

# Journey To A Better Life

## Lesson 9 . . . The New You (Ephesians 4:25-32)

Notes

**W**hen we let Christ be our Lord, or boss, a “journey to a better life” begins with some very definite changes in our lives. Old values, attitudes, and habits are replaced by new ones. As new creations in Christ we no longer live like the Gentiles, or nonbelievers, but our lives change in four definite areas: truth, temper, toil, and talk.

### First, Truth (4:25)

Paul writes, *Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor* (4:25). This would definitely make us different from the world, because according to research data in the best-selling book, *The Day Americans Told the Truth*, Americans lie. The research revealed that 91% of Americans lie regularly. One in five Americans lies every day. Fifty percent admit to calling in sick when they are not sick. Two out of three Americans say there is nothing wrong with telling a lie.

When we become Christians, we leave a world of lying and dishonesty and enter the realm of truth. According to the second sentence in John 8:44, why is lying such a terrible sin?

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Jesus is *the truth* (John 14:6a), and we as His body, the church, must reflect the truth. Moreover, what do we find about God in Titus 1:2?

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We must tell the truth because *we are all members of one body* (Eph. 4:25b). The spiritual body of Christ can only function in a context of truth. For example, what would happen if your eyes decided to deceive your foot by telling it that a red light is green? Or what would happen if you started to walk and your right foot told you it was your left foot? We cannot bear each other’s burdens, teach each other, or encourage one another unless we always speak the truth.

When it comes to telling the truth, some say, “I don’t lie, I just don’t tell all the truth.” Well, as someone has said, “Half a truth is a whole lie.” Other

people say, "I only tell little white lies." But if you tell white lies, eventually you will go color blind.

**Second, Temper (4:26-27)**

As Christians we are commanded, "*In your anger do not sin*" (4:26a). This is a quote from Psalm 4:4 and indicates there is a good anger. How do we see righteous anger in the life of Christ in John 2:15-16?

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A Christian can only be angry with sin and injustice. Even then we are to love the sinner. Any anger that is directed toward another human being is sinful. The distinction between good anger and sinful anger has been called "righteous indignation," which means we get angry at whatever makes God angry.

Also, God inspired Paul to write, *Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry* (Eph. 4:26b). Anger can be legitimate, but it must also be controlled because of what warning found in Proverbs 29:22?

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This means your temper leads you into sin. The Bible also says in Proverbs 14:17a that *a quick-tempered man does foolish things*. This means your temper causes you to do dumb things. As someone has said, "Speak when you're angry and you'll deliver the best speech you'll ever regret." We should always keep our words soft and sweet because tomorrow we may have to eat them.

Some say, "I can't control my anger," and then justify it by saying, "I just have a short fuse," or "I'm just like my father," or worse, "That's just the way God made me." None of these statements are true. Have you ever been in a fight with your wife or husband, using loud, sharp words, and then the telephone rings? You pick up the telephone, and your sharp, loud voice becomes a sweet, kind voice that says, "Hello." You CAN control your anger, so admit it and do it. God never commands us to do anything we cannot do with His help. What does the Bible say about a person who controls his temper in Proverbs 16:32?

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If we don't control our anger, we will *give the devil a foothold* (Eph. 4:27). The word *foothold* (*TOPON*) means "opportunity" or "place." Prolonged anger leads to resentment, bitterness, and hate; all of which are sins. If we become angry, even with a righteous anger, whatever triggered the anger is to be settled before we go to bed. Anger left unchecked gives place to the devil and leads us into sin.

When we become Christians, our behavior changes in the areas of **truth**, **temper**, and . . .

### **Third, Toil (4:28)**

Clearly, there were first-century believers who were stealing until they were commanded by God's Word: *He who has been stealing must steal no longer . . .* (4:28a). The word *stealing* (*KLEPTO*) is the Greek word from which we get our English word "kleptomania."

There is a tremendous misconception about what it means to steal, even among Christians. For example, there is tax theft. Omission of hidden income, improper deductions, and other types of cheating are epidemic in America. However, as Christians we must remember what command of Jesus in Matthew 22:21?

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Also, there is debt theft. Every year thousands of small businesses in this country must go out of business or suffer critical losses because customers will not pay what they owe. One advertising executive who publishes Christian card decks told me he was shocked to discover that Christians are no better at paying their bills than the lost world. That is a terrible witness! What does the Bible say on this matter in Psalm 37:21a?

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God says not paying what we owe is wickedness. It is estimated that chain stores lose eight billion dollars a year to theft and 60% of that is stolen by employees. This means employees steal 16 million dollars a day in goods from their employers, and shamefully many of these thieves claim to be Christians.

Instead of stealing, the Bible says a Christian . . . *must work, doing something useful with his own hands . . .* (Eph. 4:28b). While the world makes money through schemes, lies, and stealing, we must make our money through honest work and investment. However, even honest labor can become sinful if we are selfish, so the Bible says, *that he may have something to share with those in need* (4:28c). However, how does the last sentence in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 say we should be selective in the people we help?

