

*Mark A McGee*

# How To Walk Like A Brother

By

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## Why We Walk

The relationship of blood brothers started thousands of years ago with the birth of Abel. He became the brother of Cain, the first person born on earth. We don't know much about their childhood, but it was probably pretty cool. Can you imagine living in a world where there is just one mom and dad and two children? That's what Abel was born into. Adam and Eve would have other sons and daughters, but the first brothers would have been an amazing relationship. They would have played together, laughed together, fought together, played tricks on their parents together - just like brothers today.

What we do know about Cain and Abel after they grew up is not good. God called them to worship Him and Abel presented the proper sacrifice with the right heart attitude. Cain's offering was not acceptable to God and God called him on it. Instead of repenting and doing what was right, Cain turned on Abel and killed him. Cain failed to walk like a brother.

God often spoke about the importance of the brother relationship in the Old Testament. One of my favorite verses about the importance of brothers is in Proverbs:

"A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity." Proverbs 17:17

When Jesus came to earth to restore members of the human race to a right relationship with God as His children, He introduced the brother relationship to His followers as the model for their relationship to each other. It's interesting to note that the first disciples He called were physical brothers - Simon Peter and Andrew (Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:16), and James and John (Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19). Jesus used real-life relationships to teach powerful principles about what it meant to belong to Him.

"Then one said to Him, 'Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.' But He answered and said to the one who told Him, 'Who is My mother and who are My brothers?' And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, 'Here are My mother and My brothers!'" Matthew 12:47-49

Jesus was not denying that He was related to His physical mother and brothers, but was using that opportunity to emphasize His purpose for leaving His throne in Heaven to walk among the human race as one of them. Jesus made that clear with His next statement: "For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother." (John 12:50) The fellowship of faith is based not on human birth, but on doing the will of God. Physical birth does not gain entry into Heaven for anyone, no matter who their parents may be. Heaven is only for those who belong to God through the

spiritual birth of faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16; Acts 16:31).

Jesus taught His disciples the importance of family and brotherhood through many examples:

"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother." Matthew 18:15

"Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'" Matthew 18:21-22

"And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." Matthew 18:34-35

"Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him." Luke 17:3

"But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'" Matthew 19:14

"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in

His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:11-13

"Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another." John 13:32-34

Jesus' message was clear - being a member of the family of God meant treating each person in the family as a brother and sister with the same love they had received from their Lord. Think about that for a minute - we are to love every member of God's family in the same way Jesus has loved us! That's a tall order. We will need God's help to do it.

One of the things I first noticed when I became a Christian was how believers loved God and each other. I soon found out why. The Bible is clear about the importance of showing love toward others. It's not an option.

"Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?' Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your

neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matthew 22:34-40

The religious leaders did their best to defeat Jesus with their wisdom and knowledge, but what they did was give the Lord the opportunity to present powerful truths that have changed people's lives. I find it interesting that "an expert in the law" thought he could test the great "Law Giver." The Law of Moses had a central theme and it was love - love God and others. That's the Gospel in four words. Look at how God wants us to respond in life:

1. Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind
2. Love others as yourself

First, we give God everything because we love Him so much. Second, we love other people in the same way we love ourselves. That second one, loving others as we love ourself, is much easier to do when we love God with all our heart, soul and mind. If we don't take care of the first one, we can't do the second. Our journey to "walk like a brother" begins with loving God with our whole being. Take care of that and the rest is easier.

Now that we know why we are to walk with others like a brother, it's time to get practical and see how to do it.

# How We Walk

We know why we should "walk like a brother" here on earth, so how do we do it? First, look at the Life of Jesus Christ on earth. He is our greatest Example of how to walk like a brother. Everything He did and said was in obedience to His Heavenly Father. How can we be excellent in our walk with each other if we aren't walking in obedience to our Father? I need to stop doing everything I'm doing "for" God if I am not first obedient "to" God.

What is the world's #1 problem today? Disobedience to God. It started thousands of years ago when Adam and Eve disobeyed God - and we are still dealing with it today. Disobedience to God is our number one problem. All other problems we face stem from that root. We will always fight with that problem because of sin. Sin is deep in our spiritual genetics and causes us to wander from God. God's Grace brings us back.

The first step in walking like a brother, is being an obedient child of God. That means listening to God and doing what He says. God speaks to His children in three primary ways: through His Word, through His Spirit, and through His people. The Bible contains thousands of direct commands and insights into God's Will for our lives. How can we possibly hope to obey

Him if we don't know what He's already said? Everything we need to know about walking successfully in this life is written in God's Word. God places His Spirit in everyone who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ and is saved. The Holy Spirit goes where we go, hears what we hear, and speaks to us continually along the way. The Spirit of God guides us as we listen to Him. He leads us into all Truth. However, Christians can grieve and quench God's Spirit by their disobedience. If we do not hear the Spirit, we are missing out on guidance and encouragement vital to our mission on earth, including walking like a brother. God also speaks to us through other believers. He has given every Christian multiple spiritual gifts that are beneficial to the spiritual health of other believers. God speaks through the giftedness of His children as they serve Him and the spiritual and physical needs of their brothers and sisters in Christ. So, it is vital in walking like a brother to obey God's Word, respond to God's Spirit, and use our giftedness to serve God and others.

One of the major issues we face in the Church today is our lack of commitment to one another. It was first expressed by Cain after he killed his brother Abel:

"Then the LORD said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' He said, 'I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?'" Genesis 4:9

Cain had no remorse about killing Abel. He took no responsibility for what he had done. Cain lied to God and asked

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a question fundamental to the problem the human race has dealt with since that time - "Am I my brother's keeper?" Search history and you will find the resounding and overwhelming answer to be - "NO !" Most people do not see themselves as being a brother-keeper. In fact, it is often quite the opposite. A phrase we often hear is "man's inhumanity to man." It's not just the terrible things people have done to each other - it's also that they don't care. What is foremost in the hearts and minds of so many people is - "me."

I spent decades as a journalist and interviewed hundreds of robbers, rapists, child molesters, and killers. I also spoke with the victims of those crimes and their families. What do I remember about them? Victims and victims' families were devastated by crime - their lives would never be the same again. What did criminals feel? Nothing. Victims cried out - "how could they do such a terrible thing to me?" Most criminals denied doing anything wrong, and those who did admit to their crimes thought nothing of it. You could hear them saying - "am I my brother's keeper?" Criminals do not take responsibility for their actions. Most care only for themselves. Those who were sorry, were sorry they were caught. The lack of concern for the welfare of others and utter selfishness is what I remember about meeting criminals.

