

Instructions for the New You
Ephesians 4:25-32
Reading: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Bethany Baptist Church
July 23, 2017

...pray...

Last Sunday we saw that a Christian is *new* – you are a *new you*.

And that means a *new life & big changes*.

But the habits of the *old you* are often *stubborn!* I *am* new, but how do I *live* new?

Let's return to Ephesians 4:25-32

Paul begins to unfold his inspired instructions for how you & I *live like new*.

His list has a careful *structure*: *put off* the old, *put on* the new, followed by a word of *explanation/motivation*.

Five practical instructions for *putting off* the old you and *putting on* the new.

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| 1. Put off falsehood. | Put on truth. (25) |
| 2. Put off sinful anger. | Put on self-control. (26-27) |
| 3. Put off stealing. | Put on hard work. (28) |
| 4. Put off unwholesome speech. | Put on edifying speech. (29-30) |
| 5. Put off interpersonal warfare. | Put on reconciliation. (31-32) |

Follow these *instructions persistently*, and you will begin to *walk* like the *new you!*

So Paul writes: “off w/ the old & on w/ the new,” and “Step # 1” tackles the critical issue of *truth*.

1. And what is the apostle’s “*therefore*” (25) there for...? Because in vv.17-24 he just reminded us that we *used* to be pagans, but Christ *saved* us thru faith.
 - a. The result is that we are *new*! Not simply *rebuilt...replaced*!
 - b. And a *new you* must mean a *new walk*. You *lay aside* your *old lifestyle* and *put on* your *new life*.
 - c. Which is *exactly* what Jesus taught us from the start!
 - d. That’s what we read, starting back in v.22 – *that in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self & put on the new self*.
2. And now Paul begins his instructions by telling you to *lay aside falsehood*.
 - a. This is a pretty basic idea: *falsehood* is simply the *polar opposite* of *truth*.
 - b. I think it’s very significant that Paul starts by dealing w/*falsehood & truth*!
 - i. First, because the Christian faith places a premium on *exclusive, absolute, knowable, usable truth*.
 - ii. Jesus promised us that “*you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*”
 - iii. To which He later *provocatively* added, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but by Me!*”
 - c. I *also* believe that Paul starts w/ *falsehood* because he has just stressed (22) that the *old you* was *characterized* as being *corrupted in the lusts of deception* – lies....
 - i. And the last chapter of the Bible (Rev 22) solemnly warns that no one who *loves & practices lying* will set a foot in the *Holy City*!

3. But you can't simply *lay aside* a bad *pattern*, you have to replace it with *good one*!
 - a. So the apostle continues w/ a quote from the **OT** prophet *Zechariah* – *Speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor.*
 - b. “*Speak truth*” is a command in the *present tense*. → The *new you's* new *lifestyle* must include *truth-speaking*.
 - i. Where is the *first*, the *last*, the *best*, the *most reliable* place to *find truth* (**not** youtube! 😊)?
 - ii. The *very word of God*. Psa 119:60– *the sum of Thy word is truth*, and if the *sum* is truth, then every *figure* in the column has to be *true*.
 - c. Pau's instruction is brief but packaged w/ a few essential directions:
 - i. *Each one* speaks the truth. No one gets a *bye* on *integrity*.
 - ii. *With his neighbor*. In this context he referring to other believers. *We are* supposed to be truthful w/ *everyone*, but Paul will consistently place your relationships to the people in the pews around you as your priority.
 1. In fact, we've already learned that one of the *fundamental ingredients* of our lives together in the church demands (v.15) that we *live (speak) the truth in love*.

4. Which is the *motivation* for Paul's first *lay aside/put on* instruction. We *speak truth to our neighbor* because church is more than a Sunday morning get together for nice people.
 - a. We are a *body*. In fact, we are the *Body of Christ* – we are what the world sees of Jesus *week in & week out*.
 - b. And as each of us are *members* of the His body, we have to live together w/ integrity.
 - i. If we *lie* to one another, what happens around here? *Ruin!*
 - ii. Chrysostrom, an early church father, wrote of this vs: “*If your eye sees a snake does it lie to your foot!?!*”
 - iii. If it does, your *foot & your eye* are headed to the ***ER together!***

5. To help you see that *truth-speaking* is also at the top of the list because we all struggle with it, let me remind you that *falsehood* comes in many *containers & apparent strengths*, but they are all *poisonous*:
 - a. *Cheating* in school, *exaggerating* your explanations, *misrepresenting* your taxes, *cooking* your books (even at a *low simmer*), *making* unreasonable promises, *betraying* a confidence, *flattery*, *making* excuses, *blame-* shifting, ...*softening* your defense of God's Word.
 - b. There may be *circumstances* in which you don't have to say *all you know*, but *all you say* should be the *truth*.
 - c. And as we've said (15) *truth* is not an *excuse* to unload your *ill feelings*. *Truth* is not a *blunt instrument* for whacking your *neighbor*.

