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EPHESIANS 4:26-29

Ephesians: Recognizing Who You Are in Christ

Today we're going to look at Ephesians 4:26-29. That's as far as we're going to get today. This is part two in a series of sermons through Ephesians.

We're going through the book of Ephesians verse by verse, but last week I started with this idea that there's a difference between nice non-Christians (there are a lot of nice non-Christians out there) and biblical Christians. There are a lot of nice Christians who look like Christians even though they don't have the deeper faith. But there's a biblical Christianity that we embrace.

The problem with being just a nice Christian is that eventually you're going to get yourself into trouble because you don't have the foundation of God's word that's going to guide you into some of the things that may not be in the nice category. How are we going to deal with those things? There's a significant difference.

Paul describes what that looks like in verses 17-24. By putting off and putting on, he says, we're going to learn how to be that kind of person. He's not talking about a person getting saved because a person gets saved when they accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior into their heart. But after you're saved then you have a responsibility to put off and put on. We're continually being conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. We're continually growing into that and it requires some work on God's part. God ... [garbled] ... in our lives, but then we provide the work as well. We're doing our part.

We're going to talk about four areas where that takes place. Notice the first word in verse 25 of Ephesians 4. That first word is *therefore*. So what he's saying is, "Now that I've told you about putting off and putting on, now that I've described what it means to have this different kind of thinking let me show you what it looks like in practical terms. *Therefore* these four things." I'll read the passage down to verse 29 and then we'll look through the verses one at a time.

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your 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. Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they 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.

Christianity is very practical and this is one of those very practical passages of scripture that's taking doctrine and putting it into where the rubber meets the road in our lives; telling us exactly how to live in certain areas. In each one of these examples there's something we put off and we put on. Just like in the previous verses it uses those terms, now we're putting off something and we're putting on something different.

The first one of these things that he talks about is in verse 25. We talked about this a little bit last week. *Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor. So you're putting off falsehood and you're speaking truthfully to your neighbor for we are all members of one body.* There's this putting off and putting on in this area of honesty.

The idea here is that Christians, that is, people who are following Christ, have an integrity about them in the way that they speak. Their words are valuable. When they talk they're speaking the truth. It's not like when someone checks out your words they find that "oh that person was exaggerating." We want to be like God wants us to be. We want to be godly.

As we're doing that one of the ways we're going to do that is to consider our mouths and the things that we say. Are we speaking the truth or are we saying things that are shades of the truth and not completely being honest? Are we telling a story that makes ourselves look better in the picture or are we speaking the truth as it really took place? It's really important for us to be able to speak the truth and that our words be reliable and valuable.

Jesus had some things to say about this. He said, "When you make a statement don't attach the temple to it or the altar to it." In other words to say, "This, what I'm saying, is true. I swear by the temple or I swear by the altar."

Some people say today, "It's true. I promise." As soon as you add the words, "I promise," what you're saying is, "Well, this time it's true and I promise it's true. Other times when I speak I don't really promise, it maybe not be true or it may be true. I don't know." Jesus is saying these words: *Let your "yes" be yes and your "no," no.* When you say "yes" to someone it needs to mean something. When you say "no" to someone it means something. It's not something you say and then say, "I promise," afterwards because your words are reliable.

As Christians we consider the things that we say and we have integrity about those words. "Yep, I was late to work today. The reason I was late to work is because my car wouldn't start." That may be a very true statement. You got out to your car, you had to turn over a few times, it wasn't starting, it finally started up, and you were able to go. But that's not the real reason you're late. The real reason you're late is because you didn't get up in the morning when you should've and you're rushing around. You get out to your car and it just happens to not have started and that contributed to the lateness. But the real reason you're late is because you didn't allow margin in your schedule to give you time to get your car started and get there.

Christians have integrity in the way they speak. They speak truthfully and they put off falsehood. There's a sense of integrity that we have.

