

Why Truth Matters

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Few things in life provoke greater feelings of joy and wonder and anticipation than being at a wedding and the nature of a public ceremony of a wedding and the way that we all get dressed up for it is designed to impress upon us the solemnity of the moment, that this is a great moment that is taking place and there is a joy and an aspect of celebration to it. On the day of a wedding and more particularly the wedding vows that the couple makes, the man and woman make to each other on that day, I don't know if you've ever really thought about it. You get so caught up in the ceremony and dresses and all of that, that sometimes perhaps we miss the significance of what's being done. But wedding vows are designed to settle many things permanently for life if you think about it. When a couple, when a man and woman pledge to give themselves to each other for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness or in health, they are making a public vow, a public commitment in the presence of God that, "I am going to be committed to you for the rest of my natural life and that only death will separate us," and as life unfolds, that principle of commitment is designed to play itself out in the practical outworking of the way that life occurs for that couple. So when prosperity comes, the vow is played out. When poverty comes, they stay together because they had vowed to do so from the beginning, that this principle was settled and that the back door has been closed and locked in all we do as we go forward until the Lord parts us in death. That's the design of wedding vows and what a wedding is designed to bring forth in the life of that couple. There is a principle, here's the point, not talking about weddings per se, although it sounds like it: the idea of a wedding is that there is a principle that is established on that day that governs the rest of life, that becomes nonnegotiable and is not subject to revision later on. That's the idea of a wedding vow, of a wedding commitment. That principle becomes something that interprets the rest of life for the couple.

Now, when you have that in mind, it sets you in a position to be able to understand what we're going to see in Ephesians 4 in our text that has nothing to do with weddings but everything to do with how you are to think about the nature of your Christian life. Last time in Ephesians 4:20-24, we saw that the Apostle Paul took the Ephesians back to basics. He took them back to review the nature of their initial commitment to Christ and what happened to them in their conversion. He reminded them that at their conversion when they came to Christ for salvation, they had decisively put off the old life, the old life of sin and deception, and that they had received Christ and put on a new life, a life in which they now know Christ and they have left the domain of Satan and entered into the

kingdom of God. They have left the domain of error and moved into the realm of truth. They had left the realm of deception and come into the realm of honesty and integrity because that is what flows from the Lord Jesus Christ. He himself is the way, the truth and the life and there was a decisive moment in time at their conversion where the old life was left behind and now behold, all things have become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If any man is in Christ, he has become a new creation; behold, the old things have passed away, all things have become new."

Well, what I want you to see, beloved, is that this principle that we're talking about, about leaving something decisively behind and moving forward based on a commitment and based on what happened in salvation, this is decisively and critically important as we go through where Paul leads us now in Ephesians 4:25 and in the verses that follow. This principle of conversion, this decisive leaving behind of the old life in repentance and an irreversible turning to Christ establishes the principle by which you are to approach spiritual growth, the spirit in which you deal with sin in your life. Every area of remaining sin that you wrestle with in your life now, your fundamental disposition toward it, has already been settled if you are a Christian. There is not the option to leave open areas of sin in your life that you will tolerate and that you will nourish and cherish and say, "That area of my life is off limits. I will do what I please there." No, it does not work that way. It does not work that way. You left behind every claim of sin on your life when you came to Christ in a fundamental, defining principle and now you take that principle and you apply it to areas of your life where you need to grow spiritually. That is Paul's whole point in everything that follows in the rest of Ephesians 4. It's very exciting to understand this. It's very exciting to understand that big principles start to determine the way that you live life. That is a very crucial way to think. In every area of your life as you're thinking through problems or you're thinking through priorities, you start with really big fundamental principles rather than the specifics and once the principles are established, then you have the framework, the context in which to think rightly about the individual issues at hand. That is very, very crucial.

