

Developing Healthy Relationships Ephesians 4:22-32ⁱ

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! It is good to see you. To those of you that are guests, we say a very special welcome to you. My name is Chris Wigley, and I serve as one of the Pastors here at Trinity. Whether you are in the room or you are joining us online, we are excited you are with us today. On behalf of our church family, and our staff team, we welcome you.

We would love the opportunity to be able to connect with you. You can let us know you are here in a couple ways. You can text the keyword, "TBCMP," that stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you do that, a reply text will be sent with a link you can click on. That will direct you to a form that will then provide us with basic contact information to follow up with you.

Or you can stop by the information center in the lobby area. We have a gift we'd like to give you there. Again, we look forward to connecting with you.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

If you would, take your bibles and turn with me to Ephesians chapter 4. We are in the middle of a sermon series that we have entitled "Greater Than." We've taken a look at how Jesus is Greater Than the grave, greater than our worry and anxiety, greater than grief, than family challenges. Last week we looked at how Jesus is greater than our failures. Today, look at the fact that Jesus is greater than relational conflict.

Now, most of us probably have relationships in our lives that we would say are broken relationships. Whether it is a strained friendship, an awkward work relationship, maybe a tenuous relationship with someone coaching a youth team, or maybe even a marriage that is out of whack. The point is, we all have relationships that need work.

So, it is my prayer this morning that we see that Jesus is greater than relational conflicts and He has given us a clear path on how to relate to one another.

ILLUSTRATION: When Carsyn was born

You know, there are moments in our lives that forever change us. Driving alone for the first time changes you. You remember the freedom of being able to drive around town? Going on a mission trip forever changes you. Getting married changes us.

I brought a picture this morning of the moment my life changed. [\[Show picture\]](#) One of the most life-changing events in my life was the birth of our first child, Carsyn. Hard to believe that human is now 18, graduated yesterday, and getting ready to go off to college. Wow, Cathy and I are babies. I had more hair back then!! What's happened?! But that very moment changed my life forever.

Having a child changes things. I no longer looked at speeding drivers the same. I started yelling at other drivers to slow down. I no longer looked a cleanliness the same. I wanted to clean everything. That's all gone back to normal now. I no longer look at boys the same. Know what I mean, dads of daughters?! It changes you! Being a parent changes you.

The bible teaches, in much the same way, that when we meet Jesus, in that moment our lives are forever changed. We are different. We think differently, talk differently, and act differently. Now, of course, we still battle the sin nature, but even our approach to our sin has changed. We desire obedience instead of excuse. We are called to be different people when we meet Jesus. And that change affects even the way we go about our relationships.

BACKGROUND/TEACHING:

Ephesians, chapter 4, verses 22 through 24. Paul says, "²²to **put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,** ²³and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,²⁴and to **put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.**"

Put off the old and put on the **new**. What enables you and I to put on the new self is not our own power, but the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is the transfer from us living our life to Christ living in and through us. As we are going to see, putting on the new self enables a new way of relating to others.

We see this played out in verses 25-32. The foundation to healthy relationships is the foundation of being guided by the new self, which is found in Christ. I want to talk through the 5 changes new life in Christ brings to our relationships.

MESSAGE:**1) Falsehood into Honesty**

Paul says in verse 25 of Ephesians 4, *“²⁵ Therefore, having **put away falsehood**, let each one of you **speak the truth** with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.”*

The old self is filled with deceit and often leads us to believe false things about others. The old self speaks and believes falsehood. However, the new self speaks and believes truth in relationships. In other words, authenticity.

The word for “Falsehood” is a general word that is used in the New Testament that means lying. This word is used in two different ways. 1) There is lying by what we say. 2) But it also follows the idea that we lie by what we don’t say.ⁱⁱ In other words, broken relationships function in falsehood by speaking and believing dishonest things about one another. But you can also be dishonest by withholding truth when truth *should* be spoken.

Have you ever been guilty of these? What about withholding truth when the truth should be shared? See, our fear of man often leads us to operate outside of authenticity. We don’t want to cause trouble, we think if we share our real feelings the relationship might suffer, so we fail to speak the truth, or we misrepresent or mask our thoughts and feelings. The end result of operating a relationship that way leads to a wedge that is forever present.