God answered Cain immediately and said three things: you are a liar, you are responsible for your brother, and you will suffer for what you've done.

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"And He said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.'" Genesis 4:10-12

Cain's response is exactly what I've seen and heard from people who face justice for their crimes: "And Cain said to the LORD, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear!'" Cain was not concerned that he committed a horrible crime against his brother. Cain did not care that he cut his brother's life short by hundreds of years. Cain had no thoughts about the devastating loss that Adam and Eve felt about the crushing loss of their 2nd born son. The only thing on Cain's mind was that God's punishment was more than "he" could bear. It was all about Cain.

That, I believe, is also the big problem Christians have in walking like a brother. We have not caught the vision of God's Heart for people. We often think only of ourselves and how everything that happens affects "us." It's the same thing that has torn apart the American family. Selfishness. Self-centeredness. It's all about "me." It's a battle we all fight and a battle we must win if we are ever to love God deeply, follow Jesus faithfully, and obey the Spirit completely. That is our goal as Christians, but we have so much to overcome in reaching it.

# The Root of Our Walk

## Step 1 in walking like a brother

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength."

That's the why of walking like a brother. If we are loving God as we should, we will love most what He loves most and that is people.

## Step 2 in walking like a brother

"Love your neighbor as yourself."

That statement, "Love your neighbor as yourself," gets to the root of how we walk like a brother. We look at other people and love them as much as we love ourselves. Take any situation in your daily life, look closely at someone else, and ask this question - "how would I want to be loved?" You can ask that of your husband, wife, children, parents, grandparents, grandchildren, neighbors, fellow Christians, students, teachers, employer, employees, homeless, store clerk, enemies, anyone. How would you want to be loved in the same situation? Is the answer to your question different than what you're doing now?

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The answer to that question will give you the steps to how to walk like a brother.

Another way to explain this is to take ownership of your responsibility toward other people. It is NOT somebody else's job to love the people God has placed in your life. It's your job. God gave it to you. Your husband is your responsibility to love. Your wife is your responsibility to love. Your children are your responsibility to love. Don't give that responsibility to someone else. The same is true in other relationships. If we want to love God deeply, we need to love people as He loves them. If we want to follow Jesus faithfully, we need to love people as He loves them. If we want to obey the Spirit completely, we need to love people as He loves them. Loving people is not an option for Christians. It's what we do. It's how we live our lives. It is what God commands.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be

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perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." Matthew 5:43-48

"Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 22:37-40

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." John 15:12-13

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other." John 15:16-17

Do you view any of these verses as "requests" from God? If so, look again at your love for Him. Notice that in all but one of these verses Jesus uses the word "command" or "commandment." In the other verse, Jesus says "I say to you," which is the same as a direct command from God. A command is not a request - it is an absolute. This is what God demands that we do with our lives. To do anything less is to directly disobey God. That's sin. Do you think that's a bit harsh? Unfair? Asking too much? That's just another way of asking God, "am I my brother's keeper?"

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Just as Cain was focused only on himself, we have that same tendency. Our sin nature pulls us toward selfishness every minute of every day. So, how do we fight against our nature? What do we do to walk like Jesus walked and love our neighbor as ourself?

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# Practicing the Walk

The Bible is practical. The truths we learn in God's Word are meant to be practiced in the real world under real-life pressure. Christianity is not for the weak. It takes great spiritual strength to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. God has never been theoretical about life. It's always practical. So, how do we practice walking like a brother?

We've already seen the first two steps: 1. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength." 2. "Love your neighbor as yourself." Here are the next steps:

"... that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." Ephesians 4:22-

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Step 3 - Put off the old man

Step 4 - Be renewed in the spirit of your mind

Step 5 - Put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness

The Apostle Paul told the Ephesian believers that they had been taught, with regard to their former conduct (way of living), to do these things. Remember that Paul spent a lot of time ministering to the Ephesians. Pastors Timothy and Titus also invested time teaching in Ephesus. The believers there knew the how and why of walking like a brother. It started with deep love and devotion to God and each other, and moved to putting off the old man, being renewed in the spirit of their mind, and putting on the new man. What does that mean? Putting off and putting on? Is it something we have to do or does it happen automatically to every believer?

Putting off and putting on is what we do in concert with the Holy Spirit Who lives in us. We do not accomplish anything in this life "for" God "without" God. That's one of the reasons why the Spirit of God resides in us. He provides us with the strength and wisdom to accomplish His Will for our life. The word translated "put off" is *apothesthai*. It is the process of taking something off and putting it away. The ancient Greeks used the term for taking off clothing. It's something they did after making a choice.

Every Christian has a choice. Do we love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength or do we not love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength? Do we love our neighbor as ourself or do we not love our neighbor as ourself? Do we obey God in everything or do we not obey God in everything? Choices - the Christian life is about making hundreds of

thousands of choices during a lifetime. We make important choices every day that impact our walk with God and others.

Paul says making the choices that please God begin with loving Him and loving others, then moves on to the process of putting off the old man. What is my "old man?" The words are *palaion anthropon* - the man of the past, that which is obsolete. It's the way we were before God changed us through spiritual regeneration. It has nothing to do with our new life - it is the old life - the way we used to be - our former way of life. Paul tells us to "put off" that past man, that old man. Why? "... which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." Our "past man" is in the process of corrupting (*phtheiromenon* - destroy through corruption, bring into worse state, to waste, decay). There are physical and spiritual forces applied to all people because of sin that are causing this corruption (*present passive*). They are filled with deceitful lusts (*epithumias tes apates* - very strong desires excited through deceit, seduced through delusion). Life for an unsaved person gets worse and worse because of the decay and corruption they experience in every aspect of their life. As Paul wrote the Ephesians earlier in his letter, Christians were once like everyone else in the world with no ability to change their spiritual situation - so God had mercy on them because of His great love for them.