So, for Ephesians 4:25 and following, let's see the big picture before we consider the details remembering, and let's look at Ephesians 4:20 through 24 just to get a running start into our context. This is what we looked at last week for those of you that weren't able to be with us, including those of you on the live stream. Paul says in verse 20, "you did not learn Christ in this way," by which he means, "You did not learn Christ in order to continue living in the deceptive, dark, ignorant ways of the Gentiles. You learned Christ. You received Christ in order to leave that behind. That was the whole purpose of true salvation. You came to Christ to be delivered from sin, to be delivered from deception, to be delivered from that which dominated your life and the chains and bondage to Satan and sin. That's why you came to Christ." Paul reminds them of that so that it will give them, as it were, a running head start into understanding the specific applications that he's about to call them to.

Look at verse 22, he is describing something that they did in the past tense. Verse 22, he said, "that you lay aside or that you laid aside the old self at your conversion, that old self which was being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit." Notice that word

"deceit" because it's important for later on today. The lusts of deceit. You laid that behind. Your desires which were rooted in a deceptive philosophy of life, you set that aside. Now verse 23, you are being "renewed in the spirit of your mind because you put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth." Paul reminds them of their conversion. The Spirit of God here in this hour is reminding us of our conversion, that we left an old life behind when we came to Christ and there is no salvation that compromises on this. There is an unconditional rejection of the world. Jesus said, "Deny yourself and come after me. Follow after me."

So there is this rejection that has taken place and you notice in the context that Paul is driving a big contrast between the deceptiveness of the old life, the old way of thinking, and the truth and the righteousness and the holiness of God that defines and marks the new life. Big principles defining fundamental things of first priority, first principles of understanding. That is established. Now as we move on in verse 25 and following, he's going to play that out in the specifics that come, drawing upon that first principle and now applying it in the areas of daily life.

So what happens here in the rest of Ephesians 4 is that Paul is going to address five different areas of sanctification, of areas where you and I need to grow spiritually. By setting the context and rooting it in the nature of conversion, he has helped us to have a theological perspective, a spiritual perspective that raises this above mere human morality and roots it in, "This is what Christians do because of the work of God that he has done in our hearts and lives." Very essential that you see this. He established the root of conversion and now he's going to talk about the fruit of sanctification that that root produces in our lives.

And as a final word of introduction here, understand that what Paul is giving us here is he is instructing us on what we are to do. Perhaps some of you have had teaching in the past which gave you kind of a passive idea about the way spiritual growth would occur and that, "Well, I'm just waiting for God to change me so that I won't be a liar or be angry anymore and I'm just waiting for God to change me." That's not a correct view of sanctification. That's not a correct view of spiritual growth. You have something to do in all of these areas. Commands are placed upon believers that we are supposed to respond to and we respond to them in order to advance the work of God in our hearts because we are motivated by what has happened in the past in our conversion to conform our present life to the principle and the nature of the kingdom of God which became operative in our hearts at our conversion. You must understand that the root is now producing fruit and that you have a responsibility as a Christian to think about these things and to exert spiritual effort so that you will grow spiritually.

Let's take a look at how Paul does it here. I'm going to sweep through verses 25 to 32 very quickly and then we'll come back to verse 25 and consider it in detail before we're done this morning. What I want you to see here just by way of introduction is that Paul has a general pattern in what he's about to say in these next eight verses. His pattern is to give a negative command, to stop doing this and in general, there is one exception, and then to give a positive command, instead of being like that, pursue this, be like this. And

then he gives you a reason to motivate you and to root it in spiritual truth that motivates you to pursue this because the reason motivates your conscience to pursue what he has said. So there's a negative command, a positive command and then a reason why you are to do this.

So, first of all, he says and I'm just going to speak very colloquially, very generally here. First of all, he says, "Stop lying and speak truthfully." Look at verse 25, this is just overview, we're going to come back to all of these verses this week and in weeks to come. I just want you to see the pattern. He says, "Therefore, laying aside falsehood," there is the negative command, positively, "speak truth each one of you with his neighbor." Why? "For we are members of one another." Just like you did, watch this, lots of eye contact here, okay, because I really want you to be able to get this. If you follow me through these next few minutes, the key to the rest of this passage is going to be unlocked for you so it's very important for you to understand. What he's saying is this, he says, "Remember," having just said, "I'm going to repeat myself one more time, remember that in your conversion you set aside the old self and you put on the new self in Christ." Now, what he's saying is, "Just like what you did in general, fundamentally at your conversion, now I want you to take that same approach and apply it to this specific area of morality that I'm calling to your attention. Lay off, put aside falsehood and in a positive way, I want you to start speaking truthfully. I want you to manifest as an ongoing pattern of your life to speak truth. Why? Because we're members of one another." I'm going to come back and explain that more. For now, what's really critical is for you to see the pattern that he is following and why he does it because he's rooting it in the nature of conversion. "Stop lying and speak truthfully."