Integrity doesn't mean that I have the license to hurt people with honesty. "Oh, I'm just telling him the truth." Wait a minute. We're going to get to that in a little bit. Sometimes we say things under the banner of honesty that hurt other people and that is not appropriate either. So what he's saying here is we want to be honest, we want to speak truthfully, and when we do then we retain in people's minds the benefit of the doubt.

If someone's been dishonest with you that you wonder when they speak again, "Is that person telling the truth? I don't know for sure," you're not giving them the benefit of the doubt. We want to have the benefit of the doubt.

Part of being godly is choosing the words that we speak and how we say them. They're truthful so that when someone hears us speak there's a sense of integrity about us. Very important piece of who we are as biblical Christians. That's the first one that he talks about here and is therefore honesty.

Let's go to the second one. Verse 26: *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.*

From here to the end of the chapter, if you see down in verse 31, it talks about bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, and all forms of malice. Those are six words there. Here's two. There are eight words for anger. That's a lot of different kinds of anger. Sometimes we feel like we're frustrated or we're annoyed. There are a lot of English words for anger as well. There are eight words used for anger here.

We need to understand, I think, a biblical theology of anger. A theology means we take passages from all around the scriptures to understand what a certain subject is about. Theology of the Holy Spirit, theology of God. Let's just do a theology of anger for a moment and understand what the Bible says about anger.

If we look at this passage one of the things we see, number one, is that not all anger is sin. So if we're developing a theology of anger we want to recognize that not all anger is sin. Notice the passage it says, *In your anger do not sin.* We also know that not all anger is sin because we look at a passage like Mark 3:5 where it says Jesus got angry. Or when the disciples were preventing the children from coming to Jesus it says *Jesus was indignant.* There's a sense of anger, another word for anger there. *Jesus got angry.* That tells me that there's a kind of anger we can have that doesn't involve sin. Point number one if we're developing a theology about anger.

The second thing is to recognize that God has given us emotions, that we are emotional beings, that emotions aren't bad. Some people believe emotions are bad and they're always trying to get rid of them. It is not God's desire to flat line us emotionally. God's desire is to equip us to manage our emotions and to recognize their God-given purpose. God has given us emotions. We are made in the image of God and in a number of places in the scriptures God is reflected or made understood to us by giving Him emotional characteristics.

We know that emotions are a good thing. Just because emotions are good, though, doesn't mean that what we do with them is the right kind of thing. Anger is one of those emotions that needs to

be managed. Probably the problem is that the emotion itself isn't bad; it's what we do with it that gets to be a problem.

The emotion itself is a valuable thing. Emotion, anger in particular, gives us a message. What is the message that anger gives to us? The message that anger communicates to our heart is this: something's wrong here; you should do something about it.

The problem is the emotion doesn't have the ability to tell us what that thing is that's wrong. It's like a light flashing on the dashboard of your car. "Something's wrong with this car, but I don't know what it is. I better take it into the mechanic and find out." We need to do a little bit of self-reflection to understand why that emotion of anger is flared up inside of us. Because although something is wrong maybe the something wrong is out there, maybe the something wrong is in my heart. I don't know exactly where it is and I need to figure that out before I start taking some action. Because if the problem's really in my heart and I start doing something about it out there, I can get myself into trouble.

For example, let's say that a young person, a teenager, goes into the other room to get a snack; comes back and finds out that his brother is now sitting in his chair watching the TV where he was sitting before. Now he feels angry, right? We don't know how he's going to handle it, but at least he's feeling angry. He's feeling angry because the lights on his dashboard are flashing. Somebody has just mistreated me. Someone has intentionally taken my chair from me. That's something out there.

Let's take another example. Let's say that you decide you're going to go watch TV. You've got this great idea, go out of your room, go and sit down and watch TV. You want to sit down and watch TV, but you find your brother's already watching your TV, sitting in the chair you thought you were going to be able to sit in. Now the problem isn't out there because your brother has the right to sit in that chair; the problem is inside of you. The problem is your rights, your expectations and so you're now angry about that.