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air,

the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:1-10

This is the doctrinal foundation for everything we do and can do as Christians. We were dead in trespasses and sins, but God made us alive together with Christ! We experience life from death because Jesus conquered death for us. In the verses leading up to Paul telling the Ephesians to "put off" the old man and "put on" the new man, he reminded them that their life should look a lot different than the lives of the unsaved.

"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in

the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

Ephesians 4:17-19

That's what the Ephesians had been before God saved them. Their thinking had been futile. Their understanding had been darkened. They were alienated from the life of God. Why? Because of the ignorance that was in them and the blindness of their heart. They were past feeling. They had given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. That's how Paul expressed the pitiful condition of being lost. That's what the Ephesians believers were like until God saved them "by grace through faith."

The Ephesians knew what to do. Most Christians today know what to do. We need to "put off" the old man and "put on" the new man. How do we do that? "... be renewed in the spirit of your minds ..." The word "renewed" (ananeousthai) speaks of your being made new (made young again) at the present time. This present renewal is happening in the "spirit of your minds" (to pneumatou tou vos humon). It is a reviving of your human spirit, which affects your attitude and intent. Who does this for us? God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is the One acting on our hearts and minds every day, giving us the ability to "put off" and "put on." Once we make the decision, we find

all of God's Heavenly Resources available to do what we decide to do.

That is such a comfort to me - knowing that living for God is not something I do alone and without help. I do make the choice to obey God, but He is the One with the power to help me make the choice, fulfill the choice, and live for Him. I like it that way. God gets ALL the glory. He doesn't get "some" of it, or even "most" of it. God gets ALL of it.

A good example of this is the Apostle Paul. Look at what he accomplished during his ministry. Who got the glory?

"Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God." Romans 15:15-17

"But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for the food over which I give thanks? Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:30-31

This is not something Paul hid from the Ephesian believers. He made it clear that they existed for God's glory as well. It was a

choice God made long before the Ephesians were born. "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory." (Ephesians 1:11-12)

Moving now to the next step in this important process - what does it mean to "put on the new man?" Who is the "new man?" The words "put on" are *endusasthai*. It was used for people putting clothing on themselves and wearing them (middle voice). The Christian life is more than putting away the former things of our life. It is becoming new in every way that matters to God. Paul helps us understand what we "put on" with the next part of the sentence: "which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." The word "created" is *ktisthenta* and was used by the Greeks for the founding and forming of a place for people to live (e.g. village, town, city). New Testament writers used the word for creating or producing something from nothing. Who does this creating? "... which was created according to God ..." The words "according to God" are *ton kata theon* and speak to the dominance and control God expresses in this special work in a believer's life. God creates within every Christian a spiritual laboratory where great experiments of life can occur. It is in our spiritual lab that God works with us in the putting off and putting on. He equips our laboratory with all the necessary tools we will need

to carry on this great experiment - "true righteousness and holiness." Just as a scientist needs mixing bowls, flasks, burners, and basic elements to conduct their experiments, God gives us what we need to put off and put on - Himself. Who loved us, chose us and blessed us from before the foundation of the world? God. Who had mercy on us? God. Who shed His Blood for us to pay the price for our sins? God. Who lives inside of us to pray for us, support us, teach us, and guide us in every spiritual thing? God. What are the primary elements God has placed within our laboratory to assist us in putting off the old man and putting on the new man - "true righteousness and holiness." The Greek reads *en dikaiosune kai hosioteti tes aletheias* - in righteousness and holiness of truth.

The most essential element of Christianity is "truth." Everything is based on God telling us the truth about everything. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6) He also said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32) That is the foundation of our faith and trust in God - truth. Jesus is Truth and He will set us free! God uses this Truth as the basic element for every experiment we will ever conduct in our spiritual laboratory.

What springs from His Truth is His righteousness and holiness. Think about that for a minute. Can we really put on the new man without God's righteousness and holiness? There's no way. We're wasting our time if we think we can. Our goal is to be

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conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). That is the most amazing thing to ever come out of a spiritual laboratory. Take a sinful human being, spiritually dead and without hope - mix in the Blood of Jesus Christ, the Truth of God, and the Power of the Holy Spirit - and we have a human being who God fashions by His Grace into the very likeness of His Son! How can that happen without the righteousness and holiness of God in truth? It can't. Putting on the new man will NOT work without God's righteousness and holiness in the sphere of truth. If we're not focused on that in our Christian lives and ministries, we need to stop right now and not take another step until we take care of that first. It is that important!

What happens when a Christian puts "off" the old man and puts "on" the new man? Their world changes. People take notice of the change and react to it. They may or may not like the change, but they will react. When Christians put on the new man, "created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness," hearts, minds and lives are affected for eternity.

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## Walking The Walk

We know the why and the how of walking like a brother, now we're going to learn the what, when and where. It is time that Christians **walk the walk**.

"Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another. 'Be angry, and do not sin': do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." Ephesians 4:25-32

This is not Paul's only list of what it means to walk like a brother, but it's an excellent place to begin. Look at the first word - "Therefore." What's the "therefore" there for? Based on what he wrote in the verses just before these - we should no

longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind. God wants us to put off, concerning our former conduct, the old man, be renewed in the spirit of our mind, and put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. "Therefore," because of those facts, Paul writes, we should put away lying. "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another."

Why do you think Paul started with putting away lying and speaking truth with our neighbor? Think about your relationship with God. What is the foundation of that relationship? How did it begin? We know that God loves us, chooses us and blesses us (Ephesians 1:3-6), so what do we do? We believe God. We have faith in Christ. Faith is the foundation of our relationship - "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9) "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) "So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.'" (Acts 16:31)

What is the foundation of faith? How can we know that believing on the Lord Jesus Christ will save us? Because God always tells the truth! Truth telling is the foundation of our faith. It's the heart of trust. We must be able to believe God

and each other. We first believe God - we believe everything He says. That leads to a trust that builds confidence and power in our life. As Paul wrote the Roman Christians, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." (Romans 3:4) God is Truth. In a crazy world filled with lies coming at us from every direction continually, there is always one place we can go to get the Truth - God's Word. We know when we pick up the Bible and read it, we are reading "the Truth." What God wants us to do with each other is "put away lying" and speak truth with our neighbor.

