



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

EPHESIANS LESSON 4

In Ephesians chapters 1-3, Paul has been dealing with doctrine, or the wealth we have "in Christ." He focused on the bountiful blessings we receive when we become children of the King. I was reminded of this eternal inheritance last night as I watched a Mighty Ducks game from my friend's company suite. We were supposed to be going to watch a hockey game, but I was more interested in the food that was going to be served. We were certainly not disappointed, as the waiter brought in an endless supply of every kind of food and dessert you could think of. Because we were guests, we were able to enjoy all the benefits and blessings that our executive friend was entitled to. Because we "know Christ," we also get to sit in the heavenly places and enjoy the spiritual riches that are only found "in Christ."

Now, in chapter 4, we find a shift of focus, or a transition. This is often described as doctrine to duty, creed to conduct, the Christian's wealth to his walk, or exposition to exhortation. Paul reminds the Ephesian believers that their belief should affect their behavior. I pray that what we believe will also govern how we live. Let's get started, shall we?

First Day

1. Read Ephesians 4:1-32. Observe and list the facts you find. Note the repeated words and phrases.
2. What does the word "therefore" in verse 1 indicate?

3. How would you outline, or break this chapter up into sections? Title each section.

4. What is the main thought of this chapter? What verse would you choose as the key verse?

5. What key word is repeated in verses 1 and 17? Why is it important?

6. How does Paul refer to himself in verse 1? Why does he call himself this?

Paul knows that their doctrine calls them to a specific duty. In other words, what they believe should govern how they behave. God's call on their life should be proven by their conduct.

7. What "calling" is Paul referring to in verse 1?

8. Explain why it's so important to know what the Bible teaches before we make choices on how to live our life.

9. What thought or verse in this chapter spoke to your heart?

That's it for today. I pray that we strive to obey the truths we find in His Word. God bless you!

Memory Verse of the Week: "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you."
Ephesians 4:32

Second Day

Work on your memory verse. Practice "saying" it and "doing" it.

In the next few chapters of Ephesians, Paul deals with our conduct. From 4:1-16, Paul talks about how to walk within the church, and the importance of striving for unity. In 4:17-5:20, Paul discusses our individual daily walk as Christians. From 5:21-33, he deals with our relationships within the home. Let's begin by looking at Paul's first point - unity.

1. Read Ephesians 4:1-16. Name the virtues that should characterize a walk that is worthy.
2. How do you think these virtues promote unity within the church?
3. How was Jesus the best example of forbearance?
4. We know that pride is the opposite of humility. How can pride destroy unity within the church?

The word "worthy" comes from the word "axios," which means "to be of equal weight." Like a balance of scales, our walk should be equal to our calling. There is no greater calling than to be a child of God.

5. Explain what it practically means to "walk worthy of your calling." How's the balance of your life? Is your walk equal to your calling? Are you walking worthy?

6. Which verse tells us that keeping unity requires effort? How can "keeping peace" be an effort?

7. Read Matthew 5:9, Romans 12:18, and 14:19. What do these verses tell us about peace?

8. We are called to "fight for peace." How can we fight for peace within our homes?

The word "endeavor" means to "make every effort," or to be eager to maintain or guard," implying zealous effort and diligence. In his book, Ephesians, The Mystery of the Body of Christ, Kent Hughes gives three characteristics of a peacemaker. He says that a peacemaker "**is characterized by honesty.**" He does not pretend things are okay when they're not. He is "**willing to risk pain.**" The peacemaker risks misunderstanding and failure. He's not afraid to apologize. The peacemaker "**is a fighter.**" He makes trouble to make peace. He undergoes an

aggressive pursuit of peace. He is not mean or thoughtless, but he is filled with the peace of God and desires to impart that peace to others. He is gentle, humble, and forgiving.

9. Are you a peacemaker? Do you overlook the faults of others, or do you demand perfection? Are you humble, gentle, and loving? (Are you a peacemaker or a disturber of the peace?)