See, we don't know what the flashing light is communicating. We have to do a little self-reflection, introspection to find out why is the light on the dashboard flashing. There are some people whose light flashes a lot and that may be a problem that needs to be addressed. Something in the heart that must be addressed.

That's why it's so important for us to look at our lives and ask ourselves the question reflected in this verse that we're looking at today. Are we able to experience anger without the sin component of it? Very important. Tells me also, by the way, that sin is very close to anger and so we must be careful that anger's somewhat dangerous at times, that we can quickly move into sin. That's what we're learning from this passage.

In your anger do not sin, it says. If we can deal with emotions in a healthy way then we can use them to help us in relationships. God designed emotions to pass through our hearts, to give us information. In this case anger gives us information that something's wrong here, I need to do something about it.

If we're depressed and we're feeling down that's another kind of response that emotions do to us. They take energy out of us. When that takes place then there's another message that's being communicated at that moment. Something's out of balance here, you need to evaluate it, and that something may be a physical thing or an emotional thing. It could be anything; we don't know. Again, it's a light flashing on a dashboard.

Some emotions create energy. The Bible says about anger that it's not wise to vent it in Proverbs 29:11. There's a sense of energy that comes into your body. I don't know where it comes into your body. I know where it comes into mine. When I start feeling angry my eyebrows come down in the front, my shoulders come up, and my voice starts to get a little bit more tense. Then I know I'm starting to get angry.

I help children and adults deal with anger all the time and they report all different kinds of symptoms. One mom told me recently that she feels something in the pit of her stomach. That's how she knows she's starting to get angry. One dad told me that the hairs on his arms start standing on end and he feels tingly on his arms. That's how he knows he's starting to get angry. One twelve year old boy told me recently he feels like he's about to fly he has all this energy. That's the energy. Energy is coming into your body when you experience anger. God designed it that way.

We must manage that energy, we must manage the anger so that it doesn't end up with sin as the result. Very important. God is teaching us here in this passage that if you're going to put off and put on, one of the things you want to deal with is anger in your heart. It's one of the signs of an emotionally and spiritually healthy person. Someone who has their anger under control, someone who can manage that emotion in a ... [garbled] ...

The light turned yellow just in front of him. He did the right thing stopping at the crosswalk even though he could've beaten the red light by accelerating through the intersection. The tailgating woman was furious and honked her horn, screaming in frustration as she missed her chance to get through the intersection, dropping her cell phone and make up. As she was still in mid-rant she heard a tap on the window and looked up into the face of a very serious police officer. The officer ordered her to exit her car with her hands up. He took her to the police station where she was searched, fingerprinted, photographed, and placed in a holding cell.

After a couple of hours a policeman approached the cell and opened the door. She was escorted back to the booking desk where the arresting officer was waiting with her personal effects. He said, "I'm very sorry for this mistake. You see, I pulled up behind your car while you were blowing your horn, flipping off the guy in front of you, and cussing a blue streak at him. I noticed the 'what would Jesus do' bumper sticker, the 'choose life' license plate holder, the 'follow me to Sunday school bumper sticker,' and the chrome plated Christian fish emblem on the trunk, so I naturally assumed you had stolen the car."

Oh yes. Christians are different when they handle emotion. So Paul is saying therefore one of the things we need to do is manage our anger in a way that doesn't allow us to end up in some kind of sinful state. In particular now he's talking about an anger that we don't want to go to bed with.

Let's talk about that kind of anger which is anger that accumulates inside of us. God designed the human heart to be a place where anger passes through to give us messages. However, when we stop it up with our own determination it starts to accumulate inside of us, gunking up the heart, and developing something we call resentment or bitterness. What that does is it increases a person's propensity to get angry, that is, their tendency to get angry. They'll get angry more often, more intensely, and it's harder for them to recover from an anger episode because they've accumulated anger inside.

