

The Epistle to the Ephesians

“United by a Moment”

Extreme Make-over: God’s Home Edition

Eph. 4:1-32

In Eph. 4 we are going to talk about God’s extreme make-over. We are a body that needs to grow into maturity (the fullness of Jesus Christ v. 13). We do that in community – as a group. The Christian life and mission is a group activity.

The immature church (v. 14) is one living out individualism – independent individuals seeking what is best for “me”. Are we just a group of individuals seeking our own way – or are we a body? If we forget the centrality of the gospel – we will drift off course – directionless as to the calling we have received in Christ. The mature church is united around Jesus and is others-focused.

In this letter to the Ephesians we have already been told that once we were divided and in conflict with one another. “But God” has reconciled us to Himself in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, and, in so doing, He has reconciled us to one another in a community – as a family. Now He wants us to live up to that calling. He calls us to live as a people whom God has brought together in one body. That means change is a community project.

A. Christ has given us the Christian community to help us change (v. 1-6)

- In light of everything the Lord has done for us in total grace, we need to be completely humble (v. 2). Everything is embedded in God’s love for us, not our love for Him.
- Maintain or keep that unity – not create unity (v. 3).
- V. 4-6 contain an incredible string of “ones”.

B. Christ has given us differences in the Christian community to help us grow (v. 7-11)

- Christ has ascended to fill the whole universe with His power. And He has sent the Spirit to fill the church with His power.
- Within the unity, we celebrate the diversity.
- The gifts are given by the risen Lord for the building up of His church. We are not all the same. God has gifted His people in all kinds of ways for the building up of the Body to be equipped for the mission upon which Jesus has sent us.

C. We grow like Christ together (v. 12-16)

- The gifts are to prepare the church for works of service that the body of Christ might be built up (living stones added and beautified and shaped together).
- Every supporting ligament does its part. We are to be that bound to one another if we are going to fulfill Jesus’ mission.
- Jesus is the author of our growth (v. 16). The call to do our part should drive us to Christ whose body we are.

D. We grow like Christ by speaking the truth in love (v. 15-32)

We start with the truth that expresses itself in love.

- The gospel calls us to be a counter-cultural community
- by putting off the old and putting on the new
- because we are already God's great make-over.

1. The gospel calls us to be a counter-cultural community. A counter cultural community is one that holds values radically different than the established culture. (i.e. v. 17...)

Three marks of the Ephesian culture in v. 17-19 (sound familiar?):

- Unsatisfying choices based upon the senses only (v. 19). If it feels good, do it. If it looks good, buy it. Why is there a constant lust for more? Because those things do not satisfy.
- Decision making that leaves God out. The futility or vanity of their thinking is an echo of Ecclesiastes (v. 17). Being separated from the life of God (v. 18), their biggest reality is the world and so their purpose is connected to the here and now.
- Separated from God due to being stuck in a false view of God (v. 18)

Notice that all the v. 17-18 problems are related to truth – or lack of it. This is the description of a people captured by lies – by untruth. That is the underlying problem of the human heart. We think or believe lies rather than trusting God's Word. Behind every sin is a lie about God.

To some extent or another we all have residue of the old man.

How do we change?

2. By putting off the old and putting on the new

Sometimes we have trouble because we only do half of this. We try to stop doing the bad thing, but we haven't identified what we are to replace it with. Or we try to start doing a good thing without putting off the old. We are called to both.

5 examples of self-love v.s. gospel love:

- Put off lies and put on truth (v. 25)

If beneath the old is a lie, then growth takes place when we speak truth. Is Paul saying, don't tell lies to one another? (notice – not just the leaders – but all the members need to speak the truth into one another's lives – where we share life together. The leaders – even great ones - cannot bring about this change. Notice it says "Each of you" (v. 25) and "we are all members of one body" (v. 25). This is how change will take place. It is not enough to just hear a teaching from a particular leader once a week. Pastors are to equip us for speaking the truth, but we are to be speaking the truth into one another's lives in our missional communities. We are not sharing life together in this room, we are sharing life together in our missional communities where our lives are intersecting all the time.

It is not enough to just not tell fibs. It is to stop perpetrating the lies that lead to sinful behavior, because that is what we do.

When you get to the root of your sin, it is often a failure to believe one of these 4 truths about God:

- God is great – i.e. He is sovereign. He rules over all things in absolute wisdom. He's in charge and because He is, I don't have to be in control.
- God is good – i.e. He is the one who truly satisfies and gives life meaning. He has our ultimate best at heart.
- God is glorious- i.e. He is the one we should be in awe of and worship.
- God is gracious – i.e. So we don't have to prove ourselves.

It's not that we don't believe the information about God in our head – it is about that truth being felt and treasured in our hearts.

Four great idols of our culture

- Comfort
- Power
- Approval
- Control

We need to speak truth to one another declaring that Jesus is better than all these other things. We need to help people treasure Christ. We need to share life in transparent relationships. I need someone speaking truth into my life everyday!!! Once a week doesn't do it for me! We are called to encourage one another daily. Every day our hearts are on the brink of sin, deceitfulness, hardening etc.

Consider someone who is anxious, or moaning, or worn out. How might their problems be linked to one of these truths about God? What other symptoms might forgetting these truths lead to?

- Put off anger and put on peace-making (v. 26) - during the day people will offend you and you collect it all day long and then one day you over-flow and dump on someone else (who can't quite understand what your problem is).
- Put off stealing and put on working so you can give to others (v. 28)
- Put off hurtful words and put on helpful words (v. 29)
- Put off bitterness and put on kindness (v. 31) - you have to forgive first but can't stop there.

We can change...

3. because we are already God's great make-over.

God changes us through the truth administered in community by His Spirit. The Christian community reinforces faith and repentance.