

Ephesians 4:25–32, 5:1–2

Our new life in Christ is motivated by love.

“Because I said so!” Best line ever spoken by a parent, and a common one depending on the stage of development your kids are in. Especially if they constantly ask “why?,” when you tell them to do something or stop doing the other thing.

We do give instruction as parents, training them for life, to pick up after themselves, to pee in the right place, to be kind, respectful, to stoping hit that kid... on and on...

But we rarely start our exhortations with a disclaimer like this: “Child, as you grow and become yourself, there are things you need to learn in order to be a contributing member of this family and society. There will be environments and situations you need to avoid for your safety; objects and actions you have to be responsible for; choices you need to learn to make as to not drive other people crazy. And in all these areas of growth, I will coach you, command and convince you to do the right thing...”

No, we usually say, “stop jumping on the couch... because I said so!”

Here is the good news, God is a better parent than we are! When he invites us to a new life with him, he explains why, but more than that, he does the work in us to equip us for this life. And he surrounds us with other people on the way to encourage us and bring us to maturity.

What’s more, he doesn’t cut us loose when we fail. He lovingly helps us up and calls us to life again and again. Some of what is at play in our text today.

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Continuing in our study of the book of Ephesians, a letter to the church to keep going, continue living from the truth of Jesus for the glory of Jesus with other saints doing the same thing.

Paul is exhorting the church to live in light of Christ’s claim over them. Answering the question of ‘why do Christians get excited about certain ways of life and avoid others?’

All of it is in the context of community, growing together in Christlikeness - the whole point of our life together is to produce fruitfulness that looks like Jesus.

Now Paul moves onto moral imperatives. From this we see three keys of our new life in Christ; it is new life rooted in identity, it is purposeful, and it is motivated by love.

1. **Our new life is rooted in new identity.**

“Therefore.” Where Paul has been writing these flowing long sentences he transitions with “therefore” to short bursts of prose calling us to right living.

Exhortation to an Edifying Lifestyle. Paul gives practical examples of how church members build up Christ’s body (cf. vv. 13–16), based on what is true of them as Christians. All of which flows from his instruction to put off the old self and put on the new.

Ephesians 4:22–24 “to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, [23] and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, [24] and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” (ESV)

All of the practical change Paul describes represents two sides of a coin - putting off and putting on.

What is put on is a new morality.

Morality (right way of living) is not exclusively Christian.

Every pattern of faith has an ethical or moral code, and even secular culture has a moral code.

Secular living says do or don’t because you shouldn’t... at least until we change your mind and say you should. (Not based in truth).

Religion says, don’t or do to earn bliss, to appease the gods, to gain favor.

We view Christianity, following Jesus, wrongly if we see it as a scheme to perform with the hopes we will be found worthy. Which is hard because that is the way much of life

is. Or we get it wrong if we see it merely as God filling the gaps after we have tried our best.

The truth is that new life follows new identity.

At the heart of what it means to be a Christian is to receive a new identity. In Jesus, we do not lose our true selves, but we become our true selves, only in him.

I think of the ancient and modern tools we have used to tell us who we are. Enneagram, personality profiles, strengths tests, all used to indicated who we are... and then to live accordingly.

As people pursuing the truth of Jesus however, when it comes to living new life, its more important that we know what God says you are... “What does God think about me or say my identity is?”

John Rinehart, CEO of Gospel Patrons working with business people and investors for kingdom advance, asked and answered that same question. Biblical theology of identity.

“I am the Creator and you are my creation. I breathed into your nostrils the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). I created you in my own image (Genesis 1:27). My eyes saw your unformed substance (Psalm 139:16). I knit you together in your mother’s womb (Psalm 139:13). I know the number of hairs on your head, and before a word is on your tongue I know it (Matthew 10:30; Psalm 139:4). You are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14).

You are more valuable than many sparrows (Matthew 10:31). I have given you dominion over all sheep and oxen and all beasts of the field and birds of the heavens and fish of the sea (Psalm 8:6–8; Genesis 1:26, 28). I have crowned you with glory and honor as the pinnacle and final act of the six days of creation (Psalm 8:5; Genesis 1:26).

However, from the very beginning, you exchanged the truth about me for a lie. You worshiped and served created things rather than me, the Creator (Romans 1:25). You have sinned and fallen short of my glory (Romans 3:23). Just as I said to Adam and Eve, the penalty for your sin is death (Romans 6:23; Genesis 2:17). And in your sin, you were spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1). You were children of wrath, living as enemies to me (Ephesians 2:3; Romans 5:10). You turned aside from me. You became corrupt. There is none who does good, not even one (Psalm 14:2–3). What you deserve is my righteous judgment (Psalm 7:11–12).