So Paul is giving some practical advice for us. He's saying don't go to bed angry. *Do not let the sun go down while you're still angry.* That's what he's saying here and here's why. When you go to bed angry and you go to sleep angry, you wake up in the morning ready to fight. So that the first person who looks like the last person who got you angry or appears to do something then you're ready to go after them. We lose some of our tolerance, our patience. We lose some of our composure when we harbor anger [garbled]. It increases this something that's going on inside of our hearts.

We must be careful with this as Christians. As biblical Christians we're moving more toward a place where we're managing our anger in ways that are godly. We're not allowing the anger to accumulate. We're putting it off as we go to bed.

I know that some people (and you must know some people like this too) live in terrible lives. They are mistreated, they're abused. The circumstances of their life are painful. Sometimes it's a person that's hurting them. Sometimes it's life itself that just makes them upset all the time. Those people have a particular difficulty sometimes letting go of that anger at night. They go to bed asleep with the anger and get up and it starts to accumulate.

Notice the reason we don't allow it to accumulate is because of something that needs to happen inside of us. It's not for the sake of the other person. That other person may be abusive and mean and so on and may need boundaries. We may need to take a stand for righteousness, but we're not going to do it out of a heart of anger now; we're going to do it because it's the right thing to do. And then our emotional stability, our spiritual integrity is protected in the midst of that.

A way a person handles emotions is very important. In fact emotions are often tied pretty closely in people's minds to spirituality. If you ask someone this question, "How are you doing spiritually?" often a person will respond by saying, "I'm feeling pretty good today." Why? Because they've attached how they're feeling to their spirituality. If you ask someone how they're doing spiritually it really means a lot of things. How am I doing with the word? How am I doing in my relationship with God? How am I dealing with sin? How am I dealing with my habits? How am I dealing with my mouth? How I'm doing spiritually? That's the question we're asking. But at least one of the pieces has to do with emotions.

When we focus in on those emotions too much we can find ourselves tying emotions to spirituality and there our spirituality goes back and forth. We end up saying to ourselves, "I don't feel spiritual today because I'm down," and then we get ourselves into trouble.

Emotions are very important. In fact, notice that anger in particular is a spiritual issue not just an emotional issue. Look at the passage. Notice it says in verse 27 *and do not give the devil a foothold*. What that tells me is that anger is a spiritual issue inside of your heart. When you allow the anger to go through and you're getting messages that's one thing, but when you stop it up and it starts to accumulate inside your heart then the devil has a foothold in your life.

The goal of the devil is to destroy. He likes to destroy you, he likes to destroy your relationships, he likes to destroy everything and anger is a great tool. It may be his number one tool he uses to hurt relationships and damage people. We want to be careful about that.

Paul uses the illustration of the rock climber to give us a picture of what the devil does inside of our hearts. If you've ever watched those rock climbers climb all they need is a little crack to stick their fingers in in order to pull themselves up. Or a crack over here that with their little hammer they can pound in a stake and put their foot down so they can lift themselves up to the next place. All it takes is a little bit of anger, a little bit of harbored anger in a person's life that allows them to develop this grudge that continues on and creates a problem. The devil wants to destroy relationships. He often does it through anger and it's something we must address.

One of the signs of a spiritually healthy person is that they're able to overcome emotionally upsetting experiences more quickly. If it takes you days to stew over things then probably there needs to be some work in this particular area of your life. He's trying to apply this to our lives by saying put off and put on. Here's something that's very important. Anger is the second thing in Paul's list of things that he's trying to be very practical about.

Let's go to the third one starting in verse 28. In verse 28 he says, *Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need*.

Now most of us are not going to go into the 7-Eleven with our gun and rob somebody and steal. That's not the picture of stealing that we all have to look at. We do have to look at some other ways that we might steal.