Why? Because we are members of one another. Remember that the Christian family is not of human design. It's not the way we do things - it's how God does things. God called out a people for His Name thousands of years ago and gave them the name "Israel." They became His people - His wife - His nation. Jesus came to Israel in the likeness of human beings and offered Himself to them as their Messiah King. He died for them, but Israel refused His offer, so Jesus chose Paul (Saul) to take a new offer to the Gentile nations, because He also died for them. The new offer was to build something new, something that no one knew about - Jesus called out Gentiles and Jews to become part of His Body.

This was not new information to the Ephesians. Paul had taught them about being part of the Body of Christ before. In fact, he had just reminded them earlier in this same letter.

"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power." Ephesians 3:1-7

Gentiles are fellow heirs with Jews - of the same Body - partakers of His promise in Christ through the Gospel. This is what Jesus has made us - we are His Body and therefore members of one another.

"For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many." 1 Corinthians 12:12-14

Every Christian is part of this amazing Body of Christ. We are members of one another. What one member of the body does affects every other member of the same Body. Have you ever stubbed your toe? Just your toe - no other part of your body is injured - but how does your entire body respond to the injury to your toe? You're hopping around, looking for a place to sit, holding your foot, yelling in pain. Why is it that every part of your body reacts to your toe being hurt? Because your entire body is connected, feels the pain and responds. That's the way it is in the spiritual Body of Christ. We are all members of one another. When you hurt, I hurt. When I hurt, you hurt. When we hurt, we all hurt.

What is the deepest hurt any of us can experience? Having someone close to us - someone we trust deeply - lying to us. What was the first lie? Think about it - what was the first lie and how did it affect us? "Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die.'" (Genesis 3:4) Why was that a lie? Because God had told Adam the truth - "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17) Satan told Eve a lie and she believed him instead of God. She took Satan at his word instead of taking God at His Word. That first lie led to terrible things that affected the human race for thousands of years.

The word "lying" is *pseudos* and speaks of anything that is false, not true. What is the root of lying? Deceit. "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression." (1 Timothy 2:14) Satan wanted to deceive Eve, so he lied to her by telling her that God was a liar. Eve was deceived and fell into transgression (sin). Deceit is wicked and destructive. It's interesting that in the Greek Paul told the Ephesians to put away "the lie" (to *pseudos*). How many lies are there? Just one - the lie. "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it." (John 8:44) Satan is a liar and the father of it. His lie led to murder and death - he was a murderer from the beginning. Lying is an ugly part of our former way of living - the old man. Telling the truth is part of our new way of living - the new man.

Lying has hurt the Body of Christ deeply through the centuries. Have you ever seen what lying does in a Christian marriage? Between parents and children? In a group of believers? In a church? A denomination? I have and it is devastating. Lying destroys the very fabric of trust between Christians. How can we serve God together if we can't trust each other? How can we serve the needs of God's people if we don't trust each other? How can we take the Gospel of Christ to the world if we don't trust each other? We can't do it effectively. How many pastors,

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missionaries, youth leaders, Bible teachers, music leaders, and children's workers have left their ministries because of the lies of other Christians? Would you believe it's in the millions since the Church began? How many lives have not been touched for Christ because of the lies of Christians? Billions. We must be able to believe each other. We must "put away lying" for we are members of one another.

Notice that Paul didn't just say "put away lying." He also said, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor." Remember that Paul told them to "put off" and "put on." It is not enough just to stop lying. We also need to tell each other the truth. That may be the harder part. To stop lying can be as simple as just not opening our mouths, but that's not what God has for us. Faith in Christ is about telling each other the truth. Do you remember what God says about our heart? "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9) Satan planted a seed of deceit that became part of every human heart. We overcome that deceit through the process of putting away lying and telling truth to our neighbor. It is not enough for us to just close our mouth and not lie. We must also open our mouth and tell the truth. It is through that process of putting away lying (put off) and speaking truth (put on) that we become mature and able to serve others.

How do we speak truth with our neighbor? Paul just told them a few verses earlier: "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians

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4:15). That's the key to speaking truth to our neighbor - it must be done in love. And what happens when Christians speak the truth in love to one another?

"... but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." Ephesians 4:15-16

What an ideal world - where Christians love each other, trust each other, and tell each other the truth. Sounds like Heaven!

Paul gave the Ephesians seven steps in walking like a brother. Putting away lying and speaking truth to our neighbor is the first step.

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## The Conduct of Our Walk

The Apostle Paul wrote the Ephesians that they "should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart, who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." (Ephesians 4:17-19)

Let me stop here for a minute and share a couple of thoughts with you about unsaved people. Christians tend to look down on unsaved people (they are an unsavory group, you know - what with all their sinning and stuff). The fact about unsaved people is they can't be different than they are - lost, unsaved, unsavory. Paul said it so well earlier in his letter to the Ephesians - "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others." (Ephesians 2:1-3)

Did you catch that - "in which you once walked"? Christians, let's be careful in our pursuit of holiness not to forget where God found us. We once walked just like everyone else - dominated by the course of this world, the flesh, and the devil. We were part of them - remember? We once lived our lives in the sphere of the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. We were children of wrath, "just as the others." The Christian anthem captures the idea so well - "I once was lost but now am found, was blind, but now I see." God is telling us through Paul's letter to the Ephesians that we are not to live like unsaved people, but He also is telling us to remember who we were. A little humility is necessary from time to time and goes a long way in keeping us from thinking too much of ourselves.

"But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."  
(Ephesians 4:20-24)

What have we learned from Christ? Jesus is the Truth and the Truth is in Him. What is that Truth? That you put off the old man and put on the new man. What's the context? How we live our life - "concerning your former conduct." We are different

than what we were before we were taught by Christ because of what the Holy Spirit did and is doing in our lives - "But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:4-7) Regeneration is a powerful spiritual action (palingenesia - again birth, new birth). Notice the amazing process that leads to it:

1. Kindness and love of God our Savior appeared toward man
2. Not by works of righteousness which we have done
3. He saved us according to His mercy
4. Through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit
5. God poured out His Spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior
6. We have been justified by His Grace that we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life

Just out of curiosity - did you see any part of that process that brings glory to us? God's kindness - God's love - appeared toward man - not by works of righteousness which we have done - He saved us - according to His mercy - through the Holy

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Spirit's washing of regeneration and renewing - God poured out His Spirit on us - His grace justifies us - we become heirs according to the hope of eternal life that comes from God. See anything there that's our doing? Nope - neither did I. It's all of God. God = everything ... me = nothing. How can a dead man bring himself to life? Can't be done. How does a spiritually dead person bring himself/herself to spiritual life? Can't be done. God does it all - from the loving to the choosing to the dying to the saving to the changing. We can put off the old and put on the new because of what Jesus accomplished on our behalf.

