

SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY NOTES

— June 24, 2018 —

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SERMON: 5 Principles of a Healthy Relationship

TEXT: Ephesians 4:25-32

CENTRAL MESSAGE:

Being a Christian is not so much about how much you attend church, how many ministries you're in, how much money you give, how many scriptures you have highlighted in your Bible, how long you can pray, whether or not you can or cannot speak/pray in tongues, or how loud your shout is. It really comes down to how well you do the two commandments which are *loving the Lord God with all your heart and loving your neighbor as yourself*. One of the ways we can do this is through practicing healthy relationships.

CONTEXT:

The book of Ephesians, like many of Paul's letters, can be broken down into two sections. In the first half, chapters 1-3, you have **BELIEFS**. So, Paul really drills down and says, *“Listen, you're a Christian now and this is what you need to **believe** about salvation, about heaven, about hell, etc.”* In chapters 4-6, Paul then switches and says, *“Okay, in light of all that you **KNOW** and **BELIEVE** as a Christian, this then is how you should **BEHAVE**.”* And in chapter 4, he is urging his readers essentially saying, *“If you are a Christian, act like it.”*

In verses 22, he says to *“take off the old self”* and in verse 24, he says to *“put on the new self”*. But what exactly does that mean and what does that look like in my life on a daily basis? In this passage, Paul is going to suggest five principles of healthy relationships. Notice the structure here. For each of them, he tells us what we *shouldn't* and *should* do, and *why*.

Principle #1: BE HONEST...NOT DECEPTIVE – v. 25

²⁵Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor for we are all members of one body.

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The word “falsehood” means much more than lying. The Greek word *pseudos* refers to “a fake”, “a phony”, or “anything that is not what it appears.” It means not being fully honest in what you say or how you present yourself. Here are some practical ways we can be guilty of *pseudos* or falsehood.

1. Making false promises – This is when we get caught off-guard and make a promise to do something or be somewhere when we know all along we are not able to make good on the promise. This also includes not following through.
2. Living a secret life – When we have secrets involving how we handle money, how we interact with the opposite sex, or our use of the internet, that is *pseudos* or falsehood. God wants us to live in the light so that we have absolutely nothing to hide.

Principle #2: BE A PEACEMAKER...NOT A GRUDGE HOLDER – v. 26

“In your anger do not sin...”

There is no sin in being angry. God gets angry. Jesus gets angry. As a matter of fact, this verse **COMMANDS** us to be angry. **Anger is a right response to a wrong action.** He says, “*When you’re angry, don’t sin!*” When someone has offended you, it’s easy to feel justified in sinning against them. Let me give you a couple ways we do this.

Passive Anger (Tesla)

A Tesla can pull up right next to you, and you won’t even know the car is on. But oh boy is it on! This is the same way some people are. They can be right next to you, and you won’t even know they are fuming because they keep it all in. These are the silent treatment people. This is that person that you know so well that something is wrong and when you ask them they look you straight in the eye and say, “*I’m fine.*” The reason why this is a sin is because it’s a lie. It’s *pseudos* when you say “*I’m fine*” and you’re not. Instead, we should say, “*I’m angry, but I need to calm down before we talk about this.*” That’s a right response to a wrong action.

Aggressive Anger

Mustangs, however, go from 0 to 60 in four seconds! This is someone who can go from totally calm, peaceful, and happy to outbursts of anger, tears, victim mentality, rage, being verbally abusive, slamming doors, cursing, throwing things, or hanging up the phone. Ladies, if you’re single, let me give you a scripture that’s in the Bible just for you. It says in Prov. 22:24, “*Make no friendship with an angry man. And do not associate with one easily angered.*” If he’s has anger issues on this side of marriage, multiply it times 10 on the other side.

How To Handle Anger

Paul gives us the reason why we need to deal with our anger. He says in 26, *“Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”*

Paul says, *“Okay, you can be angry as much as you want...for about one day. Then, be the one to INITIATE peace in the relationship!”* Someone has to be the peacemaker in the home and it can't be the same person all the time. That gets old. Why? Because he says when we don't, we are giving the devil a foothold. Now, I typically use Greek in my preparation but rarely in my presentation but this is so good that I have to share it. The Greek word for devil here is the word *diabolos* which literally means “slanderer.” And the Greek word here for foothold is the word *topos* from which we get the word topography or study of the earth and land. What Paul is saying here is that when we allow anger to dominate us, we are giving the devil real estate; land; some area in your relationship to do what? To slander! Listen, when you and the other person aren't talking to each other, the devil is talking to both of you. He is feeding negative things about that person in your ear. *“She doesn't love you. He's probably cheating on you. He cares about his job more than his family. She doesn't want you around. She doesn't appreciate you and your hard work.”*

Principle #3: BE SELFLESS...NOT SELFISH – v. 28

“He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.”

This will be a short point. People who steal are thinking of one thing only. How will this benefit me? Instead, Paul says our focus should be, *“What do I have to give to the person in need?”* That is the application in this verse on relationships.

Principle #4: BE AN ENCOURAGER...NOT A CRITICIZER – v. 29

“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.”

How we speak is a great representation of our spiritual life. If you want to know how spiritual you are, pay attention to how you talk to people because the Bible says, *“Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.”* In this one verse, we have before us one of, if not the most, practical verses on speech in the entire Bible because it tells us what *not* to say, what *to* say,

when to say it, and *how* to say it.

Right Type

We struggle to communicate in a healthy way. First off, it says, *“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth.”* The word here for unwholesome is the word that means *“rotten, corrupt, or spoiled”* and carries the idea of something that can’t be used because it’s bad. This could include sarcasm, criticism, demeaning someone, dismissing their opinions, talking down to them, name-calling, cursing, or being verbally abusive. And what Paul is saying is that this type of communication should have NO place in the life of a born-again, spirit-filled believer.

A man named John Gottman of *Gottman Institute* has done a ton of research on this area of communication, and he and his team discovered that the average number of negative statements that you hear in a day vs. the positive statements is about 6 to 1. Don’t be the person that contributes to that statistic.

But, it gets even deeper. They also were able to predict, with 90% accuracy, couples that would get divorced - with the number one predictor of divorce being negative, unhealthy communication patterns.

Right Timing

Two more things here. He says, *“according to the need of the moment.”* I love this because it teaches that we can have the right words but the wrong timing.

Right Tone

Finally, he says, *“so that it will give GRACE to those who hear.”* This is referring to our tone. Do people hear and sense a spirit of grace when we talk or judgment and self-righteousness? It’s been said that over 70% of our communication is non-verbal (body language, tone, facial expressions, etc.).

Principle #5 – PRACTICE FROGIVENESS...NOT BITTERNESS – v. 32

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

Forgiveness means *“to cancel a debt”* or to *“let it go.”* Forgiveness wouldn’t be that hard if not for two words...JUST AS. Isn’t it interesting that we are so quick to ask and receive forgiveness

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from God, but we are so stingy in extending the same forgiveness towards those who hurt us? When people hurt us, we punish them. We lock them away in a prison. We no longer trust them ever again in life, but yet we don't want God to treat us the same way.

Not only do we need to learn how to forgive our family members regularly, but we also need to learn how to forgive those in our past that have hurt us. Forgiveness affects how we treat even our spouses. I've heard it said that **marriage is a continual act of forgiveness.**

You see the reason why many of us struggle with forgiveness is because we aren't willing to give up or ignore what was done to us. Listen, forgiveness is not the absence of pain, but the absence of bitterness.