Secondly, he says, "I want you to put off anger." Verses 26 and 27, here the pattern breaks just a little bit but he says in verse 26, he says, "Be angry, and yet do not sin." There is a bit of a positive and a negative there speaking of a righteous anger in response to sin. Be angry and yet do not sin, "do not let the sun go down on your anger." Why? "And do not give the devil an opportunity." When there is anger in your heart, you're giving the devil an opportunity therefore get control of your anger so that you're not giving the devil an opportunity. Put off the old, put on the new because of this.

Thirdly, he says, "Put off stealing and manifest a good work ethic." Look at verse 28, he says, "He who steals must steal no longer," Put off the old but put on the new. "But rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good." Why? "So that he will have something to share with one who has need." So he says, "Put off lying, speak truthfully, put off anger, put off stealing, work for a living."

Fourthly, he says, "Put off unwholesome talk and speak in a way that will edify others." Put off the old unwholesome talk, put on proper speaking. Verse 29, he says, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that," here's the purpose, "so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." He says, "Put off that old way of speaking. Put

off the filthy talk. Put off the dirty speech. Put off the reveling and the public display of your sinfulness and speak instead in a way that edifies others in the body of Christ."

Finally he says there in verse 31, he says, "Put off bitterness and to show love instead." Look at verse 31, put off/put on, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice." Put off these sinful heart attitudes and instead put on this, verse 32, "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other." Why? "Just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." Why is it that you as a Christian cannot continue to harbor and nurse the bitter attitudes over things in the past? Why is that? It is because, first of all, God commands you to put that off, that bitterness and anger is part of the old life. That's what marks sinners. You put on the new attitudes of love and forgiveness. Why? Because that is how God has dealt with you. Stop being bitter and holding other people's sins against them because God hasn't dealt with you that way. You are supposed to be like God, to be like Christ. If he has lovingly forgiven you, then you are to manifest that in the realms of other people as well and you can't withhold forgiveness from those on a human level when God has not withheld his grace and forgiveness from you.

It's all very powerful and all we wanted to see here this morning was just that pattern of what he's doing. As he addressed this systematically, different areas of life, he's following the unifying principle through that is he's following this principle: lay this aside, put this on, take off the old dirty clothes of unrighteousness and put on clean clothes in keeping with the nature of Christ. Put off/put on because of this. That's the pattern that we are seeing in this passage. It's very powerful.

I ended last week's message telling you that as we walk through this passage in the weeks to come, it's going to change us. Dan Jackson likes to use the phrase "we walk through the word verse-by-verse and as we do that the word walks through us." That's what's going to happen here. You need to approach the instruction that we are about to receive from God's word today and over the next few weeks with a receptive heart. You need to be teachable. You need to acknowledge in your heart before the throne of God that there are areas of your life that need to change. Not one of you and not me either, none of us have been perfected. We haven't reached a perfect of sanctification. We all still fall short of the glory of God. As a result of that, that means that there is room for us to grow and there is no room, there is no place, for a resistant heart that says, "This area in my life is off limits. I will do what I want." That is defiance toward God. As his word instructs us, we cannot receive it with that defiant, protection, self-justifying spirit. We need to let the word of God speak to us and address us with a heart attitude that says, "Lord, I'm willing to change here, just help me understand and give me the strength to follow through but just as I laid my old life beside when I came to Christ for forgiveness, in the same way now and as a Christian in these individual areas, I'm willing to lay it aside and become what you've directed me to be. Just make it clear. Help me to understand."