Step 1 - "Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another."

We have an amazing relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us the Truth. He never lies. I can "trust" what Jesus tells me. God wants us to have that same relationship with other members of the Body of Christ. Put away lying - "let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor." Why? Because "we are member of one another." God has placed each one of us into the same spiritual body - the Body of Christ. We need to be able to believe each other - trust each other. Speaking truth to each other is the foundation of a powerful body of believers. Remember Genesis 3 ? Things were going great until Satan told Eve a lie and she believed it.

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Step 2 - "Be angry, and do not sin': do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil."  
Ephesians 4:25-27

Be angry? Why is Paul telling Christians to be angry? That seems like a strange thing God would tell us to do? The insight we need is back in Genesis. God established a system of "sin offering" after Adam plunged the human race into sin. This offering was the way God gave people to have a relationship with Him. As was their custom, the men brought their sin offering to God. Abel was a shepherd and brought God the "firstborn of his flock and their fat." Cain brought "an offering of the fruit of the ground." God "respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering." The Hebrew word translated respect (sa' ah) means "to turn the eyes either to or from an object." God turned His eyes "toward" Abel's offering and "away" from Cain's offering. Why did God do that? "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks."(Hebrews 11:4) Abel offered God a more excellent sacrifice "by faith." Remember the foundation of our relationship with God? Faith. Abel offered God a more excellent sacrifice because it was "by faith." What does that tell us about Cain's offering? It was not excellent - it was not "by faith." So, God looked away from Cain's offering and did not receive it.

Think about that for a minute. You and your brother go before the Lord, as you have done countless times before, to bring your sin offering to Him. This time is different. God looks with favor on your brother's, but looks away from yours. How does that make you feel? What if your mother and father are watching? What about your wife and children? Everyone sees that God looks away from your offering, while respecting your brother's. What will you do now?

What was Cain's reaction? "And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell." What was God's reaction to Cain's anger? "So the LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted?'" That seems like wise counsel. All Cain has to do is "do well" and God promised to accept his offering. However, there is another side to anger - "And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." God presents the bad side of anger with personal attributes: "sin lies at the door ... its desire is for you." What could Cain do about it? "... but you should rule over it." Sin wanted power over Cain, but Cain had the ability to rule over sin. The Hebrew word for "rule over" is *masal*. It carries the idea of bringing something under your control - getting mastery of the situation, as a leader would do. God told Cain to get control over his anger before sin took control.

We know what happened next. Cain's anger was based on evil and it led to evil. "In this the children of God and the children

of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous." (1 John 3:10-12) Do you see the part Satan played in this? Satan was behind the first lie and he was behind the first murder. Cain "was of the wicked one and murdered his brother."

Being angry is not the problem - things happen in life that anger us. What's in our heart and how we respond to anger can be good or it can be bad. That's what Paul wrote the Ephesians: "Be angry, and do not sin." Okay, brother Paul, how do we do that? How can we be angry, but not sin?

1. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath
2. Nor give place to the devil. Don't let the day go by without dealing with your anger. Don't give your anger time to develop into a monster you cannot control ("sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you"). Take control of your anger and rule over it. What happens when you don't deal with your anger before the end of the day? Satan gets a place - a foothold - in your life. You go to sleep angry - you wake up angry - you start your day angry - you spend all day angry - you end that day angry - and the evil cycle begins. Where does it end? In murder. It may be the

death of a relationship - it may be the murder of someone's good name and character - it may be the destruction of someone's life. That's what happened to Cain. "Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him." (Genesis 4:8) Cain allowed time to pass while anger turned to jealousy and hatred. Cain talked with Abel and moved things to another location - to a field where Cain could be alone with his brother and kill him. When Cain refused God's advice, he gave the devil a place in his life. What does the devil do when he gets a place in our life? Jesus said, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." (John 10:10) That's what Satan does - he lies, cheats, steals, kills, and destroys. No good thing will come from allowing sin to rule over us.

Christians - be angry, but don't sin. Don't give Satan any place in your life. Don't let him have any say in the way you think, feel or act. Sin is always nearby, ready to pounce on us whenever it can. Its desire is "for us." Sin wants to control us. When you get angry with a brother or sister in Christ, know that the devil wants to use it to destroy relationships and undermine the work of God. Paul says, "do not let the sun go down on your wrath." Deal with it righteously - right away - every time.

## Repairing Our Walk

God wants the very best life for each of us. He tells us to do the things that He knows will work. God is not leading us astray. He's not telling us to do the wrong things. If you believe the Bible is God's Word, then let's do it.

"Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another. 'Be angry, and do not sin': do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." Ephesians 4:25-32

We've seen how important it is that we put away lying and speak truth with our neighbor, "for we are members of one another." We've seen that we should not sin in our anger nor

let the sun go down on our wrath. If we do, we "give place to the devil." So far, pretty simple: don't lie, tell the truth, deal with anger quickly and appropriately. Don't give the devil the opportunity to get his foot in the door of your thoughts or feelings. That's what Satan did with Adam, Eve and Cain. Don't let it happen to you.

Now, on to step 3. "Let him who stole steal no longer."

**Fact** - Christians did bad things before they were saved. Some were thieves. They stole things from other people. Stealing is a way of life for many people, so it means a big change of heart and mind. The first thing a saved thief needs to do is want to put off the old man and put on the new man. That's where being "renewed in the spirit of your mind" plays an important role. It will take a renewed spirit and mind to change a thief.

Can a thief really stop stealing? Absolutely! The power of God in a saved life is a mighty thing to behold. He can certainly empower a thief to stop stealing. Then what? What should a saved thief do after they stop stealing stuff from people? Work hard with their hands and give stuff to people - "but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need." Isn't that the coolest thing?! It's the perfect therapy for someone who wants to change from being a thief to being someone people can trust. The heart of a thief is self-centered, only caring for themselves. They lie and cheat to get what they want. Remember Step 1?