You can steal by taking things from work that you shouldn't be taking from work. We can steal by taking time and working on something else when we're supposed to be doing something else in our lives. We can steal by reducing the quality of work and not giving that quality of work that is due to our employer. There's a lot of different ways that we can steal and we need to be careful about this area of our lives.

It's another issue of integrity. Am I the kind of person that is honest about how I'm handling material things or time? Those kinds of things. Do I have integrity in that regard?

Notice the solution for a person who has a problem with this. If you have a child (and I work with children who have lying problems, stealing problems), here's the solution. It is right in this passage. This is for children, but it's also for adults. If a child has a problem of stealing or dishonesty what does the passage say is the solution? There are two words - work and share -

that that child needs to develop as therapy because that's going to help that child learn how to handle the dishonesty in life.

The reality about dishonesty, whether it's stealing or lying, is that it's always a shortcut. It's always the easy way to get something. The person who doesn't know how to work hard succumbs to the easy way to do something. It's like if you see the "do not walk" sign on the grass (do not walk on the grass) and you don't feel like walking all the way over there. Forget that; I'm just going to walk across the grass. There's a certain laziness inside that says I don't want to do the telling the truth. I'm going to walk across my conscience here and that's okay with me. So that conscience is weak inside of a person.

What we're saying is if you're going to help a child develop a greater ability to be honest and to be strong in the way that they speak and act toward others then they're going to learn how to work hard.

... [garbled] ... forms at the National Center for Biblical Parenting where people are responding to us and telling us all kinds of problems that they have. Some of them we're able to respond to and some of them we aren't.

A lady this week wrote in the response form (I should have brought it and showed you), "I am a compulsive liar." Why she told us that I don't know, but this is a mom who's saying this and she obviously needs some help in her life. We mainly deal with parenting issues. I think she would probably benefit from someone parenting her, but the problem is sometimes people have a real hard time with this area.

Paul's solution is work hard and share. When a child learns how to work hard he then has the character to be able to tell the truth or accept responsibility for the offense that just took place or to be able to share with others. I think one of the signs of financial stability for a Christian is not having a lot of money in the bank; it's the ability to share with others. So Paul is saying here that they must work doing something useful with their own hands that they may have something to share with those in need.

That's going to be a very important area of our lives that we want to be strong in. Working hard and being able to share with others. It cuts down on our temptation to steal and it certainly gives us the ability to handle temptations that come that direction.

Let's go to one more. This is the fourth one in Paul's list in the therefore. Verse 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.*

Unwholesome talk. The word *unwholesome* is the word *sapros* which has the idea of rotten fruit. If you're going to do a family activity with your kids to help them talk about this idea of the things that come out of our mouth it's often good to go empty the trash first. Bring all the trash into the kitchen, throw it into the bin, and say, "Now is your trash talk or are you having an edifying kind of talk?" Because that's what he's talking about. Rotten fruit. Oh it's gross. Don't let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth.

He gives three tests in the passage for us that allow us to know when something is wholesome or not wholesome, when we should allow this to come out of our mouth or not. This is a great test. I need this passage. This is really important for me.

Test number one: *build others up*. I'm taking this right out of the passage there, right out of the verse. Number one: *build others up*. Number two: *according to their needs*. Not according to my needs.

I think people like to be loved in different ways and we like to be loved in a particular way, so we tend to speak in terms of our desire to be loved instead of caring for someone else. We need to ask the very important question, "How can I phrase the words I'm about to say in a way that are going to meet the other person's need, not just reveal all?" Sometimes people are in the habit of just sharing whatever they're thinking about.

I think this can have some challenges. Let's take a common problem between a husband and wife. This is one of those characteristics. It may not be true in your situation, but often it's suggested that the case is that women like to talk a lot and men don't like to talk very much. Right? It's even suggested that women often have like twenty thousand words and men have like five thousand words and so they end up with problems in the midst of all of that.