That's the spirit with which we approach that. We are all, speaker included, we are all under the authority of God's word. We are all under the authority of Christ and the way that he manifests his rule and the way that he exercises his authority over our lives is he

takes his word and he applies it by his Spirit to our hearts and so we need to be receptive to what's here even if it's going to sting a little bit. The fact that it stings is good. Sometimes the healing of medicine comes through a temporary exposure to pain. Well, we need to receive this and that's what we're going to do here in the coming weeks.

With that little bit of context said, James Montgomery Boice, the former pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, now with the Lord after a very fruitful ministry, he said this talking about this passage and I quote, he said, "Paul is demanding a high form of behavior precisely because something decisive has already taken place. We have already been made new in Christ. That is why we should and must act like it."

So with that preparation, let's go back to verse 25 and just focus on this one verse for the remainder of our time together. Paul here is going to give us in verse 25 two reasons for us to cultivate truthfulness in our character, integrity and honesty in the way that we speak. As we consider this, just as we kind of walk into this and kind of walk through the vestibule and sit down and see what this verse has to say to us, I want you to be mindful of the fact that the way that you practice deception in your life is more than just telling outright falsehoods. It's more than just saying A when non-A is actually true. It's more than just simply saying, "I went to work today," when actually you did not go to work today. That's a lie and we all get that but what I want you to see and want you to be mindful of is that Scripture is addressing it are more than just a superficial level than that. You are being deceptive when you withhold facts and you don't disclose that which is necessary for a proper understanding of the circumstances. You are being deceptive when you cover up things in your life without telling anybody. You may not say, "I didn't do that," but if you just cover it up so that someone can't find it, when you try to do that, that's deceptive also. That's dishonest. For some of you young people in the audience, you cover up things and hope that your parents won't find it out. Understand that you're practicing deception when you do that and if you make a claim of knowing Christ, you have to set those things aside. You can't be calculating and trying to present a picture of yourself or your life that is different from the one that is true.

Now, let me say something quickly to qualify that. That doesn't mean that as we go about life that we spill out to everybody every internal sin that we've ever committed: bad attitudes, lustful thoughts. We don't have to go out and confess those things that have never manifested themselves externally in order to be truthful here. That's not the point. That's not edifying to anybody to have those kinds of discussions. Just deal with that before the Lord. What we're talking about here is the way that you try to make yourself seem to be somebody that you're not and you actively mislead people by what you withhold or by strategic things that you say that are maybe exaggerations or outright falsehoods or somehow shading the truth and you are covering your tracks with your life. That's where we want to go with that and Paul here gives us two reasons to manifest truthfulness in our speech and in our lives so that we will become more like Christ who is truth himself.

Let's take a look at this. We kind of already have spoken through the first point here but why is it that you should cultivate truth in your speech? First of all, consider your

conversion. Consider your conversion. Paul is showing the consequences. He leads into this with the word "therefore." Look at verse 25 as we go here. Verse 25, Paul says, "Therefore," and the point here is that there is a logical connection, there is a necessary inference from what he had just said with what he is about to say. "Therefore" is like the bridge that crosses the river to get from one shore to the other. "I have talked about your past conversion," here's the bridge, "therefore now that we find ourselves on this side, let's see what it has to say." And what he's saying with the word "therefore," look at verse 25, let's read it again just to get it fresh in our minds again. He says, "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another." He says, "Therefore." He said, "Remember how you came out of that old life that was marked by deceit and deception? Well, therefore, because you came out of that, therefore as an ongoing matter and an ongoing matter of your character, understand that falsehood characterizes the old way of life that you left behind." If I'm in marriage counseling with somebody, it would be very appropriate for me to take them back to the beginning and say, "Remember your wedding vows? You said for richer, for poorer, for better, for worse? Okay, I understand that things are worse right now but you settled your response to that back on your wedding day. You made the vows back then about richer or poorer, better or worse and so now, having already settled that principle, then it's just a matter of how we move forward from here is the idea."

Paul says, "Laying aside falsehood." Many commentators have noted what jumps out when you read the original text. The word translated "falsehood" in the original says, "the lie." Having laid aside the lie. Having laid aside falsehood. He's calling to mind the fact that, "You have laid aside the whole world's system of deception. You have laid aside in your conversion that aspect of life that is rooted in Satan himself who Jesus said is the Father of lies." He said, "You separated yourself from his kingdom, his kingdom of darkness and deception. You stepped out of that so it should be obvious, it should be easy to understand that that kind of lack of integrity, that deception is totally opposite of what you should be as a Christian. You left the dominating realm of that at your conversion."

