to patience, to tolerance, is restraint. It's holding back. It's holding back your desire to win an argument or to verbally put someone in their place. The Old Testament taught "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." If someone hurt you, you had the right to get even. But Jesus raised the standard. "But I say to you, do not retaliate against an evil person. Whoever slaps

you on your right cheek, turn the other cheek” (Matthew 5:38-39). Retaliation will always inflame a situation, but restraint has a chance to calm the situation.

Patience is loving people who annoy you or irritate you. Patience is loving people who hurt you or let you down. Patience says, “In spite of your quirks and mood swings, in spite of your weird family, in spite of your moments of temporary insanity ... I still love you.”

## FORGIVENESS

A third quality of Christlikeness is forgiveness. The word forgiveness is not in this passage, but it is implied, when it says, “**Showing tolerance** to one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2, NAS). It’s taking patience a step further. A third quality of Christlikeness is ***forgiveness, because you make mistakes too.***

Peter often asked the questions no one else dared to ask. Peter asked Jesus, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” We wonder the same thing. How much do we have to forgive? But here’s what Jesus said. “Not seven times, but seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:21-22, NLT).<sup>6</sup>

The rabbis taught that a person was required to forgive three times. This came from their interpretation of what the Lord said to the prophet Amos. “For three transgressions (I will forgive) ... (but) for four I will not hold back My punishment.”<sup>7</sup> The rabbis took this to mean that even God had limits. So the rabbis taught there was a limit to forgiveness.<sup>8</sup>

Peter tried to show that he had a bigger heart than the rabbis. He offered to forgive not just three times, but up to seven times. Expecting to be commended, instead Jesus said, “No Peter. Not seven times, but seventy times seven!” Peter and the disciples were stunned. Did Jesus really expect them to forgive that much? Yes.

Peter was thinking the same thing we’re thinking. “But wait a minute, Lord. You don’t understand my situation ... You don’t know how bad it was ... You don’t know what he did to me!” It doesn’t matter. Jesus died on the cross for every sin, great and small. He paid the penalty for every sin, great and small. He has forgiven every sin, great and small. And He expects us to do the same.

But it’s so hard to do. Why is it hard to forgive?

- “Because I don’t respect him and I don’t trust him. So how can I forgive him?”
- “Because I don’t want to be nice to him after what he did to me.”
- “Because I hope I never see that person again as long as I live.”
- “To forgive her is to act like it never happened. But it did happen!”
- “To forgive him is to act like it didn’t hurt. But it did hurt.”

Why is it hard to forgive? Because it's just not fair! That's how we feel. It's just not fair. Neither was the grace God showed us. And that's why we forgive others.<sup>9</sup> His grace humbles us, softens us, and helps us forgive when it's not fair. Forgiven people forgive ... over and over and over again.<sup>10</sup>

## LOVE

To conquer our blind spots, and to become more like Jesus, we must grow in humility, patience, and forgiveness. But a fourth ingredient, perhaps the greatest ingredient, is love. "I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called," Paul said, "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another *in love*" (Ephesians 4:1-2, NAS). ***Love, because of how much Jesus loves us.***

Jesus declared love the greatest commandment. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart" and "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39, NAS). Love is the greatest commandment and the distinguishing characteristic of a follower of Jesus Christ. We are to "walk in love just as Christ loved us" (Ephesians 5:2, NAS).

First Corinthians 13 is called the love chapter. We often hear it read at weddings, but it applies to every relationship. "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:4-8, NIV).

This is the kind of love God asks of us. This is how God wants us to do family, to do marriage, to do church, to do all our relationships. On our own, we can't do it. This kind of love must come from God. God loved us when we least deserved it, and He asks us to love those who don't deserve it as well. So we pray, God help us love others the way You have loved us.

## SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

So what can we do? Let me ruin your lunch today, by suggesting that over lunch after church, you ask your spouse or friend or family member, "So what are my blind spots?" That would be a fun lunch.

Again, Jesus had something to say about blind spots, when He said, "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye" (Matthew 7:3, NAS). If we want to be more like Christ, and if we truly want to honor Him with who we are and how we live, we will invite the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth about us and to sand off the rough edges of our character.

So what can we do?

***One, learn from life experiences.*** In Proverbs 3:13, Solomon said, "Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding" (ESV). How do we find wisdom? How do we get understanding? From life experiences. Life is a great teacher. When we do something stupid,

we suffer the consequences. When we do something sinful, we suffer the consequences. And those consequences are a great teacher. So pay attention to how you react to various situations. Pay attention to how you react to stressful situations or hurtful situations. Pay attention to how you react to pressure or conflict. Spiritual maturity comes by paying attention to how you react to life experiences. Life is a great teacher.

***Two, listen to faithful friends.*** Relationships provide great feedback. How people respond to you often exposes your blind spots. So pay attention to how people react to you.