You are new, live in truth!

**Then because you are *new*, put off sinful *anger* and put on *self-control*.
(read vv.26-27)**

1. If you read Paul carefully here, he changes up his pattern. He starts with the *put on*, then follows it with the *put off*.... But first, *let's talk about anger*.
 - a. There are a few Grk words we can translate *anger* – the ref in **v.26** is to a *settled, intense emotion*.
 - b. Is *anger* always *sinful*...? It's tempting to say "yes."
 - i. After all, *anger* appears in Gal 5 as a *deed of the flesh*.
 - ii. And Proverbs warns us that the *anger of man won't accomplish the righteousness of God*.
 - c. But the Bible also frankly declares that God is *angry*.
 - i. The psalmist writes (Psa 7): *God is a righteous judge, and a God who has **indignation** every day. If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword. He has bent His bow and made it ready*.
 - ii. Now it's true that you & I are *not* God, but Scripture does teach that a Christian *loves* what *God loves* & *hates* what *God hates*!
 - d. What's the difference between *sinful, fleshly anger* & *righteous anger*?
 - i. Basically, *sinful anger* has the wrong *motivation*: **me!** You offended **me!** So it's *self-centered...selfish*.
 - ii. *Righteous anger* has right *motives*.
 1. It is *indignant* when God is *blasphemed*. It is *offended* when *injustice* strikes your *neighbor*.
 2. And it is *careful*... God describes Himself (Ex 34, 2Pt 3) as *slow to anger*....

2. So Paul writes (26) that if you are *angry*, *be angry* the right way for the right reasons.
 - a. *Be angry for righteousness sake, not for your own sake.*
3. So immediately he issues his *lay aside: do not sin*, i.e. do not *settle into sinful anger*.
 - a. Are you *angry* because someone *stepped on your toes*?
 - b. Maintaining the *balance* here is *difficult*, it requires *self-control*. Remind yourself that your Heavenly Father is *slow to anger* while *abounding in lovingkindness*.
4. Then our text gives a *how* and a *why* for controlling your anger:
 - a. **How** do you manage this? Paul instructs you to *not let the sun go down on your anger*.
 - i. Be *determined to resolve issues*. Including when your anger is *not sinful*. Take it to *God & resolve it w/man*.
 - ii. The longer you *refuse* to deal w/ something *bad* in the *back of the refrigerator*, the *worse it stinks!*
 - b. Then Paul offers a **why (v.27)** that ought to get our attention.
 - i. Would you *open your front door* to your *enemy*? Keeping the door *open on anger* too long (26) allows Satan to introduce his *schemes* and *deceive* you.
 - ii. Paul has written a lot about Satan in Ephesians: **2:2** – *prince of the power of the air*; **4:14** – (implied in) *craftiness of deceitful scheming*; **6:11 f** – *the schemes of the devil* (spiritual warfare).
 - iii. Paul says (27) that sinful unresolved anger gives the devil an opportunity.
 - iv. Satan wants to *enslave* the lost & *harass* the church, and *accusation & deception & error* are among his *favorite weapons*.

v. Sinful anger among us *holds open the door* and *ushers the Devil* into the church to spread his *accusations & lies*.

1. “*You mad at her? You have every right to be! Did you see the way she looked at you?*”

5. I read a powerful & practical *application* of this instruction this week: ***The day of anger should be the day of reconciliation. (2X)***

a. Beloved, when something starts to *burn* in the kitchen, you don't wait until *tomorrow* to *put it out*...and then *you don't wait* to *open* the windows & *air* it out.

Live new - don't let the sun go down on your anger.

The new you must *put off* stealing and *put on* hard work (read v.28).

1. Lay aside *stealing*. More literally, Paul singles out “*the stealer*”: *The stealer must no longer steal.*
 - a. His Gr root-word is **κλεπτω** which is in the *Greek word family* from which we get...*kleptomaniac*.
 - b. Just as the God commanded *Thou shalt not lie* He also required that *Thou shalt not steal*.
 - c. Stealing is *dishonest*, stealing demonstrates a *lack of respect for people & property*, and as Paul is about to *clearly indicate*, stealing is just flat *lazy*...

2. So in place of *stealing*, *put on hard work*.
 - a. This is a graphic Gr verb: **κοπιωω** – *hard work, labor, copious toil*; it suggests the idea of *weariness*.
 - b. And Paul keeps going: *working with his own hands that which is good*; his details are *intentional*:
 - i. *Hard work* is the **opposite** of *lazy larceny*.
 - ii. And you *steal* with your **hands** so now *work* with **hands**.
 - iii. ...with your **own hands**!
 - iv. The *tasks* your hands perform should be **good - beneficial**.