Now, speaking to you personally here: many of you prior to your conversion were liars. You were untrustworthy. You were so skilled and practiced in deception that you could do it effortlessly like a fish swims in water. People didn't know whether to believe you or not and you kind of liked it that way but eventually it catches up with you and you're lying to cover up other lies and it all kind of collapses down on you eventually and you realize how wrong and what a violation of the holiness and the truth of God that is and you stepped away from it and came to Christ for forgiveness. Well understand, beloved, that that kind of deception is a mark of darkness. It's the mark of Satan and you left that behind when you called out to Christ for mercy to save you from your sins.

Well, by contrast, Christ said in John 14:6 and the profound holiness of his words when he said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me." To come to Christ is to embrace him as your way to God. It's to embrace him as the authority for truth and that in his own perfect character in which it is impossible for God to lie, you say, "I am now under the realm, under the authority, I am in a sphere of truthfulness that now must mark my life going forward as a Christian." Conversion

compels you. Let me say that again. Sometimes I like to just repeat myself, hear myself talk when something important is at stake. Beloved, when you came to Christ, your conversion compelled you to disown your prior deceptive ways of life and to work out in your life a character of truthfulness and integrity that people can believe you when you say what you say. This is fundamental. You left the realm of deceit and entered a kingdom that is marked by truth. Now that you are joined to Christ, you must be truthful after the manner of his own truthfulness.

You know, there is an assumption, a presupposition that we all make when we open the Bible as believing Christians. There is a presupposition. Sometimes we talk about it and teach on it but every time that you open a Bible as a Christian, you are assuming that what you are reading is telling you the truth. That Scripture is perfect and that it is true and that there is no mixture of falsehood in it. It is completely true and you trust God to be true and to be faithful to his word. You just fundamentally assume that. You depend upon that. You count on that every time you open your Bible and read it to be instructed and encouraged out of God's word. You depend upon that, that God is not going to violate what he has already said.

Well, just understand that that which you assume and depend upon and stake your soul on, that principle of truthfulness unmixed by deceit, well, that's the way it's supposed to be with you and me, that that's the standard, that that's the way that we live, that that should be what's in our heart and what comes out of our mouth and the manner in which we conduct our lives. There is no such thing as a white lie. The falsehoods that you tell are a violation of conversion. It is like throwing dirty paint in the face of Christ and we have to repent of that. We have to recognize that for the completely unacceptable way and aspect of life that it is and turn away from it.

Notice what Paul says here in verse 25. Look back at verse 25 with me. I like these messages where we can just kind of focus on one particular verse. He says, "Laying aside falsehood," and then you notice that it's all in caps. It's all caps in the little bit there after. That's because in most of your Bibles it's like that, it's a quotation from the Old Testament. It's a quotation from Zechariah 8:16 where God says that one of the things that will mark the renewal of the Jews in a time still future to us is that they're going to speak truth with one another and the lying will be set aside. Well, notice what he says in Ephesians 4:25, "Laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH," there's what we're talking about and then notice what it says here, "EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR." Each one of you should be like this. In other words, beloved, here's the way that you're supposed to think about this: this is more than just a general principle that operates in the realm of Christianity. Each one of you speak truth. This is more than just an expectation that you place on the body life of a church that you attend and never really think through how it applies to your own self. It's easy to do that, isn't it? "Ah, the church is all full of hypocrites and blah, blah, blah." Well, forget all of that because that's not Paul's point. It's not good for a church to be full of hypocrites but that's not the point here today in this verse. The point here today is each one of you. The authority of Scripture being exercised over your own soul and character.

That's the point here today: each one of you. It particularizes the command. It says, "I'm not speaking just to the group of you, I'm talking to you individually and you need to take this to heart," and under the authority of the word of God, the word of God tells us each one of us in this room, "Take this to heart," because God's word is calling us individually to do this.