And yet, in my great love, I gave my unique Son, that all those who believe in him will not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). While you were still sinners, Christ died for you. While you were still hostile toward me, you were reconciled to me by the death of my Son (Romans 5:8, 10). Sin doesn't have the last word. Grace does (Romans 5:20).

Now everyone who calls on the name of Jesus will be saved (Romans 10:13). You who have believed are born again (1 Peter 1:3). I have adopted you (Ephesians 1:5). You are children of God, heirs of God (1 John 3:2; Romans 8:16–17). You are no longer orphans. You belong to me (John 14:18; 1 Corinthians 6:19). And I love you as a perfect Father (1 John 3:1; Luke 15:20–24).

In my eyes, you are a brand new creation. The old has passed away; the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17). Sin is no longer your master, for you died to sin and are now alive to me (Romans 6:11; Ephesians 2:4–5).

You are finally free from the slavery of sin and death. There is now no condemnation for you (Romans 8:1–2). All your sins are forgiven (1 John 1:9). All your unrighteousness has been cleansed by the blood of Jesus (1 John 1:7, 9). You are now righteous in my sight with the very righteousness of my perfect Son (Romans 4:5).

You've been saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8). You've been justified by faith (Romans 5:1). You are utterly secure in me; nothing will be able to separate you from my love in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:39). No one is able to snatch you out of my hand (John 10:29). And I will never leave you nor forsake you (Hebrews 13:5).

You not only have a new Father, but also a new family of brothers and sisters (Luke 8:21). You are now part of the people of God (1 Peter 2:9). And together the life you now live is by faith in my Son (Galatians 2:20).

Look to Jesus. Keep your eyes on him. He is the author and perfecter of your faith (Hebrews 12:2). Christ is in you by my Spirit, and you are in Christ (John 15:5; Colossians 1:27). Stay close to Jesus. Abide in him (John 15:4). For your life is found in him (John 14:6; Colossians 3:3–4). To live is Christ, and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21).

Don't live by your own power or understanding. No, live by my Spirit within you (Zechariah 4:6; Proverbs 3:5). Remember, I have given you the Holy Spirit to be with you and in you (Romans 5:5; John 14:17). The Spirit will guide you into all truth, help

you to obey me, and empower you to do my work (John 16:7, 13; Acts 1:8; Galatians 5:16).

As you seek me and see more of my glory, I am transforming you into the image of my Son (2 Corinthians 3:18; Exodus 33:18). One day you will be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet sound (1 Corinthians 15:52). When Jesus appears, you will be like him, because you shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2; Romans 8:29).

You will be delivered from your body of death through Jesus Christ, and your dwelling place will be with me (Romans 7:24–25; John 14:3). And I will wipe away every tear from your eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore (Revelation 21:3–4).

You will drink from the spring of the water of life without payment, and I myself will make for you a feast of rich food and well-aged wine (Revelation 21:6; Isaiah 25:6). You will enter my rest, inherit the kingdom I've prepared for you, and step into fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore (Hebrews 4:9–11; Matthew 25:34; Psalm 16:11).

But most of all, you will see my face and be with me where I am (Revelation 22:4; John 14:3).

Therefore, walk in a manner worthy of your calling (Ephesians 4:1). You are no longer darkness, but light in my Son. Walk as children of light (Ephesians 5:8). You are the light of the world, a city set on a hill (Matthew 5:14). I have called you (2 Peter 1:3). I have chosen you (Revelation 17:14). You are now a saint, a servant, a steward, and a soldier (Romans 1:7; Acts 26:16; 1 Peter 4:10; 2 Timothy 2:3). You are a witness and a worker (Acts 1:8; Ephesians 2:10). Through Jesus you are victorious (1 Corinthians 15:57). You have a glorious future (Romans 8:18). You are a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20). You are an ambassador for my Son (2 Corinthians 5:20).” *Desiring God*

We shed all the lies opposed to this.

From this truth, from identity, we live.

2. Our new life is purposeful.

Paul lists practical ways of putting off and putting on. A list of replacement living. What it looks like to live as a Christian. It is not an exhaustive list, just examples in his letter to the church, but gives the orientation of a life lived from our new identity in Christ.

- Falsehood is given up for speaking truth with our neighbor (here other believers).
- Anger without sin becomes resolutions before the sun sets.
- Stealing is replaced by labor and generosity.
- Crass speech is set aside and encouragement is taken up for the building up, fitting the occasion, giving grace to those that hear.

All of this is summed up then in verses 31 & 32.

Ephesians 4:31–32 “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. [32] Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” (ESV)

A life of examination and reorientation.