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Put away lying and speak truth with your neighbor. A forgiven thief must live a life of truth to their neighbors. They must change their way of thinking and living. They must prove themselves trustworthy to be trusted. How to do that? Thieves use their hands to steal what belongs to people who work hard for their possessions - so a saved thief should work hard and make good things with their hands so they can give something to people in need.

Is that an amazing way for a saved thief to live? You bet it is! Tell a thief to stop stealing. They stop stealing. Then what? They made a living with their hands taking what belonged to others. What will they do with their hands after they stop stealing? If they don't use their hands for something good, don't you think they will be tempted to go back to their former way of life and use them to steal again? They haven't learned the importance of serving God out of their weakness. God knows us inside and out. He knows exactly what it takes to change a person.

We are changed through the process of loving God and others. A big part of loving someone is serving them. Remember that stealing is more than just the physical act of taking things that belong to others - it is also the mental and emotional act of taking what doesn't belong to the thief. Working hard with their hands, then giving to others from their heart and mind is a big part of changing the way a former thief looks at their life and others. It changes the way they see people. Instead of

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seeing people as targets for theft, they see people as brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ, or they see unsaved people in need of the same Love and Grace that changed the life of the former thief.

This principle from God's Word works for any kind of thief - whether they steal things, ideas, dreams or hope. Example - I was an outspoken atheist 40 years ago. I told people on my daily radio show every day that God did not exist. I spent hours and hours reading and studying religious, agnostic and atheistic texts to be ready to defend atheism and challenge Christianity and other religions every chance I got. I used my skills as a radio host to influence people for atheism. I stole peoples' ideas, dreams and hope through my ideas and by my words. Then God saved me. What did He direct me to do? Speak for Him - become an outspoken believer of the Living God. I told people on radio and television about God. I spent hours and days reading and studying God's Word, history and sciences to be ready to defend the reliability and integrity of the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I wrote about God in newspapers and magazines and on the Internet. Studying and teaching God's Word turned me around and pointed me in the right direction. It forged within my mind and soul the absolute Truth that God is Who He says He is, has done what He says He has done, and will do what He says He will do. But what if I had just believed and nothing else? When I was an atheist, I tried with all my strength to convince people that God did not

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exist and that believing in Him was a complete waste of their time. What if I had never studied the Bible, never spoken for the existence of God, never defended the Gospel of Jesus Christ, never tried to convince people that God did exist and that believing in Him was the best use of their time? I can't even imagine not doing that. What God did for me is more than anyone on earth could or would have done. I owe everything to God.

Just like an atheist has a lot to give back - so does a thief. An atheist steals people's hopes and dreams. A thief steals their possessions. Which is worse? Which is better? Doesn't matter - the forgiven atheist and the forgiven thief have a lot in common. Both need to labor so they will have something to give people who have need. We live in a world that is hurting - really hurting. People need to know God and His Love. God uses us to show them how.

Were you a thief before God saved you? Did you steal people's possessions? their ideas? their dreams? their hope? Then give back. Use your hands, your heart, your mind, your mouth - and give back to those in need.

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## The Talk of Our Walk

I love how the Holy Spirit uses the personality of the people He inspired to author God's Word. Paul, for instance, was a young legal scholar (Pharisee) when Jesus met him on the road to Damascus. Though Paul (Saul) later repudiated his position as a Pharisee, we see the personality of that training in his writings as the Holy Spirit guided him.

“Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another. ‘Be angry, and do not sin’: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” Ephesians 4:25-32

Paul presents 7 steps in this short paragraph about how to walk like a brother. We've already seen 3 of the steps:

Step 1 - put away lying, speak truth with your neighbor

Step 2 - be angry, and don't sin; don't let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil

Step 3 - let him who stole steal no longer, but instead work with your hands what is good and give to others who have need

Now we look to step 4: "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers."

What is a "corrupt word?" The Greek is *logos sapos* and translates as "bad, rotten, foul, of poor quality, unfit for use, putrid." It comes from the word *sepo* - to rot, rot off, drop to pieces. Paul has already addressed the problem of lying to each other. The word *sapos* is not about lying - it's about words that cause a rotting process. The word was used for vegetables and fruit that were rotten and no longer good for eating. They had the potential to give life, but had become putrid and would only make people sick. Paul compares "corrupt word" with "what is good." Again, this is not a matter of lying to someone. It's about speaking words that are rotten - words that cause moral sickness.

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Listen to conversations where Christians are involved. What comes out of their mouth? Do they speak words that promote life? Or are their words rotten, foul, putrid, unfit for moral use? Do you and others listening to them feel stronger in your faith because of what they said? Are you more in love with Jesus because of the words that proceed from their mouths? Are people edified and built up because of their speech? Do they "impart grace to the hearers?" Or do their words depress you, make you think things you shouldn't think, take you in directions that are unwise for a believer? What about your own words? Are they good or bad? Life-giving or rotten? In order to "walk like a brother," our communication must promote life and health, not disease and death.

I think back on all the words I have spoken in my life. Millions of words in a lifetime. How many of those words brought health to people? How many of my words were rotten, putrid, unfit for use? God knows. He has heard every word I've ever spoken. That's embarrassing - to know that the Holy God has heard every word I've spoken since I first began speaking as a child. What's even worse - He's heard everything I've said since I began speaking as a saved child of God. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write clearly that we who name the Name of Jesus Christ should let no corrupt word proceed out of our mouth. And this is not the only time the Spirit has told us about the importance of speaking life-giving words that edify and impart His Grace to the hearers.

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"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer." Psalm 19:14

"The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, And his tongue talks of justice." Psalm 37:30

"I said, 'I will guard my ways, Lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, While the wicked are before me.'" Psalm 39:1

"My mouth shall speak wisdom, And the meditation of my heart shall give understanding." Psalm 49:3

"The mouth of the righteous is a well of life, But violence covers the mouth of the wicked." Proverbs 10:11

"The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, But the perverse tongue will be cut out." Proverbs 10:31

"The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious, But the lips of a fool shall swallow him up." Ecclesiastes 10:12

"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit. Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things." Matthew 12:33-35

"But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth." Colossians 3:8

"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no

spring yields both salt water and fresh." James 1:1-12

What does Paul mean when he says - "what is good for necessary edification"? The Greek is *agathos pros oikodomen tes chreias* - good to improvement of the need. *Agathos* describes something as being good in its character or basic makeup - beneficial in its effect. *Oikodomen* is the building of a house. Paul used the word for the process of promoting spiritual growth through teaching and example. It's what he told the Ephesians a little earlier in this letter - just before he told them to put off the old man and put on the new man.