Now, what does this mean? It's in the present tense, the command, so it has the idea as an ongoing matter, "As the pattern of your life, speak truth to one another." Well, what does that mean? It means that each day you should be mindful of what's coming out of your mouth and whether it conforms to reality or not. Is what you're saying in conformity with the way that things really are? Are they in conformity with the truth or not so that when you are tempted to bamboozle people by making them think something that is not really true by what you say either by stating falsehood or hiding facts, you need to come to the fact that Scripture is meeting your life right at that point and saying, "No, you cannot be that way as a Christian."

So what do you do? Well, you reject that impulse to mislead. You lay it aside. You set it aside and you act on your responsibility to manifest integrity in your conversations. You see, the spiritual reality of being a Christian motivates us to live a sanctified life and that sanctified life includes fundamental honesty even with your spouse, even with your kids, even with your parents. And in the context as we're going to see, especially in the realm of the body life of a church.

Beloved, I realize that this pinches us. You see, there are two sides to the coin, think about it that way. There is a positive and a negative pole on a magnet. There is a positive and a negative side to our attraction to Christ. We love him because he saved us. We love him because he is truthful with us, that we can believe him, that we can utterly trust him. Well, understand that the reverse, flip that coin over, and you look at the tails side of it, as it were, you realize that that means that there is a rejection of deception. There is a rejection of falsehood and that that plays out in the way that you live your life and in the normal manner of your conversations. It gets that practical. It's that detailed.

You see, and I think most of you understand this but it's good to repeat it and say it: you see here in something like this that true Christianity, true conversion, is not something that you check off in your life by coming to church on Sunday and then you go back out and you live however you want. Christ places a comprehensive assertion of his Lordship over every aspect of your inner and outer man and you carry that through life, not as a burden because it's not burdensome to serve the King of kings. It's not a heavy thing to belong to the sovereign Son of God of the universe. We're glad to live life out this way. We welcome it. We embrace it. We're glad to receive this because we love his kingdom. We love Christ. He is one who is true and we love every aspect, every opportunity to conform ourselves just a little bit more to what our Savior is like. That's seven days a week. 168 hours. 24/7. 365. Pick your number just as long as you realize that this applies to all of life.

As we think through these things, as we see this precious verse out of Scripture and we think through who our Christ is and, "Ah, I can trust his word when I open it," then the deception that you have tolerated and practiced in your life over periods of time in the past, you suddenly realize how distasteful and repulsive it is even to your own heart and you want to turn away from it because it is so contrary to the spirit which led to your salvation. That's the point and we embrace that gladly. You see, this is a whole lot more, isn't it, than simply saying it's bad to lie. If that's all we said, that would be really, you know, I mean, it would be true. It is bad to lie but that doesn't really get you to where you need to be spiritually. What I want you to see, beloved, is that as Paul is laying forth these ethical things on us, he's taking us to think deeply. He's calling us to think through what salvation means and bring it all the way through to conclusion and that he's saying so much more than, "Don't be a liar." You should be a liar but understand why as a Christian that it's so foreign to that very thing that defines who you are at the very core.

Now, Paul goes on, doesn't he, in verse 25. Let's look at it again. I love this verse. He says, "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE of you WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another." What is he saying there? Who is the neighbor of which he speaks? Now, you might be inclined to think that what he's saying here is that we should be truthful with everybody indiscriminately and that's true. There are not pockets where you lie to people but that's not his point here. That's not what he's saying here. While you might think that it's a call to be truthful to all men everywhere, that's true but that's not what Paul is trying to impress upon our hearts at this particular point in Scripture. He has something else in mind, something transcendent in mind than just a general kind of morality that anyone with a sense of human decency would affirm.

No, he's calling us to think about something else, another reason why veracity is so essential to us as Christians and he brings us to this second point. He's said that you need to be truthful because of your conversion. We've talked through that exhaustively here this morning but, secondly, he's teaching us another reason, a separate additional reason to motivate your heart in this direction so that you will receive what he has to say in obedience. Secondly, why is it not just your conversion? Secondly, it's because of Christ's church. Your conversion and Christ's church. Paul here is writing to Christians in the context of the local church and he brings up the nature of the church as a motivating reason for you to have integrity in your speech and conduct. I want you to see this. The context is everything. Reading Scripture is just like real estate. In real estate, it's location, location, location. In Scripture it's context, context, context that defines everything for us.