- c. *Working hard* and your *work ethic* is an important principle in the NT:
- i. Other verses on hard work include
 1. **1 Cor 4:12** – Paul wrote of himself & his fellow apostles:
we toil, working with our own hands.
 2. **1 Thess 4:11** - *make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you,*
 3. **Now follow me to 2 Thess 3:6-13 (read).**
 - a. Paul warns against an *unruly* life, and guess what he *singles out*...?
 - b. *Lazy busybodies!* In fact, *not working* & being a *busy body* go *hand in hand!*
 - c. So we read his *well-known* but *oft-neglected* directive: *if a man will not work, neither shall he eat.*
3. A wise man once said – *hard work ain't easy!* So why *bother?*
- a. What Paul *implies* here (Eph) and *states plainly* elsewhere is that your *hard work* meets your *needs* honestly.
 - i. We just read in **2 Thess 3** – you are to *work in quiet fashion and eat your own bread.*

- b. But *beyond the basics*, Paul addresses (28b) the ability to *share with the one who has need*.
 - i. In this context Paul is likely to be *particularly* concerned w/ the *needy* in the *church*.
 - ii. As I think about this instruction (*difficult physical labor*) I picture a man who *works hard* to earn enough to *feed his family*, then works a *little* longer to earn a *little* more for his *needy brother*.
4. Before we push on, I'd like to *pull Paul's words* into the **21st** century.
- a. You may not think you are a *stealer*, but are you *stealing time* from your *boss*? If he pays you for **eight** hours, given him *every minute*!
 - b. In addition, I think Paul may also be addressing *laziness* here. In our **21st** century economy, **not** every job is *manual* but every job allows you to *work hard* if you have *initiative*.
 - c. A *sloppy work ethic* can become a *habit*. Bad habits are **easy** to *justify* and **hard** to *break*. Paul writes (28) – *do this no longer*. Stop now.
 - d. One more *observation*... A great *work ethic* is a *great testimony*! *Work hard! Stand out!* Then when someone asks, "*Why?*" - *share the faith!*

Because *sharing your faith* is also a part of *being new*! ...pause...

Has anyone every told you to *put a sock in it!*?! ☺ Paul's version is to *put off unwholesome speech and put on upbuilding speech* (read vv.29-30).

1. He begins again w/ the *negative*: *Lay aside* your unwholesome words.
 - a. Paul lit. writes *no rotten word*. The word was used to describe (e.g.) *rancid fish!* The only thing worse than *fish breath* is a *rotten carp conversation!*
 - b. Beginning w/ the 3rd Commandment (Ex 20), the OT/NT are filled with cautions about your *tongue*.
 - i. We could build an *extremely long list* on this point, but let's simply repeat Jesus' maxim from Matt 12:34 "*The mouth speaks from that which fills the heart.*"
 - ii. Your *vocabulary & conversations*, much like your *wardrobe*, are a *billboard* for what's in your *heart!* ...*pause...*
 - c. Which means you *can't bypass* a very important detail in Paul's instructions: *no unwholesome word ... & only such word ...* & it's even "*word*" *singular* (not *plural*).
 - d. His *point* is that you are responsible for *every* word you say, *all* of the time....
 - i. Whether your *wife* is there are not.
 - ii. Whether your *kids* are listening or not (they always *are*)!
 - iii. Whether your *pastor* is listening or not.
 - iv. Whether you are at *home* or *work* or *church* or the *gym*.

2. Then the *positive* is to *speak in words that build up your neighbor*.
 - a. “*Edification*” is a *construction site* word, picturing a *building project*. Paul uses the word a lot because in **Eph** he has said a lot about the *construction of the church*. Here Paul stresses that your *every* word can help *strengthen* your **bro/sis**!
 - b. John MacArthur points out (29) there are **3 characteristics** of *wholesome* speech: *edifying, appropriate, gracious*.
 - i. The right word is *good for edification*. Spec. *strengthening* your friends *spiritually*. Sometimes by *encouragement* & sometimes by *humble, careful correction*.
 - ii. We speak *according to the need of the moment*. Your words need to *fitting - appropriate*.
 1. **Not** every conversation has to be a *sermon* but every word needs to be *fitting*.
 2. **Prov 15:23** – *how delightful is a timely word!*
 - c. A fitting word gives **grace** to those who hear.
 - i. For that to *happen* your conversation needs to be *seasoned* with God’s truth & *powered* by His purposes.
 - ii. When that’s *true*, God will use *your* words to *pour* grace into the *lives* of your friends! ... *How cool is that!?!*