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." Ephesians 4:11-16

This is not the only time Paul taught Christians about the importance of edifying each other.

"Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another." Romans 14:19

"Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification." Romans 15:2

"Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies." 1 Corinthians 8:1

"All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify." 1 Corinthians 10:23

"For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church ... Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel ... For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified ... How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has

an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." 1  
Corinthians 14:2-4, 12, 17, 26

"Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being  
present I should use sharpness, according to the authority  
which the Lord has given me for edification and not for  
destruction." 2 Corinthians 13:10

"Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just  
as you also are doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11

We are here to edify - build up - each other ... not to tear down,  
not to destroy. But what is the outcome of "corrupt  
communication?" Destruction. Corrupt words tear down and  
destroy. You know what I'm talking about. You go to church  
and you're feeling great. God is so good and you're excited to be  
going to be with God's people on the Lord's Day. And then it  
happens. It might be something someone says in the parking  
lot or hallway, in a bathroom or classroom. Someone speaks  
corrupt words and you begin to feel sick. How do you deal with  
it? Do you speak words of health back to them? or walk away  
without saying anything? or maybe you give them a half-hearted  
response. Can I tell you something in private? It happens every  
Sunday in every church in America. It happens every day in  
every Christian's life. But it should not happen among believers!  
What does the Holy Spirit say? **LET NO CORRUPT WORD  
PROCEED OUT OF YOUR MOUTH!**

Chreias means "that which is necessary, to use, make use of, make the most of, profitable." The words that Christians speak should always be useful to others. When Christians speak, people should receive something they can use to build up their lives and meet the needs of others. How does that happen? Go back a few verses to the foundation of walking like a brother.

"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."

Ephesians 4:17-24

We put off the old which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts and put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. That affects every part of our body - including our mouth. Corrupt words come from the corrupt man, which we are supposed to

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put off. When a Christian speaks corruption they are speaking from the old man with its deceitful lusts. When Christians speak corruption they are talking like unsaved people, who speak from the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. Why would a saved person want to talk like an unsaved person? WHY? It makes no sense. It is not logical. If we have been changed, then we need to be changed in every area of our life - including our speech. Understand? Where is the proof of our change if there is no proof of our change?

When I hear corrupt words come out of the mouths of other Christians, I have to make a choice. 1) I can listen and not say anything. 2) Listen and speak corruption with them. 3) Not listen and walk away. 4) Speak health to my brother or sister. Here's an example of what I mean. A brother or sister starts speaking negatively about someone else in the church. You stop their words in mid-sentence and speak words of truth, purity and virtue. Do you know what happens when you speak words of edification in that situation? The brother or sister who was speaking corruption has to make a decision. They can listen and not say anything, listen and agree with your edification, not listen and walk away, or defend their corrupt words. What I find, most of the time, is that words of truth, purity and virtue usually put an end to corrupt words.

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"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you."

Philippians 4:8-9

There is tremendous power in the words we speak to each other. First, stop lying to one another because we are members of one another. Second, do not let any corrupt words leave your heart and brain and come out of your mouth. If you have a corrupt feeling in your heart and corrupt thought in your head, ask God to change your heart and your mind and give you thoughts that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely and of good report.

What is the outcome of doing this? It will "impart grace to the hearers." The Greek is *ina do charin tois akouousin*. It translates "in order that it may give grace to the ones hearing." That is our goal - that people who hear us speak will have God's Grace imparted to them. If we speak just to hear ourselves talk, what good is that? If we speak to puff ourselves up, what good is that to those who hear us? We have only so many days on this planet to speak to people. What's it going to be? Words that impart grace? Or words that corrupt? Words that build up? Or words that tear down? It is our decision to make. I pray we

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make the choice God wants us to make - the one that will build up the Body of Christ and bring glory to our Lord and Savior Who gave His Life for us.

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## The Spirit in Our Walk

Who is closer to us than a brother? Who walks with us everywhere we go, every minute of every day? Who lives inside us to love us and guide us in our earthly journey? Who helps us walk like a brother? That's right - the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised His disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit to them when He returned to His Throne in Heaven.

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. 'I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.'" John 16:7-13

Notice that Jesus said, "It is to your advantage that I go away." I find that statement fascinating in the face of what the disciples would experience in the next 40+ days of their lives.

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The Lord would die on the Cross, rise from the grave, appear to His disciples multiple times, then physically ascend to Heaven as they watched. Jesus was their Lord, their Teacher, their Mentor. How could it possibly be to their advantage for Him to go away? Jesus answered their question before they asked it: "for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you." Do you see the beauty of God's Plan? God the Father sent God the Son Who sent God the Holy Spirit. The Godhead (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) determined before Creation the part each would play in our salvation and regeneration. The Father loved and gave - the Son loved and died - the Spirit loved and empowered.

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians is filled with the foundational doctrine of the Church and its application. Let's look quickly at the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Ephesians, then at the application. Paul begins his letter by writing, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." (Ephesians 1:3) God the Father has blessed everyone Christian with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Who imparts those spiritual blessings? Read on - "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." (Ephesians 1:13-14) We receive every

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spiritual blessing through the Holy Spirit. We were "sealed" with the Holy Spirit of promise. He is the "guarantee" of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. Ancient kings placed their royal seal on documents and envelopes that contained their commands and promises. That royal seal was proof to all who saw it that it carried the promise of the king. The seal would not be opened until the documents were handed to the person addressed on the envelope. The Holy Spirit is the Royal Seal on us and in us that proves we have the promises of King Jesus.

Jesus died for our sins - He bought us with His Blood - we are His purchased possession. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guarantee our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. Important question - what is the address that Jesus placed on us? Important answer - God the Father! Jesus did all that He did for His Father. Read John 17 in that light and you will see that we who are members of the Body of Christ are the Lord's love gift to His Father.

The Holy Spirit is also our "access" to God the Father - "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." (Ephesians 2:18) Jesus' death gives us the right to become children of the Father - the Holy Spirit gives us access to our Father. How amazing is our life as the redeemed of God! Not only do we access to God the Father through the Holy Spirit, but we are also a place for God to dwell (katoiketerion - permanent place to live), and He does that work through His

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Spirit.