Solomon confirmed this principle in Proverbs 27, when he said, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend ... As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:6, 17, NAS). In other words, wise people invite other people to speak truth into their life.

Do you have a Proverbs 27 friend? Who speaks truth into your life? Who has permission to ask you tough questions? Who knows you well enough to know your blind spots and has the freedom to point them out? Who really cares about you and who really challenges you? I’m talking about more than a golfing buddy or a Facebook friend. I’m talking about an “iron sharpens iron” friend.

Relationships provide great feedback, and wise people invite other people to speak truth into their life.<sup>11</sup>

***Three, sit with God’s word.*** Notice I did not say read God’s word or study God’s word. Of course, that’s important. But too often we read and study God’s word for information, for knowledge. But to sit with God’s word is to allow it work on our hearts. The goal is transformation, not just information.

Hebrews 4:12 says, “The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (ESV). “Piercing.” “Discerning.” The word of God reveals the truth about us. The word of God exposes our blind spots. And as we sit with God’s word, it shapes us and we become what we read. Sit with God’s word and allow it to change you to make you more like Jesus.

***Four, invite the Holy Spirit to expose your blind spots and reveal the truth about you.*** David is a great example of this, when he dared to pray, “Search me, O God, and know my heart. Test me ... Point out anything in me that offends you” (Psalm 139:23-24, NLT).

When we pray that, and when the Holy Spirits confronts our sin and exposes our character, He is not trying to condemn us. He is not saying, “Gotcha!” When the Holy Spirit confronts us, it is always with grace.

Why would we pray that prayer? Why would we ask God to search us and expose what’s there? For the same reason we want a doctor to do an MRI. To reveal what’s wrong, to reveal what’s making us sick, to reveal what’s threatening our life. An MRI creates sliced images of internal organs and provides the most detailed diagnosis of disease. An MRI prayer is praying,

“Lord, slice the layers of my heart and expose any cell in my life that offends Your holiness or is contrary to the character of Jesus.”

David was willing to pray, “Search me, O God.” You must be willing to ask the Holy Spirit to show you the truth about yourself. To expose any area of your life that needs to change.

## CONCLUSION

*Why are you the way you are?* That’s a hard question to answer because we all have blind spots. Self-awareness is hard, and it’s impossible to be objective about ourselves. That’s why we need the Holy Spirit. To take an honest look in the mirror we must invite the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth about us and allow Him to sand our rough edges.

We may be tempted to say, “That’s just the way I am.” Or resigned to say, “I’m too old to change now.” But the Bible refuses to allow us to say that. Romans 8:29 says He “predestined us to become conformed to the image of His Son.” To be more like Jesus. As the potter shapes the clay, so the Lord shapes us. And He’s not finished with us. He’s not finished with you!

And if you want to be more like Jesus, if you truly want to honor Him with who you are and how you live, then you will submit to the Holy Spirit’s work in your life. You will invite the Holy Spirit to sand the rough edges of your character.

Therefore, listen well. As Paul said, “I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love” (Ephesians 4:1-3, NAS).

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Max Lucado, *Just Like Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1998), page 3.

<sup>2</sup> Paul David Tripp & Timothy S. Lane, *How People Change* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2006, 2008), page 1.

<sup>3</sup> Lucado, page 3.

<sup>4</sup> See Philippians 2:3-5.

<sup>5</sup> Peter fell at Jesus' feet and said, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!" (Luke 5:8, NAS). Paul once said, "Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and I am the worst of them all" (1 Timothy 1:15, NLT).

<sup>6</sup> Several translations read "seventy-seven" (NASB 2020, ESV, NIV). But the phrase actually means seventy sevens, or "seventy times seven" (NASB 1995). We see similar language in Daniel 9:24 concerning the prophecy of the "seventy weeks," meaning seventy times seven. These 490 years represent the time from Daniel's prophecy to the coming of the Messiah.

<sup>7</sup> Scan Amos for this repeated phrase.

<sup>8</sup> See William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1975), page 193.

<sup>9</sup> Forgiveness is ... turning the other cheek ... giving up your right to get even ... resisting the urge to retaliate ... refusing to resent or hate ... refusing to keep score ... humbly realizing that you've probably offended someone else just as bad as this person has offended you ... seeing that person as God sees them, imperfect and flawed, yet valued and loved by Him. What does Jesus really require of us? To do what God has done for us. To forgive ... over and over and over again.

<sup>10</sup> Colossians 3 says, "As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:12-13, NIV).

<sup>11</sup> Again, Solomon said, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Proverbs 27:6, NAS). Beneficial is the tough love of a friend. Tough love hurts like a doctor's needle. It stings for a moment, but soon healing will come. David knew that. He even invited it. "Let a righteous man strike me – it is a kindness; let him rebuke me – it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it" (Psalm 141:5, NIV).