

Opening Words

Let me ask you a question today – what is at the center of your life? Is Jesus Christ at the center? If he is not, then you are placing something from the created world at the center of your life.

171 Eph Six Ways to Live as a New Man 2 (The Lie vs the Truth)

In the latter part of Ephesians 4, Paul lays out the behavior that he expects the followers of Jesus to exhibit. It's one thing to know theology and understand it, it's another thing to put it into practice. In several other places in his writings, Paul tells us that sound doctrine always has godliness partnered with it. Here in Ephesians 4, he does the same laying out six areas of godliness in which every Christian must engage.

I am so happy to bring these messages to you. When God began to grab hold of my life in deeper ways, I was attending a Christian high school that was connected to a Bible Church where the pastor teacher had the gift of teaching. We were drilled in good Bible doctrine, and I will be forever grateful for the ministry of that school and church in transforming my life. As I studied God's Word, I saw that I could not, I dare not sever doctrine from godly living or vice versa. I am grateful for the many other fine Christian men and women and the books I read that helped me understand this better. Most of all, I am grateful for the gracious ministry of the Holy Spirit to lead me in the paths of righteousness.

Well, speaking of the paths of righteousness, we have some clear markers for our path. Let's look at the first area. Paul says, "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE *of you* WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another."

There's something interesting in the Greek text that doesn't come out in our translations. Paul isn't speaking only of general falsehoods that most people have committed at one time or another in their lives. He is talking about the big lie that has pervaded human history and has corrupted civilizations. The Greek text says, "therefore, laying aside, 'the lie.'" The lie – Paul says. Paul has something very specific in mind here. Paul is speaking of the same thing he referred to in Romans 1 and we have already seen how Ephesians 4 parallels Romans 1 very closely. In Ephesians 4 Paul lays out the dark practices of the ancient world and traces them back to the root causes in a sequence of phrases. In Romans 1, Paul reverses this order by laying out the root causes and then he gets into the consequences of the darkness that the ancient world lived in. He traced the corruption of humanity to the fact that people refused to honor God as God and refused to give thanks to God. Paul said the consequence of turning from the truth they knew, was that humanity exchanged the glory of God for the idols of corruptible created things, He says they exchanged the truth of God for ... the lie.

What was the lie? The lie was to place creation at the center of everything rather than the creator. In the ancient world, people placed creation at the center of everything by worshipping animals or other humans. In the modern world, we place creation at the center of everything with secular humanism. Other religions in the world place created things at the center of it all, and the Bible tells

us that there is coming a day when a human figure will demand the allegiance of every man, woman, and child on earth. We know him as the Antichrist. Paul tells us in 2 Thessalonians 2 that those who reject the Gospel will turn to him and worship him and that they will believe ... and here's the phrase again ... the lie. It's the same phrase there as in Romans 1 and Paul uses it here in Ephesians 4. Paul is telling the believers that we are to lay aside "the lie." We are to stop placing other people or other things and especially ourselves at the center of everything.

The lie is at the core of paganism. The lie is at the heart of the darkness that is in the world. Because we have laid aside our association with paganism, because we have laid aside our solidarity with the old Adam race and have embraced the new Man Jesus Christ, we should in all our speech lay aside the lie in every form and in every way. And again, what is the lie? The lie is placing any created thing at the center of life, rather than placing God at the center.

Let me ask you a question today – what is at the center of your life? Is Jesus Christ at the center? If he is not, then you are placing something from the created world at the center of your life. What do people tend to put at the center of their lives? How about money? Becoming wealthy and having more possessions than we know what to do with is at the center of the lives of millions.

How about fame? For some, life is about being known and adored. They crave the attention of others. For some, life is about pleasure and in our day the #1 pleasure is sex. Sex has ceased to be a pleasurable and meaningful way for a man and a woman within the bounds of marriage to express and to enhance their love relationship with one another. Sex has become a god – this created experience has become the center of life for millions. The creature is served and worshipped rather than serving and worshipping God.

Do any of these describe you? Perhaps there is something else at the center of your life that you are embracing and you have placed it there instead of placing God at the center. I want to ask you to do something today. I want to ask you to remove whatever is at the center, and to place Jesus Christ on the throne of your life.

When we think of the kinds of lies that people can tell, we must see the root behind all these lies. The root behind it all is idolatry. The root behind all lies is putting ourselves at the center of everything. Why is it that we lie? We lie because we want to get our way. We lie because we are in a tight spot and want to get out of the tight spot without paying the consequences. Paul tells us to lay this aside. He uses the same word in verse 25, lay aside, that he used in verse 22 when he said that our old man, our old identity with Adam was laid aside. Because that identity with Adam was laid aside, therefore, now lay aside the practice of lying that is associated with paganism.

Let's take a moment and pray. "Heavenly Father, you know our hearts. We ask you to identify the lies, anything we place at the center of our life other than you. We want you to be our Lord and God and nothing else. And we ask this in Jesus name, Amen."

Did you pray that? If you did, write to us and let us know, and if we can pray with you about anything we will do that.

Instead of lying, Paul says, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor. This is an interesting phrase. Paul is quoting from Zechariah 8:16 and he is purposely doing it because he wants the readers to remember what was going on in the book of Zechariah. The prophet Zechariah was sent by God to encourage the remnant who had returned from Babylon, from the exile that God had imposed on them for their sin. They had started to rebuild the temple. They had laid the foundation but the work was so hard. Food was scarce. And enemies surrounded them. The work on restoring the temple was nothing like the work on the first temple that Solomon had built in the glory days of Israel. And because of all this, the people were discouraged.

But God sent his prophet Zechariah to encourage the leaders. God was at work in their work and all this would lead to a great day when the Messiah and his kingdom would come and all promises would be fulfilled. Because of this hope, the people were to lift their heads and behave in a way that was consistent with their calling as the people of God and consistent with the promises that God gave. Zechariah then starts outlining the way the people were to behave and the first thing he says is, “speak truth each one of you with his neighbor.” In other words, don’t give into the lie of paganism that the idols are stronger than the God of Israel. Don’t give in to the lies of paganism that their way is the only way. You are a unique people with a unique heritage, unique promises, and a unique mission for the whole world. Speak truth to one another. Speak about the truth of God. Speak about the truth of his promises.

Paul is doing the same here with the Church. He is telling us, “don’t give in to the lie. Don’t let your life be characterized by the lie of paganism and the lies of darkness. Base your life on truth and show it by the way you talk to one another. Speak truth, each man, to his neighbor. And then Paul gives us the theological rationale for this – for we are members of one another. We should speak the truth of God to one another, only, all the time because we belong to one another. Paul echoes his teaching in the previous verses of Ephesians 4 when he compares the Church of God to a body and says that each of us is to do his part in building up the body of Christ into full maturity, into love. And one of the ways we do this is by speaking truth to one another.

This is the first step in conforming our behavior to the status we have as the people of God who are justified and connected to the new Man, Jesus Christ. Stop the lying. Speak the truth. Speak the truth to your spouse, to your children, to your parents, to your friends, to your fellow church members. Let the truth of God prevail in the church. Let the truth of God prevail in the world.