10. Should we pursue peace at all costs? (What are our boundaries?)

11. Why is unity in the church so important?

The unity that Paul is talking about is rooted in the Trinity. There is one body and one Spirit. The Holy Spirit brings unity to the universal body of believers (1 Corinthians 12:13-31). The Holy Spirit takes people who are very different and makes them live in unity, bringing glory to God. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of the "hope of our calling," which is Christ's promise to return for His church. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, which creates one faith. Because of our one faith we are baptized into one body of believers at our conversion. There can only be one body, one faith, one hope, and one baptism because there is only one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

12. Verse 2 tells us that unity comes from being patient with others. The Apostle Peter began as a prideful, impatient man. What did he learn about dealing with people, according to these verses?

- a.** 1 Peter 1:22
- b.** 1 Peter 2:17
- c.** 1 Peter 3:8
- d.** 1 Peter 4:8

That's it for today. There is so much we could talk about in these verses alone. Are you in a sticky situation right now? How can you fight for peace without compromising?

Third Day

Spend time meditating on your verse.

In Ephesians 4:1-7, Paul discussed the things that bring unity which are common to all of us. (i.e., one faith, one Lord, etc.) Now Paul talks about the diversity within that unity.

1. Read Ephesians 4:7-16. God gives us gifts according to His grace (Romans 12:6, Ephesians 1:6-7). This grace describes the ability to perform any task that is given to us by God. Each of us has received this enabling grace in the exact proportion that Christ gave it.
2. In verse 8, Paul quotes Psalm 68:18. Read this passage. Although it is very similar, what one major difference do you find?
3. What's Paul's point in verses 9-10?

In verse 8, Paul is making the point that Christ is the giver of gifts. Psalm 68 is a picture of a king's conquering return. William Barclay comments: "The king ascends on high by climbing the steep road of Mount Zion into the streets of the Holy City. He brings in his captive band of prisoners and marches them through the streets with chains to demonstrate his conquering power. The Psalmist speaks about the conqueror receiving gifts, but Paul changes it to read, 'gave gifts to men.' In the Old Testament the conquering king demanded and received gifts from men. In the New Testament the conquering Christ offers and gives gifts to men." Paul uses this picture to illustrate the fact that Christ, in His crucifixion and resurrection, was victorious over Satan. When Christ ascended to Heaven, He gave gifts to the church.

4. What did Jesus set us free from? What was holding us captive?

I believe Paul's point in verses 9-10 was to show us that Christ is Lord over the whole universe. He came to earth to rescue all people, and no one is beyond His reach. The Life Application Bible says that the phrase "the lower parts of the earth" can mean the earth itself (lowly by comparison to heaven), the grave, or Hades, which some believe is the resting place of souls between death and resurrection." I personally think that Jesus descended into this world when he entered it as a man, and He ascended from this world when He left it to return to His glory. Paul is excited because the King of Glory is the same Lord who walked on this earth. He came down and actually became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21), but then He resurrected, bursting forth as conquering King that gives gifts to all men. He did not desert us, but fills the entire universe!

5. What are some of the gifts given to the church according to verse 11?
6. For what purpose were these gifts given? (vs.12)
7. With what goal? (vs.13)
8. What are some signs of spiritual growth in us as individuals, as well as within the church? (vs. 14-16)
9. The purpose of the gifts is to edify and build up God's Kingdom. How are the gifts sometimes used to build up our own kingdom?
10. The Holy Spirit has given each of us gifts. Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 27-31, Romans 12:3-8, 1 Peter 4:9-11, and Ephesians 4:11. (Most believe that these lists are not exhaustive.) What gifts has the Spirit given you? Are you using them? How are you personally building up and edifying the body of Christ? Are you doing your share? (vs.16)

11. God desires unity, but not uniformity. What does that mean, and how does this section prove that?

12. How can we discover and develop our gifts through fellowship with other believers?

13. Today, teaching seems to be a much needed and important gift. How does good, solid Bible teaching protect us from being "tossed to and fro"?