Ephesians 4, go back to verses 1 through 3 and let me remind you of the major transition he made in chapter 4. This just helps us see the context so that we don't miss it here in verse 25. We talked about this a lot, about the priority that Paul places on unity in the church and an individual's responsibility within the body. That's what we're going to look at here for just a moment. Verse 1 of chapter 4, he said, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." So he says, "I implore you to live life in a way that is keeping with what I have just said in the first three chapters of the book." Now here as we get to chapter 4, he's

helping us see what that worthy life looks like and he doesn't leave it in the general, he gets particular. "Walk in a worthy manner and, by the way, that means that you're going to be truthful in what you say."

Look as he goes on, verse 2, he says, "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love." He puts the priority of relationships in the body of Christ front and center. Then he says in verse 3, "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Unity – watch this – unity is really crucial to him. It's really crucial to Scripture. It's really crucial to the church and Paul is calling that unity to mind.

Now, jump down to verse 15 and 16. This is just reviewing what we've seen in the past. Verse 15 in that context of unity, he says, "speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

Let's just take a breath here and remember what we're talking about here. Paul is writing to Christians in the context of a local church stating universal principles. He says, "It is a priority of Christ for his church that there be unity. One of the ways that unity comes about is when each individual member is doing his proper part so that each one of us as we live a sanctified life, as we pursue our spiritual growth, we are contributing to the growth of the body by being what Christ calls us to be individually." Something important there, something really crucial and I haven't quite thought through all of this in the biggest picture possible. It's kind of like you're in a room with an elephant and the room is dark and you feel like you're touching something big but you can't quite get your hands all the way around it yet. There is something really big here. I'm convinced that most teaching that you and I have received over the years, not all, I've been privilege to be under some really good men over the years and so I don't point fingers at them as I say this but the general tenor of evangelical Christianity is to make us think in individualistic terms. It's to make us think about what being a Christian means for me; how it helps my life today. What does the word of God have to say to me today? And there is this me, me, me focus in it as if we were just individual silos placed inside this room and there is just this individual silo that circles us all about and there's not a connection from one silo to another. That's not Christianity. That's not the way that we are supposed to think about what it means to be a Christian. We're not supposed to be that selfish and self-centered about it.

You and I are supposed to think about our lives and what it means to be a Christian and to realize that we are woven together as part of a body, that what I do affects you and what you do affects me and that there is this interconnection that makes it impossible to think rightly about being a Christian if we're only thinking about me and God separate from the people of God. That is what Paul is calling our attention to. To become a Christian means that you become part of the church, the invisible body of Christ and you identify with a local manifestation of that body like here at Truth Community. And the priority of Scripture, the priority of Christ for his church is unity, that there would not be

division in the body. That flows from the reality that we share a common life in Christ. Now stay with me here. This is really important. What that means is and what Paul is saying in Ephesians 4:25 is that those interrelationships with one another inform the priority of truth in your life. You should be thinking about, you should think through today and in the days to come the fact that the way that you handle your personal integrity has an impact on the body of Christ. You can't lie in isolation. You can't be deceptive without harming the body of Christ.

Look at chapter 4 now, chapter 25 as we come back and I'll show this for you now that we have that little secondary introduction out of the way. Paul is speaking about the church here as he says, "speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for," here's his reason. Here's his motivating reason, "speak truth with your neighbor for we are members of one another." That shows you that he's thinking about life in the church. The bigger context from Ephesians 4 was about life in the church. Now he says, "we are members one of another. We belong to each other because we all belong to Christ," and so his context and the reason that he is impressing upon us to pursue personal integrity is because we belong to one another in Christ. You can't view this in isolation and think about it only on your own little island surrounded by nothing but water and there is no one there to come and visit you and you don't impact anyone else. You're not an island in the church.