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Being a Christian cannot be compartmentalized. We must be totally honest in every area of our lives—taxes, work, and paying our bills. Not only does being a Christian change our attitudes and actions about **truth**, **temper**, and **toil**, but also . . .

#### **Fourth, Talk (4:29-32)**

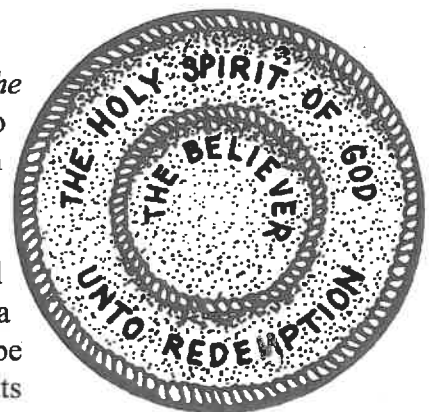
The Bible says, *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths*, (4:29a). The word translated *unwholesome* (*SAPROS*) means “rotten” or “filthy.” It could be translated “filthy mouthed.” For some reason, many people today think it is manly or liberated to use vulgar humor, dirty talk, or filthy jokes. This kind of talk has no place in the life of a believer, for what did Jesus say in Matthew 15:18?

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Instead, we are to speak . . . *only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen* (Eph. 4:29b). This is how we can know if we are speaking the truth in love. If we are saying it for their benefit, it will be *helpful* and *according to their needs*.

To motivate us to live as commanded, Paul writes, *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God . . .* (4:30a). The Holy Spirit works in our lives to produce what is good and decent, and when we pollute our lives with deceit, anger, dishonesty, and dirty language, we grieve Him. The word translated *grieve* (*LUPEITE*) means “to cause pain or grief.” The Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer, is deeply hurt when the evil vices mentioned in verses 25-29 show up in our lives. This reveals that the Holy Spirit is a Person, not just a power or force in our lives, because only a person can be grieved. The phrase, *sealed for the day of redemption* (4:30b), repeats Ephesians 1:13 (see comment on page 15).



To keep from grieving the Holy Spirit, we must *get rid of all bitterness* (4:31a), which means resentfulness, or vengefulness, and is the opposite of kindness, which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. *Rage* (*THUMOS*) means outbursts of uncontrolled passion and frustration, while *anger* (*ORGE*) refers to an abiding condition of the mind that leads to hate and revenge. *Brawling* (*KRAUGE*) refers to shouting or yelling. *Slander* (*BLASPHEMIA*) translates the Greek word from which we get our English word “blasphemy.” It means to say something damaging to one’s character or reputation. The Greek word translated “devil” (*DIABOLOS*) means slanderer, so when we say damaging things about any human being we are being led by the devil, not the Holy Spirit. The list concludes by forbidding *every form of malice* (4:31). The Greek word translated *malice* (*KAKIA*) is also translated *wickedness* (Acts 8:22). It refers to evil intent or the desire to harm or hurt another.

All of these are attitudes and actions of our pre-Christian life, and we should get every trace of such behavior out of our lives. This will create a vacuum that must be filled with being *kind* (4:32a). The word translated *kind* (*CHRESTOS*) means good, pleasant, gracious, and helpful.

We are also to be *compassionate to one another*, which means we do not take advantage of people, lie to them, steal from them, or hurt them with malice or slander. Instead, we go out of our way to help them, a stark contrast to our pre-Christian behavior.

The phrase *forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you* is reminiscent of what words of Jesus in Matthew 6:15?

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The Bible teaches that God forgives us in the same way we forgive others. If you refuse to forgive, you had better hope you never sin because if you refuse to forgive those who hurt you, God will not forgive your sins. Not only are we to forgive those who wrong and hurt us, but what four things does Jesus say we are to do in Luke 6:27-28?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

*Love* means we meet their needs, *do good* means we help them with a problem, and *bless* means we say only good things about them. To say good things you have to look for the good things in their lives and quit just looking at their faults. That will change your attitude and make it easier to forgive them. Finally, Jesus says we are to *pray* for them. We cannot pray for

someone and hate them at the same time. When we obey Christ's command in Luke 6:27-28, we don't just resist bad feelings; we replace them. We replace those negative, resentful feelings with positive attitudes that make forgiveness much easier. One of Jesus' greatest qualities was His willingness to forgive, and if we are going to become like Him, we must learn to forgive.

You might say, "You just don't know how I have been hurt. I just can't forgive them." If you are a Christian, you can because of what declaration in Philippians 4:13?

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In what area—truth, temper, toil, and talk—do you have the most difficulty in your new life in Christ, and what should motivate you to work on replacing those things with truth, kindness, compassion, and forgiveness this week?

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