14. What's your growth chart look like? Have you shown signs of spiritual growth this past year? Describe your chart ...

Tomorrow we'll take a look at how we are to conduct ourselves as individuals. But first, spend some time thanking the Lord for the gift He has given you and for wisdom in using it to build up the body of Christ.

Fourth Day

What's your memory verse?

1. Let's begin by reading Ephesians 4:17-32. Describe the walk of the Gentiles. Why are they past feeling?

Apart from God, life is a downward spiral. John Stott outlines the progression like this: (1) hardness of heart (2) darkness of heart (3) deadness of heart (4) recklessness, unrestrained abandonment to sin.

Paul now tells us about a divine wardrobe. He explains what we should take off and what we should put on to be properly dressed. William Blake calls it a "mantle for the soul divine" which will change one's life.

2. Once we've accepted Christ, what are we supposed to "put off"?
3. Do you think you put them off once, or is it a repeated "putting off"? Why?
4. How do we renew our mind? Also read Romans 12:2.
5. After we renew our minds, what are we called to put on?
6. Why isn't it good enough just to "put off"? Why must we also "put on"?

Our old garments are usually quite comfortable, aren't they? Sometimes they are so natural to us that we don't even realize that we're still wearing old bitterness, unforgiveness, or anger. We must daily choose to put on love, or put on peace. It's a continual surrender of our will to the Lord, allowing Him to control our lives.

7. Are there some old garments that you are still wearing? Are there any works of the flesh that we must reject? Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart on this. Our behavior is governed by our call, remember?

8. Why does Paul say to put away lying, in verse 25? Also read Romans 12:5.
9. Explain what it means to be angry, but not sin. Why shouldn't we let the sun go down on our anger?
10. Anger is one thing we should be "putting off." Do you have a problem with anger, or angry outbursts? How does this give opportunity to the devil? What should you do about it?
11. In verse 28, Paul gives us an interesting motive for working. What is it? Why?

These characteristics of the new man are birthed in us as we walk in the Spirit. We certainly can't do this on our own. I pray that every day and every moment we strive to put on the heavenly wardrobe designed for believers. Let's set aside our old, rotten clothes of the old man, and exchange them for shiny white ones, shall we?

Fifth Day

Write out your verse from memory. I pray that it spoke to your heart.

1. Continue reading about the wardrobe of the new man in Ephesians 4:20-32. When believers wear their new clothes, how does it affect the whole body of Christ?

2. What should be the purpose of communication, according to verse 29?

3. Think of how you communicated with others today. Did it edify or build up the person?

4. Do you generally edify your husband with your words? Your kids? Your friends? What changes do you need to make in this area?

"We are to converse in such a way that our words become a vehicle and demonstration of the grace of God."

Kent Hughes

5. What can we do to the Holy Spirit?

6. Read verse 31. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you if any of those attitudes still remain in your heart.

7. The new man is kind to others. Read 2 Corinthians 6:3-10. Why is kindness important? Do we always "feel" like being kind?

8. What does it mean to be "tenderhearted"? Does that word describe you?

9. Another mark of the new man is forgiveness. Also read Mark 11:25-26. Why should we forgive others?

10. What do the following verses tell us about God's forgiveness? Read Psalm 86:5, 1 John 1:9, Isaiah 43:25, and Isaiah 55:7.

11. Do you have trouble forgiving those who've wronged or hurt you? Does someone specific come to your mind? Ask the Lord to fill you with His love for them and give you a heart that is ready to forgive.

We can either grieve or bless the Holy Spirit. Reflect on the areas discussed in this section. Are you bringing joy to the Spirit or grief?

12. What did the Lord show you about yourself this week? Write a prayer to the Lord, expressing your heart. Don't worry -- you don't have to share it with your group!