If we're going to apply this passage to a man and a woman relationship then the person who has lots of words must put a guard on their mouth because some of the words that they might be wanting to say might not be the best words because they might not be edifying, building others up. They might not be according to the other person's needs. They might just be trying to exercise the need to get all their words out for the day.

So there needs to be a guard stationed at the mouth that asks three questions about every word that comes out of our mouth. Does it build others up? Is it according to their needs? Does it benefit those who listen? Wow. That's a pretty big test. And maybe some words would not be released if they don't pass the test that the guard has.

But I don't think that we're just talking here about talk too much because I think that the person who only has five thousand words and has used them all up at the office and now comes home and doesn't want to talk also has a problem because what they should be doing is talking more. They should consider words that are going to build up according to their needs (his wife's needs) that it might benefit his wife so that she can hear what's going on. It might be work for him to share more than his five thousand words because he wants to benefit his wife, he wants to care for her.

Some of the times we talk not just guarding our mouths and protecting the things that come out, but sometimes we're even adding additional words in order to build the person up. The point here is that the things that come out of our mouth are designed to help other people, not just satisfy our own need to talk.

There are a lot of people who haven't got this yet. They just talk as if "I've got to get it out. I've got to talk. Somebody's got to hear this. I hope somebody's listening because I have a bunch of things to say." Some people just express themselves in ways that don't have these three things.

Now we see we want to be godly Christians. We want to be biblical Christians and so we're going to ask these three things about the unwholesome talk to prevent it from coming out of our mouths. Number one: does it build others up? If it doesn't build others up maybe I shouldn't be saying it. Number two: according to their needs. I'm not only going to build them up, but I'm going to think about how they need to receive that information. Number three: that it might benefit those who are listening. So that the person hearing it is going to be benefited from it. We've got to be thinking others-centered as we're coming back here.

We've already talked about speech in terms of lying on the one side. We're trying to prevent untrue things from coming out. Here what we're saying is let's say things, but let's say them in a way that considers other people. That's the important difference that they're talking about here.

We applied this to husbands, we applied this to wives, we applied this to people who talk a lot, we applied this to people who don't talk very much. Let's apply this in another very sensitive area. Let's talk about Facebook.

There are some people who believe that on Facebook they have the right to just tell everybody whatever's going on in their life. I think that's a mistake. We really don't want to know some of the things that are going on in your life. We probably ought to have a guard there asking these three questions. Is it building people up? Is it according to their needs? Is it benefitting those who listen? Very important because if we're having the latest squabble on Facebook about something that's going on and everybody else is watching, it's like taking your dirty laundry and hanging it out in front of your house. Please put it in the backyard. We don't want to see it all. We have to be careful, I think, even on Facebook how we handle ourselves because others are watching.

I really like Pastor Erik's handling of his Facebook account. Because here's what he says. He says, "I view my Facebook account as a ministry." You see scripture verses on there all the time. He's often considering other people, talking about other people, building them up. I think that's a great model for us on Facebook.

Some people just like to share it all thinking that other people care. And really the most important thing is not do we care, because I do care about the problems that other people have that they sometimes put on Facebook, but I think it's more important for us to ask the question, "Does the thing I'm putting on Facebook build others up? Is it according to their needs? Does it benefit those who listen?" That doesn't mean that the only thing you can post is scripture. It doesn't mean that you can't even post negative things. It may be appropriate to post a negative thing, but the way that we talk about other people, the way we handle ourselves is very important.

I think that if Paul were writing he would've included a statement about Facebook if he were writing today because Facebook is such a strategic way that we communicate in our lives. It's not good enough to be right, that is, to say something that's true here. The point here is that

we're not only saying something that's true, but we're saying something that's edifying. When you're just reporting information around the dinner table, are you saying things that are edifying? We want to choose the things we say. Things that are beneficial. That's what he's saying here that we need to consider.