I think it is important to know that biblical, healthy relationships do not mean that it is free from tension. There will be tension in all relationships. It’s a fact of life. The key is communication and authenticity within that relationship to be able to share and receive real thoughts.

Paul says, *“for we are members one of another.”* When a member of your body is in pain, it does not hide or mask what is going on. If the hand hurts, it communicates that hurt to the brain. The only reason that your body would “lie” is if there was a dysfunction somewhere. For example, if someone were to have a dysfunction in their spinal cord, it would cause a loss of feeling in the extremities. However, a fully functioning body communicates in truthfulness. Paul says that is the way we are to function in the new self.

Now, some of you are all kinds of excited. Finally! The Pastor is giving me privilege to say what is on my mind. I’ve been waiting a long time to be able to

give those around me the “what for” because it is the truth. That’s not exactly what Paul is saying here. Remember the context. Previously in this very chapter Paul says in verse 15, *“¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love...”*

To say I can speak the truth without love is not the principle here. But it is important to realize that the converse is true as well. We can’t forgo truth for the sake of love. I think that is the point Paul is trying to get across. The great Pastor, **Adrian Rodgers**, said it this way, “Loveless truth is brutal. Truthless love is hypocrisy. Love in truth is necessary.”ⁱⁱⁱ

So, the putting on the new self benefits relationships by turning falsehood into honesty. Secondly, ...

2) Anger into Righteousness

Let’s look at verses 26 and 27 of Ephesians 4. *“²⁶Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and give no opportunity to the devil.”* This sounds contradictory here. Be angry, but don’t be angry. What’s going on here?

The words translated “angry” and “anger” are two different words with different meanings. The first word, “Be angry,” means to be convicted. The second word, “anger,” means a seething, resentful response.^{iv} The first, Paul says, is not sin while the second is sinful. It is important to understand the difference.

Did you know that Jesus demonstrated what it means to be angry, convicted? In Matthew 21, beginning in verse 12, *“¹²Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. ¹ “It is written,” he said to them, “My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.”* Jesus being angry was the result of a godly conviction, a righteous anger.

Paul says, “Be angry and do not sin.” In other words, be convicted by injustice around you. But do not allow it to become sin. *“Do not let the sun go down on your anger.”* There’s the second word. In other words, don’t allow a seething, resentful anger to take root in your life and destroy relationships.

Why would that be important? Well, a seething anger is a type of anger that does not let go. It leads to bitterness and holding grudges. Paul is urging us to

not allow that kind of anger to linger. It's dangerous! Do not let the sun go down on your anger."

Why is that such a big deal to Paul? Anger is going to happen. But why is handling our anger correctly important? Look at verse 27. *"**27 and give no opportunity to the devil.**"* When we let a deep seeded anger linger in our lives, we give room for the enemy to do destructive work.

So, the new self, the redeemed self, builds relationships among one another by turning falsehood into honesty and anger into righteousness. Thirdly, ...

3) Selfishness into Selflessness

Look at verse 28. *"**28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.**"*

Now at first glance, this verse seems to be a tangent that Paul slipped in. What does this have to do with relationships? Two key words here, steal and share. Stealing focuses on what I can get from someone. Sharing focuses on what I can give to someone. Do you look at the relationships in your life from only what they add to you, or do you look at relationships in terms of what you can invest in others?

When you steal you believe that others exist to meet my need; that's selfishness. But, when you share, you believe that others can and should be blessed by you, selflessness. And Paul says this requires work, effort, or labor.

One commentator I read this week said, "A Christian's desire should be for the purpose of being able to give more and help more."^v How might our relationships change if we cared more about what we can give than what we get? I heard one pastor say "Maybe God doesn't have that person in your life for what they can do for you. Maybe God has that person in your life because of what He desires to do in their life through you."^{vi}

Jesus modeled this kind of selflessness. Philippians 2:5-8, *"In your **relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:** ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his **own advantage**; ⁷rather, he made himself **nothing** by taking the very nature of a **servant**, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found*

*in appearance as a man, he **humbled himself** by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!*

When we have the mindset of Christ in our relationships, we move from stealing to sharing. Take marriage for example. One of the reasons that couples cannot resolve their differences is because they are "stealing" in their marriage. They are focusing on what they get and not what they give.