3. *Tongue control is a 7x24, difficult assignment! (7x24? Some people talk in their sleep!) So why bother.*
- a. Paul unpacks **2** *benefits* and we just saw the *first*. Your *edifying word* to your *friends* strengthens them *spiritually*, .i.e. *gives grace*.
 - b. The *second benefit* is in **v.30 (read again)**.
 - i. *Rancid speech* grieves the *Holy Spirit of God*.
 - ii. Paul *underlines* the seriousness of this by using the Spirit's *full & formal title*: "*The Holy Spirit of God*."
 - iii. Don't be *guilty* of *grieving God's Spirit* by your *careless speech*! Paul also warns (1 Th 5) of *quenching the Spirit*.
 1. Perhaps some people have so little *spiritual power & influence* because they have so little *verbal self-control*.
 - iv. Paul is *not* implying that the Spirit *will* leave you. His work includes *sealing you* in Christ (1:13), *securing* your heavenly *inheritance* (1:14).
 1. But how *ungrateful* of us to *speak in ways* that *grieve Him* and possibly *quench the full glory of His power lived through us*!
4. My years in the *secular workplace* taught me that how you *speak*, like how hard you *work*, can build your *Christian testimony*!
- a. If you speak like *everyone else*, nothing *sets you apart* and so your testimony is *weakened*, your opportunities for evangelism are *diminished*.
 - b. But in a society where *public discourse* gets *coarser* every day, your *consistently wholesome words* can eventually *blow open the doors of opportunity* for a *gospel conversation*!

Every word counts!

Finally, God saved you so that you would *lay aside your malice and put on grace* (read vv.31-32).

1. Paul has a *list*. It's an *ugly* list! It's a list of all the *ingredients* of a fleshly church. He wants you to *search every cupboard & closet & corner* of the congregation, find every *poisonous ingredient*, and *throw them out!*
 - a. *Put away all bitterness*. You could say *resentment*.
 - i. It's evidenced in *irritability, sourness, self-righteous grudge-holding*.
 - ii. *Bitter* people are *lonely*, but *bitterness* is never *isolated*, which is why the writer of *Hebrews* observes that *bitterness defiles many*.
 - b. *Put away all wrath & anger*. This is an echo of v.26, with its focus on man's *sinful anger*. Now Paul uses **two terms**:
 - i. *Wrath* is explosive, *anger* is smoldering.
 - c. *Put away all clamor*. *Clamor* suggests *shouting & loud outbursts*. Like an *escalating argument - rude* and headed for *out of control...*
 - d. *Put away all slander*. Paul's Grk term is related to the idea of *blasphemy*. *Insulting*, character damaging conversation.
 - e. *Put away all malice*. *Malice* is an all-encompassing word for *evil*. As if Paul didn't want you to accidentally leave behind any *hateful attitude*.

2. In their place, *put on this!* → *kindness, compassion, & forgiveness...*
- a. *Kindness* is a *fruit of the Spirit* (Gal 5). If you don't *grieve* the Spirit, you'll grow in *kindness*.
 - b. *Compassion*. Paul writes **σπλαγχνον**. (I love that word!) Your Engl. translation says something like *tender hearted*, but **σπλαγχνον** originally just meant *guts!* ☺
 - c. *Last but hardly least: put on forgiveness.*
 - i. Life in the *flesh* means that we will fall back into *bitterness & wrath & anger & clamor & slander & malice*. Which means we still sin against *one another*. It's just *true!*
 - ii. So our *new walk* won't get us very far if we *won't forgive...*
 - iii. *Forgiveness* is one of the *basic ingredients* of *strong relationships* & a *strong church*. (2X) It is a fundamental Christian *virtue*. Jesus taught these things, from the beginning:
 1. "*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*"
 2. "*How often should I forgive – 7 times?*" "*Not but I say to you up to 70 X 7.*"
3. Paul concludes with a compelling *reason to forgive*. ***Just as...just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.***
- a. The *motive & model* for forgiveness is that God has *forgiven you in Christ*.
 - i. The apostle could have simply written *just as God has forgiven us*.
 - ii. But Paul specifies that "*God in Christ also has forgiven you*" to remind you of ***why*** God forgives: *Christ's died in your place:*
 1. *Now you are forgiven.*
 2. *Now you are new.*
 3. ***And now you must forgive.***

Beloved, Paul's carefully structured list is *not* hypothetical. He was certain that Christians in Ephesus were struggling with each of these *old, fleshly patterns*.

Could these things also happen in *our* lives, families & in this church? *Yes!*

Here is your Lord's *remedy*:

Put away *lying*.

Put away self-centered *anger*.

Put away *larceny & laziness*.

Control your *tongue*, every word, all the time.

Put away *acting ugly*.

But you know you aren't going to get this *perfect*, and neither am I! 😊

So are you *forgiven*? *Forgive* your neighbor!

...pray...

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