I really like this verse. It's a verse I need. We could spend the whole time just on this particular verse, but I'm going to read to you a section from a book I'm reading by Jay Link on stewardship. How our life needs to be a stewardship and we need to view ourselves as stewards. It's a way to think that I really like. I think it would be a great men's study sometime for men. But I'm just going to read you the part about "A Good and Faithful Steward Lives a Controlled Life."

"Living a controlled life is a foundational characteristic of a good and faithful steward. Self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). Paul repeats several times in his letter to Titus that believers are to live a controlled life. Elders are to have their lives under control (Titus 1:8). Older men are to be self-controlled (Titus 2:2). Young men and women are to be self-controlled as well (Titus 2:5-6).

Paul uses the discipline and self-control of an athlete in training to illustrate the controlled life of a steward (1 Corinthians 9:25). Just two verses later he applies self-control to himself when he says, *But I discipline my body and keep it under control.*

I think Solomon makes this point best when he says in Proverbs 25:28, *A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.* There is nothing to contain him and he lives a life that is out of control in one or more ways.

We all know people who lack self-control. They cannot control their tempers. They cannot control their appetites. They cannot control their emotions. They cannot control their tongues. They cannot control their sex drives. They cannot control their spending. In one or more ways they are lacking self-control. They are *like a city broken into and left without walls.*

The good and faithful steward, to the contrary, is constantly restraining and retraining his natural impulses to keep all of these fleshly desires (both good and bad) under control. He is diligently working day-by-day and often minute-by-minute to keep his head in the game and not allow *the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions* (1 John 2:16) to break down the walls of self-control that is a defining characteristic of a good and faithful steward.

John Milton said well, 'He who reins within himself and rules passions, desires, and fears is more than a king.' The steward who is in control will be both useful and effective in obediently serving his Master.

So, would the word 'controlled' describe your life?"

I like that.

Paul gives four areas where we can put off and put on, practical things, that he's trying to give counsel or ideas or suggestions or commands, however you want to look at it, that are going to help us to live the godly life that God has called us to live.

We are not just trying to be nice people. We're trying to be biblical Christians who know how to think the way God has laid out for us. As we do that we're going to become more godly. We're going to experience more peace with others, peace with ourselves, peace with God. That's what we're talking about as we talk about the controlled life.

This message is primarily one for people who are Christians, people who made a decision to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. If you're here today and you've never made that commitment to accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, that's your first step. You want to go to God and say, "God, I want you to be my Savior. I want you to come in." Because we don't clean the outside of the cup; we first clean the inside of the cup and God helps us to work on the outside of the cup. That's what we're trying to do. So if you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior that's your first step. And then you can enter in with the rest of us.

We're all struggling in this area to be the kind of people that God wants us to be. We're all trying to grow. That's all we are. We're just forgiven people trying to grow in the godliness that God has laid out for us.

You might look ahead at the passage. We're just going to take a couple of verses next week, verses 30, 31, and 32. That's three verses. We're going to talk about them again more in this whole area of what it means to be godly in our lives. I think Ephesians is a great book for us to study as a church because it really helps us to know who we are and how we should live in our lives.

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, thank you for your word and the privilege that we have to read it and study it and learn from it. We need your grace to live each day and to face the challenges. Because we come to verses like this and we end up saying to ourselves, "But you don't know my situation. My situation is very difficult or challenging or tempting." Lord, we know you do know our situation and that you give us grace to deal with the difficulties we don't understand. So we ask that you would empower each person here. I pray for my brothers and sisters here that you would give us all the ability to stand for what's right, to follow you, and to serve you with all of our hearts. Now, Lord, as we continue to worship you we ask that you would continue to speak to us through the worship, that we would be dedicating our hearts to you as we sing these words of worship before you, as we come before you and honor you in our mouths and our hearts in worship. Lord, continue to speak to us in practical ways. We ask in Jesus' name, amen.