So, putting on the new self, benefits relationships by turning falsehood into honesty, anger into righteousness, and selfishness into selflessness. Fourthly,

4) Corrupt Talk into Grace-Filled Talk

Verses 29 and 30. *"**29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**"*

When a word comes out of our mouths, there is no taking it back. No redacting. So, Paul says we must choose our words very carefully. The Scriptures are full of this warning. Proverbs 18:21. *"**Death and life are in the power of the tongue.**"*

I had a Pastor point out that there are three aspects to how we need to approach our talk.^{vii}

- 1) **First, we are to be careful in what we say.** Paul says, *"**29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up.**"* The word translated "corrupting" means rotten, ruined, repulsive as in rotten fruit.^{viii} The flipside to corrupting talk is edifying talk. Paul says, *"...but only such as is good for building up."* Be careful in **what** we say.
- 2) **But also, when we say it.** Paul says, *"as **fits** the occasion."* Proverbs 25:11 captures this perfectly. *"A word **fitly** spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver."* It is possible to say the right thing at the wrong time. When that happens, it is not like apples of gold but rather rotten fruit. So, we have to be careful **what** we say, **when** we say it, and...
- 3) **How we say it.** Look at what Paul says. *"that it may give grace to those who hear."* Listen, an encouraging word, timed perfectly, with love, gives

grace to those who hear. Proverbs 15:1 says it this way, *“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”* It is possible to say the right thing at the right time, but in the wrong way.

So, we have to be careful what we say, when we say it and how we say it. The new self, in Christ helps us do that. Turning falsehood into honesty, anger into righteousness, selfishness into selflessness and corrupt talk into grace-filled talk. Fifthly, ...

5) Bitterness into Forgiveness

Read with me verses 31-32. *“³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”* Scripture tells us to avoid the root of bitterness. Why? The fruit of the root of bitterness is wrath, anger, clamor, slander and malice.

However, the flipside, gained by putting on the new self, is forgiveness. When we forgive others, we display kindness and tenderheartedness. That is Christ living in and through us.

Listen, I know and understand that this is not easy. When someone does wrong to us, it is very difficult to forgive them. But I want you to remember a couple things. First, Paul said that relationships take work. It doesn't come easy. And secondly, remember that Jesus has forgiven you of much.

It is important to remember the degree to which you have been forgiven. Because when we remember the devastation of our sin and the forgiveness offered in Jesus, we then become people who can extend forgiveness to others. Jesus taught that he who has been forgiven much also loves much.^{ix} In other words, returns the favor.

What if our love for one another could become like breathing? With each inhale we take we thought about the incredible grace of God we have experienced throughout our life. The times God has been faithful to forgive us. The grace found in the person and work of Jesus. That kind of inhale gives life to us.

Then consider as we exhale, thinking about the closest relationships we have, then taking the same grace we have breathed in and then breathing that out on them.

The husband thinking, “You don't know what she's like and how she frustrates me.” Yes but, do you deserve God's unconditional love any more than her? Breathe in God's grace. Breathe out God's grace.

A wife thinking, “You don't understand how he treats me.” Well, do you deserve God's compassion any more than him? Breathe in God's mercy, breathe out God's mercy.

A friend thinking, “You don't know how they've gone behind my back.” You're right, but is there anyone outside of God's grace? If The Lord has been gracious to you, can't He be gracious to them? Breathe in God's kindness and breathe out God's kindness.^x

Always hold in view what God in Christ has done for you. Because when we do that, we then can forgive others. Jesus is greater than relational conflict. There is a better way.

CONCLUSION:

I want you to picture, in your mind's eye, the brokenness in the Garden of Eden. Think about all the broken relationships that was a result of sin entering the world. There was rampant deception. The serpent lied and twisted Scripture. Adam was deceitful in his reply to God by passing blame on to Eve. Anger and bitterness took root in the first family. Cain, jealous and envious about Abel's better sacrifice, winds up killing him. Both Adam and Eve were selfish, which led them to eat of the fruit they were not supposed to in the first place. They took something that wasn't theirs. They were stealing based on their own desires.