“A Christian has to examine every part of a life and say, “Is this what God wants?” Christians are really the only radicals. They’re the only radicals because they have a standard that can stand over everything else. No matter what political party you get into, no matter what ideology is being taught, no matter what the trendy views are of the particular group you hang out with, you have a standard, the Bible, with which you judge everything. You examine every part of your life, and you re-orient it. To put off the old self means you re-orient your life. Everything you do you do now for a different purpose.” Timothy J. Keller

There is not a single area of your life, not a single spot Christ doesn’t have something to say about.

In these five areas of life that Paul highlights, none of them stand alone. They are all doing something on purpose. Did you notice?

Paul has been calling the church to this life, for spiritual maturity, Christlikeness.

- Speak truth, for we are members of one another, in this together.
- Resolve anger and rob the devil of the opportunity for division.
- The one who used to take not gives to anyone in need.
- Words should be given as a gift, grace to those that hear.

Kindness, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you. Out of your new identity, live new, for the good of the family, so we all are served and grow in grace, fruitful, not for selfish gain but the good of your brothers and sisters.

The way you live is meant to be purposeful. After cutting weeds, we plant good seeds, for the flourishing of our hearts, each other and the church.

The why of our new life is both “because this is who you are,” and “because the maturity of the church depends on it.”

This morality is rooted in identity, others-oriented and purposeful, but we haven’t even gotten to the dynamite yet...

3. Our new life is motivated by love.

Usually when I preach a text there is a sticky verse. This week it has been verse 30.

“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

I have used the phrase plenty to encourage spiritual things. But this week the Spirit uses this verse about Himself to lovingly bring me to repentance.

Here is what is happening. In your new identity, when you believe in Jesus for salvation and life, his Spirit takes up residence in you, to lead you to truth, to comfort in hardship, and convict of sin.

Paul is saying when you make the choice to walk in a manner of the former life, it grieves the Spirit of God in you.

The One who sealed you for the day of redemption, making you fit for himself. This proves the personal nature of the Spirit but there is more to it.

Grieve is such a relational word.

Thinking of my dear friend who’s father passed away unexpectedly. He is grieving the loss.

Children grieve parents when they choose unhealthy ways of living. There is a tie that is strained, relational depths that is encountered when this type of grieving exists.

We can have a view of grace that suggests sin doesn't matter - grace is so significant. No sin can separate us from the love of God in Christ, but it matters.

The Spirit cares so much for us, when we sin, he grieves. And I see this as a sign of love.

“This text reveals to us the close connection between the Holy Spirit and the believer; he must take a tender and affectionate interest in us since he is grieved by our shortcomings and our sins. He is not a God who reigns in solitary isolation, divided by a great gulf; but he, the blessed Spirit, comes into such near contact with us, takes such minute observations, feels such tender regards, that he can be grieved by our faults and follies. Although the word “grieve” is a painful one, yet there is honey in the rock; for it is an inexpressibly delightful thought that he who rules heaven and earth and is the Creator of all things and the infinite and ever blessed God condescends to enter into such infinite relationships with his people that his divine mind may be affected by their actions. What a marvel that Deity should be said to grieve over the faults of beings so utterly insignificant as we are.” Charles Spurgeon

Made worthy in Christ, eternally valued and loved. Motivation to live new.

And more, it's a sign that he isn't ditching us.

“When you sin God doesn't say, “You insubordinate punk.” We have to say this reverently because God is a God who is all-powerful. God does not need you in reality, but God has bound his emotions up with us so when we sin he is shattered emotionally. (*He is not harmed...*); his power isn't weakened. He is grieved. Now why should you not lie? Because it grieves your friend. That's why.

You let that work on you, and you will find yourself much more able to tell the truth, much more able to deal with your anger than anybody else who adheres to the same basic system (at least superficially), to any other religion, or to any other philosophy. Don't grieve your friend. He loves you. That's the dynamic. That's the heart. That's how different you are. Put off the old self. Be made new. Put on the new self.” Timothy J. Keller

Paul is clear. He could have said, “don't grieve the Spirit who can cast you out...” he says, “Don't grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed...”

When we mess up we are given grace to live, so we go again. Do so in community with others walking with us, looking to Jesus, to become more like him.

Ephesians 5:1-2 “Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behavior from their parents. Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn’t love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that.” Message

Because of who we are in Christ, for the building up of others, and because he loves us, we walk in love, made new, putting on the new self, day by day, for the glory of God and good of his Children.

Will you live it?

Our new life in Christ is motivated by love.

Be made new - Believe in Jesus, turn from the old manner of life, commit to living his truth. Find his in his word, in community, and his Spirit in you.

Be imitators of God - Take on his tenderness, live new: Be gentle with one another, sensitive. Forgive one another as quickly and thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you.

Give yourself up for others because Jesus gave himself up for you. It is the best life.

As little children we might ask, “why live this way?” In response we hear “because I love you.”

From our identity in Christ, for the remaking of others, from the love of Christ for us, may we live.