

EPIC: God's People on Mission
"Excel"
Ephesians 4:25 – 5:2

I. Series Overview

- a. Week 1 – Embark – God has embarked on a mission to redeem and restore mankind, and we are invited to embark on that same mission.
- b. Week 2 – Energy – Jesus Christ is the source of the power or energy that we the people of God, the Church possess to accomplish the mission.
- c. Week 3 – Enlist – God has enlisted us to serve as a part of His team that is accomplishing His mission
- d. Week 4 – Established – We are now established as a unified people of God through faith in Jesus.
- e. Week 5 – Envoy – We are stewards and messengers of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- f. Week 6 – Expect – As God's messengers we can expect that God will do something through us as we faithfully serve Him.
- g. Week 7 – Equip – We have been equipped with everything we need for unity and maturity within the Body of Christ.
- h. Week 8 – Exchange – As God's people we are to exchange our old life for a new life that reflects who we are in Christ.
- i. Today – Excel – As God's people we are to excel in righteousness and live according to "a more excellent way"

II. Text

Ephesians 4:25 - 5:2 - Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. 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. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

III. Prayer

IV. Message

a. Excelling in Horizontal Righteousness (4:25-29).

i. Putting off dishonesty to speak truth (25).

1. **Ephesians 4:25** - Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.
2. There is a direct relational concern here because of the damage that lying and deception does in our relationships.

3. The question that we have to ask is; are we willing to change our behaviors that are destructive to the community of believers? Paul clearly implies here that the value of unity among the body of Christ is great enough that we should be willing to be honest, real, and authentic with one another.
 4. In order to do this though we have to first be honest with ourselves about who we are. About our own struggles with sin, about our ongoing need for God's grace.
 5. Do you trust your neighbor, your brother or sister in Christ, to be truly honest about who you are? Until we can say yes to this question we are never going to be speaking truthfully to one another.
 6. The fear of rejection and judgment from others can prevent us from living this out.
- ii. Managing anger to avoid sin (26-27).
1. **Ephesians 4:26-27** - "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.
 2. Anger in and of itself is not sin. In addition to this verse we see it in the life of Jesus who experienced anger though he never sinned.
 3. **Mark 3:5 (NLT)** - He looked around at them angrily and was deeply saddened by their hard hearts. Then he said to the man, "Hold out your

hand." So the man held out his hand, and it was restored!

4. Two ways that anger leads to sin
 - a. We give anger the control and lash out at someone else as a result.
 - b. We use anger to manipulate others to do what we want. Learned from parents.

5. Anger is a secondary emotion. Beneath the anger that we feel there is often emotions of fear, pain, loss, etc.). To avoid sin when we are angry we have to identify the cause the underlying emotion and deal appropriately with it.

6. Biblical prescription for dealing with anger.
 - a. God takes anger seriously (Matt 5:22, subject to judgement).
 - b. Address it as soon as you possibly can (Matt. 5:23-24). If it can't happen that day at least set a time to address the conflict.
 - c. Pray and ask God for wisdom (James 1:5).
 - d. Confess your own sin in the conflict (James 5:16).
 - e. Be willing to forgive the other party (Matt. 18:21-22).

- iii. Sharing with others instead of stealing (28).

1. **Ephesians 4:28** - He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.
 2. Again there is a direct relational connection that Paul sees here. The one who is stealing is not contributing to the needs of the community.
 3. Paul's concern is not only for the financial wellbeing of that person and their family but also for their responsibility to contribute to the needs of those in the community who are genuinely in need.
 4. Thus we have to conclude that the decision not to work even when you can is selfish, destructive to the community, and denying your responsibility as a member of the community to provide for the needs of others.
- iv. Building others up with our speech instead of tearing them down (29).
1. **Ephesians 4:29** - 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.
 2. Unwholesome talk here is not necessarily a reference to George Carlin's list of seven words you can't say on TV. Or someone's list of words that good Christians don't use.

3. Here we are talking about speech that is damaging to relationships within the community. This would include prideful speech, slander, gossip, negative criticism.
 4. Paul points out that the purpose of not using destructive language is to allow for you to use constructive language and to build up others in the community.
 - a. There is a difference between building up and buttering up.
 - b. Should be done according to their needs. You do it whether you like it or not, it is for their benefit.
 5. A refusal to use your words to encourage others is selfish and sinful. We are relational beings and we need this stuff from others.
- b. Excelling in Vertical Righteousness (4:30-5:2).
- i. Choosing to please God (4:30-31).
 1. **Ephesians 4:30-31** - 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.
 2. Paul is writing to believers who like us are struggling with sin as they try to put off the old and put on the new. Here he reaffirms their position

in the family by saying that they are sealed by the Holy Spirit.

3. The point here though is that our sin has an affect on God as he is grieved by the actions of his children. Parents you get this as you know what it is to be grieved by your kids actions and yet at the same time love them unconditionally.
 4. Yes the goal in life is to never grieve God by engaging in sin. The standard is perfection and none of us can achieve that. Fortunately none of us are ever to sinful to be outside of God's grace as well. So because we sin what do we do with it.
 5. Confession is essentially to our relationship with God.
 - a. God already knows it and isn't surprised when we confess it.
 - b. You are allowing God's grace to be applied to that particular sin.
- ii. Choosing to forgive others (4:32).
1. **Ephesians 4:32** - Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.
 2. Even though this section deals more with our relationship with God there is certainly a direct personal application here in regard to forgiveness.
 3. The pattern for forgiveness is established by God

- a. Forgiveness is free. We are not to require others to earn our forgiveness. This doesn't mean we remove natural consequences.
- b. Forgiveness is complete. Holding on to some of the offense is not forgiveness.
- c. Forgiveness is ongoing. We don't forgive and forget, that is not practical. We forgive and choose not to hold it against.

iii. Choosing to imitate Christ (5:1-2).

1. **Ephesians 5:1-2** - Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.
2. On Wednesday this past week I was working on getting our four-year-old Micah into bed. When we went into his room he grabbed this little toy doctor kit that is in the shape of a briefcase and declared that he is like Daddy. Daddy carries and bag to and from work and so Micah has decided that to be like Daddy you have to carry a bag.
3. Why would he do this? Children want to be like their parents. They grow up emulating their parents. They play dress up. They copy their speech. They find anything that they can do to make themselves feel like their parents.
4. The same is true for us spiritually. We are to imitate our Heavenly Father.

- a. **Hebrews 1:3** - The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being
5. We can begin to do this in two ways.
 - a. We live a life of love. Love for others and love for God (Matt. 22:36-40).
 - b. We sacrifice our lives for the good of others (Philippians 2:3-5)
 6. I think the goal here is when we do God-like things without even realizing it.
 7. I once had someone tell me that when I preached it reminded them of listening to my Dad preach when he had been their pastor. It is hard to get a better complement than that.
 8. Wouldn't it be great if your friend or neighbor were to say the way you share God's love with me is kind of how I think Jesus would do it.

V. Close in Prayer