But listen to me carefully. What sin destroyed in the Garden of Eden, God restored on the cross. There is penalty and there is payment necessary in what we ushered in. But Jesus absorbs that penalty in his death and resurrection. And through faith in him, in Jesus, we have the ability to put on the new self, which is Christ in us living through us, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

See, Jesus is Greater than even our broken relationships. By allowing Jesus to live in us falsehood is turned into honesty, anger into righteousness, selfishness into selflessness, corrupt talk into grace-filled talk, and bitterness into forgiveness. Only Jesus can do that.

If you are here today and you have never trusted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you are still operating in your old self. The Lord desires to make you new, redeem you. The Bible says that we are all sinners in need of a Savior. A change is needed. The change that ushers in the new self is not a change you and I can muster in our own doing. We need Jesus.

Do you know Jesus? Has there been a time in your life where you have bowed the knee to Him and your Lord and Savior? Scripture says that we must be born again. That only happens by way of a relationship with Jesus. If you have questions about that, or you have never done that, come, let us tell you how you can do that today.

[Pray]

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TRANSITION ANNOUNCEMENT:

Church family, before we get into closing announcements, I want to make you aware of a staffing update. Active covenant members received an email this week, but I wanted to be sure you all were informed. Dawna Land has submitted her letter of resignation as our Children's Minister to pursue an opportunity with a startup company. Her last day on our staff team will be Sunday, June 5th. But the next couple of Sundays we want to provide an opportunity for you to express your love and appreciation for Dawna and her 18 and a half years of ministry in our church. We will provide a basket in the Fellowship Area where you can write a note or even drop a gift. We will make sure she gets that. That basket will be available the next two Sundays.

I want you to know that we remain committed to Children's Ministry and ministry to the next generation. It is extremely important to our church, and we will make sure we continue to prioritize ministry to kids. We are working a plan for the interim that we will communicate with you the details in the coming days.

We are grateful for Dawna and the leadership she has provided. She has ministered to countless families over the years and pointed scores of children to The Lord. She will be missed on our staff team, but we believe The Lord is raising someone up to fill the big shoes she is leaving. Pray for Dawna, Randy, and our church during this time. Thank you for doing that. How grateful are you for Dawna and her leadership?!

Pastor Jeff, why don't you come with closing announcements.

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation of this message: John MacArthur, “*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians*,” The Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, 1986; John MacArthur, “*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 16-23*,” The Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, 1988; Klyne Snodgrass, “*The NIV Application Commentary*,” Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1996. Dr. Jack Graham, “*Much More: Change Your Thoughts – Change Your Life*,” PowerPoint podcast on October 15, 2021, accessed: <https://www.oneplace.com/ministries/powerpoint/listen/change-your-thoughts-change-your-life-921680.html>; Dr. Jack Graham, “*Much More: Forgiven and Forgiving*,” PowerPoint podcast on October 18, 2021, accessed: <https://www.oneplace.com/ministries/powerpoint/listen/forgiven-and-forgiving-923443.html>; Pastor J.D. Greear, “*Mystery & Clarity 6: The Mystery of New Life*,” preached at Summit Church, April 18, 2010, accessed: <https://summitchurch.com/message/the-new-life-ephesians-417-52>; Pastor Skip Heitzig, “*Expound: Matthew 18*,” taught Wednesday, May 2, 2012, accessed: <https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/#/series/55/sermon/814>; Scott Worthington, “*The Stressless Life: Dealing with People*,” sermon preached Sunday, March 22, 2022 at Hope Church Las Vegas, accessed: <https://hopechurchlv.com/messages/dealing-with-people/>.

ⁱⁱ Bible Hub, Interlinear Bible, Strong’s Concordance, accessed: <https://biblehub.com/greek/5579.htm>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Love Worth Finding with Adrian Rogers, “*Nothing But The Truth*,” accessed: <https://www.lwf.org/nbtt>.

^{iv} John MacArthur, “*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians*,” The Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, 1986, page 184-185.

^v Ibid, page 186.

^{vi} Pastor Vance Pitman.

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} MacArthur, page 187.

^{ix} Luke 7:47.

^x Excerpt taken from Connor Bales and Todd Kaunitz, “*Gospel in the Home: Turning Chaos Back into Order*,” Lucid Books, Houston, 2016, pages 27-28.