

Tips for Vibrant Living From Ephesians 4

While in Bible college, I sat in on a class debate on Christian behavior and whether or not we should expect specific a certain level of perfection from believers.

I admit, I was a bit stunned by some of the arguments that it should be expected that Christians sin from time to time.

While I agree that no one is perfect, in the sense that no one can live their life void of mistake, for the Christian there is a distinct expectation that—by virtue of their name “Christian”—they simply refuse to sin intentionally. They refuse to entertain and be entertained by sin.

Alexander Pope once said:

*Vice is a monster of so frightful mien
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.*

Hebrews 10 also has a very dire warning for Christians who choose to entertain and actively participate in sin:

For if we willfully continue to sin after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation, which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who despised Moses' law died without mercy in the presence of two or three witnesses. How much more severe a punishment do you suppose he deserves, who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded the blood of the covenant that sanctified him to be a common thing, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is

Mine,” says the Lord, “I will repay.” And again He says, “The Lord will judge His people.” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:26-31).

This is why it is not just important for a believer to renew their mind, it is vital. It is the difference between the life and death of a believer!

On the heels of Paul's instruction to renew our minds, he goes on to list a number of sins that we need to completely eradicate from our lives, why these sins are so dangerous to the believer and how we should live instead.

Paul starts off by saying, “Therefore... (Heb. 10:19) or “In light of what I just said...” He is referring back to the Ephesians 4:25-32 passage where he warns the Ephesian Christians to not behave as the perverse Gentile Christians but begin renewing their minds so that their behavior identifies them as new creations in Christ Jesus.

5 Things Christians Should Stop Doing

1. Stop lying (4:25).

Instead, speak truth to your fellow man *because* we are one body.

2. Don't sin in your anger (4:26-27).

Sin, not people, should make you angry. Do not be angry with people; instead, in those times when you've been hurt or offended, resolve it in your heart and forgive before you go to bed or it will give the devil territory in your heart.

“Give place to the devil” means to give the enemy a place of jurisdiction in your heart. When we fail to resolve our anger quickly, when we go to bed angry, we give the enemy an open invitation to come and begin taking over areas of our heart. And we know that if we give him just one area of jurisdiction,

he won't be content with that. He will slowly begin taking more and more territory.

3. Steal no longer (4:28).

Instead, work with your hands and earn an income, because we are called to give to those in need.

4. Stop saying bad words (4:29-30).

This isn't limited to just profanity. The Greek word means "rotten, corrupted by one and no longer fit for use (which would definitely define profanity), poor quality, worthless." Instead, speak good things, edify with your words and speak grace, because our words can grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whom we were given as a gift and a guarantee of our inheritance.

I truly believe that this sentence: "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you are sealed for the day of redemption." has incredible significance in the context of this verse.

5. Eradicate bitterness, wrath, anger, outbursts and blasphemies (4:31-32).

It is interesting that Paul lumped these together; I believe it is because they all feed off of each other. Bitterness happens when an offense, or perceived offense, is left unchecked. If not resolved, bitterness will lead to wrath: indignation. While the use of the words "wrath" and "anger" may seem redundant, in the Greek, they are two different words. Wrath is a behavior, but anger describes a person's character, their disposition, which is the natural progression of things when we fail to bring our indignation in check.

"Outbursts" ("clamor" in some versions) is an interesting word, which means to cry or an outcry, like protests. And when all of this negative and volatile emotion is allowed free

reign, it leads to evil speaking: slander and blasphemy.

Instead, “be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another” (4:32) because God, in Christ, forgave you. Paul is telling us to forgive others in the same measure that Christ forgave us.

How did Christ forgive us?

He gave us a blank check of forgiveness. He forgave everything past, present and future—without a second thought. And this is how we are to forgive others.

But before this passage is over, Paul says this in verse 31: “with all malice.”

Malice. In the Greek, it means “evil, wickedness, malicious, depraved,” which is the perfect segue into Ephesians 5, where Paul will expound on this list of five sins and teach us how we should walk instead.

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