Follow me there: why do we speak truth? It's not just because of the nature of our conversion. We speak truth particularly in the body of Christ, in our relationships with one another, we are truthful with one another because we are members of one body in the church. We have relationships with each other that are based on our common participation in the life of Christ. I mean, that's just true. We have relationships. If you did the permutations of it, it would be thousands just in this room. Thousands of relationships. You know, 200 people in the room, I've got 200 relationships in this room and you've got 200 others and on it goes and it just multiplies.

Beloved, think with me for just a moment. Just one more moment. What are relationships built on? What do relationships absolutely depend upon? What is the glue of a relationship? It's trust. If you can't trust me, we're not going to have much of a relationship. What does trust grow out of? Trust grows out of truth. Over time, you start to realize, "This person can be depended upon for what he says. When he says something, I know it's true. I can trust him." We can develop a deeper relationship as a result. Stated differently, stated in the light of the passage here: we're members of one another. And when you are truthful in your interactions with each other, when I'm truthful with you from the pulpit, trust develops and when trust develops, relationships grow and flourish. And in that love that flows in that relationship of trust, we manifest the glory in the life of Christ. We show what Christ is like and that is loving, truthful relationships within the church. We provide an oasis for each other in a hostile world that is increasingly opposed to us outwardly.

So for us today, whether you've thought about it or not, when you come into this room and you have a general assumption, a general expectation that the people that you're

going to interact with are going to deal with you truthfully. And if that's ever violated and you find that someone has lied to you or misled you, the trust gets broken. Or if you are the one doing the lying, understand that you are injecting poison into the well when you do that and that none of us, not you, not me, none of us have the prerogative to inject poison in the pure water of the living life of the church of Christ. We must respect the Lordship of Christ over his church and recognize that truthfulness is what he calls us to and it's not our place and God forbid that we would be the ones who would pollute the water with a lack of integrity and dishonesty in the church. God forbid. God strike us dead before that happens because that would just be so bad. A deceitful Christian in the church is like a worm in an apple. It pollutes that which would otherwise be fruitful and nutritious and healthy.

So what Paul is saying here is that you think back to your conversion and think vertically about what Christ has done for you as you're contemplating the character of your life. But he says you also think horizontally. You think about the fact that there are people who meet with you and interact with you in the context of the church and throughout the week. They are depending upon, they are trusting the fact that who you are is in conformity with reality. What you say you are is consistent with what you really are. That the facts that you disclose are consistent with the way things really are. And Paul says, "That's why we're truthful." He says, "That's why I want you to lay aside falsehood. You're in a different realm now by your conversion and out of love you need to be mindful of the fact that in the body of Christ, truthfulness is what drives trust and trust drives relationships and relationships produce love and through that all we glorify Christ by manifesting his character in the way that we live."

So we all need to examine ourselves. You need to examine yourself. Are there areas of deception in your life that you've consciously tolerated and practiced? This message, this verse from Ephesians 4:25 is your call to lay that aside and you need to think through, "What does it take for me to set that aside so that that won't mark me anymore," and then replace that deceptive pattern with patterns of truthfulness. You've got to do both for the change to take place. Why do we do it? We love our conversion. We love the Christ who saved us. We want to be like him. We want to please him. And we do it because we love our fellow believers and we want our life to be one of integrity, that they can depend on, that others can look at and say, "Oh, that's what it looks like." And in this way, in devotion to Christ, in devotion to one another, our integrity becomes a way that we manifest our love for the body. It becomes the way that we manifest our love for the Savior of the body.

Has this message convicted you that not only are you not a Christian but that you are a dirty, filthy liar? That by character you cannot be trusted? Is the Spirit of God pointing his finger on you and saying, "You are this deceptive liar of a man and judgment awaits you in that condition"? Is that you? Well, I've got good news for you: Christ offers himself to you to redeem you from sin, to save you from that deceptive web of lies that you've made your lifestyle. To save you and to convert you and to bring you into his kingdom and to make you someone new. He will cleanse and forgive you of all of your deception if you will come to him in humble, repentant faith.

Let's bow together in prayer in response to God's word this morning.

Our God, for the sake of Christ and for the sake of his church, help us turn from dishonesty and to develop a consistent pattern of truthfulness in our lives. For the sake of him who is the way and the truth and the life, for his glory we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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