"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." Ephesians 2:19-22

Notice how God built the Church. He began with His Son as the chief cornerstone, then added the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Next, God expressed His Grace to Jews and Gentiles and brought them together as one household. The Lord used all of these to build a new holy temple, in which He dwells through His Spirit. Do you see what God has done here? He took lost and pitiful sinners who had no hope and no permanent home and brought them together to become His dwelling place on earth. In the past, God took up temporary residence in an earthly tabernacle and temple built with hands. But now, God has taken up permanent residence in His people through the agency of His Spirit. That's you and me!

The next doctrine Paul taught the Ephesians was how the Holy Spirit revealed a mystery to the apostles and prophets (the foundation upon which the Church was built).

"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power." Ephesians 3:1-7

Paul was a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the Gentiles and said that God had made known to him the mystery - which he called "the dispensation of the grace of God." The Greek word for "mystery" is *mysterion* and means that which is made known to those initiated into the mysteries. How was Paul initiated into this mystery of God? By special revelation - "by revelation He made known to me the mystery." The word revelation (*apokalupsis*) means "an uncovering." God had kept something covered for thousands of years that He uncovered and specifically gave to Paul so he could reveal it to the Gentile world. What was that mystery? The Dispensation of the Grace of God. The word dispensation (*oikonomia*) means the

management of a household. God has had many households of faith through time and is managing the current household (dispensation) through His Grace. That's why Paul called it the "dispensation of the grace of God." The way God was going to manage a new household of faith that included primarily Gentiles with a smaller number of Jews was a mystery, but the Holy Spirit revealed it to Paul, and Paul revealed it to the Ephesians and other believers of his time.

Paul was tremendously committed to God's calling for him to preach the riches of Christ and make everyone understand this mystery of God. Paul also pointed the Ephesians to a higher reason for this new way for God to work with Gentiles. The Lord was using them to demonstrate His wisdom to the principalities and powers in heavenly places! The Lord is doing the same with us today.

"To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in

Him. Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory." Ephesians 3:8-13

The first three chapters of Ephesians are doctrinal in nature. Paul is laying the framework of the Dispensation of the Grace of God to help the Ephesian believers understand why they should live the way God was telling them to live. But before Paul revealed how the Ephesians should live their lives, he first bowed his knees to God and prayed for them.

"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." Ephesians 3:14-21

This is one of the most extraordinary prayers in the Bible and holds great insight to how we can walk with great power and

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success in our lives and ministries toward others.

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## The Worth of Our Walk

The Apostle Paul laid the framework of the Dispensation of the Grace of God in the first three chapters of his letter to the Ephesians to help believers understand why they should live the way God was telling them to live. Before Paul revealed how the Ephesians should live their lives, he first bowed his knees to God and prayed for them.

"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." Ephesians 3:14-21

This is truly an amazing prayer and teaches us more about the

Holy Spirit's work in our life here on earth. Paul's first acknowledged his devotion to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, then asked that God would grant the Ephesian Christians, according to the riches of His glory, "to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man." The Greek is *dunamei krataiothenai dia tou pneumatos autou eis ton eso anthropon*. *Dunamei* means "achieving power, inherent ability to perform anything." *Krataiothenai* means "to make strong, to establish," and is in the passive voice in this passage. That means the strengthening and establishing of the Christian in the sphere of able power to accomplish what God commands is done "through His Spirit in the inner man." *Dia tou pneumatos* means that the Holy Spirit of God is the One Who establishes and empowers Christians. We all know that, but do we all "know" that? Do we understand, acknowledge, and appropriate the truth every moment of our life that God's Spirit gives us the strength to do God's Will? We need to remember that because the life God has called us to live and the work He has called us to do is supernatural. It is far beyond human natural ability to accomplish even the simplest of supernatural tasks. Where does all this strengthening happen? In the "inner man." *eiston eso anthropon* speaks to that part of a human being that is inside - the inner man, the inside man." *Eso* (inner) is an adverb that implies motion. Something is moving in the inside man. What is it? The Holy Spirit of God! God's Spirit is alive and moving within the believer to establish and strengthen them with the power to accomplish God's Will.

Paul wrote the Ephesians to understand who they were as God's chosen children - "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved." (Ephesians 1:4-6) This is God's will for every Christian's life and He accomplishes His will through His Spirit Who lives within us, strengthening and establishing us with supernatural power. We are sealed for the Day of Redemption by the Spirit of God. We have access to the Father through the Spirit of God. We are being built together with other Christians for a dwelling place for God by His Spirit. The mystery of God's will in this Dispensation of His Grace has been revealed to the human race by the Holy Spirit. And we are strengthened with power in the inner man by God's Spirit.

What was the first thing Paul called on the Ephesians to do immediately following the "Amen" of his prayer? To walk worthy of God's calling.

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as

you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Ephesians 4:1-6

God has called every Christian to do this - not just the Ephesian believers 1,950 years ago. He wants us to live supernaturally - "with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Everything God commands us to do here is supernatural. The natural man - the external man, the old man - does not do these things. Everything God's Spirit inspired Paul to write to the Ephesians is about unity. That's what Jesus accomplished for us in His death on the Cross.

"For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity." Ephesians 2:14-16

The Spirit of God is in each of us to make us one with each other and make peace. That peace comes "through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity." It is absurd for Christians to oppose each other - since God made us one. One of the most

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mentioned reasons by the unsaved as to why they don't want to become Christians is because of the hypocrisy of believers in saying Christianity is about love when they are fighting and bickering with other believers about unimportant things. Even unsaved people can see that. Why can't we? Christians must endeavor (spoudaizontes - to make haste, to be zealous, to be eager, to be diligent) to keep (terein - to watch over, guard, preserve) the unity (henoteta - one, oneness) of the Spirit in the bond of peace (sundesmo tes eirenes - that which joins and finds together that which is in harmony). That is our high calling from God - to be eager to guard and preserve the oneness of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Do you see how important the Holy Spirit is to Christians? We cannot function supernaturally without Him. We are fully dependent on God's Spirit to accomplish God's Work.

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## The Supernatural in Our Walk

"Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another. 'Be angry, and do not sin': do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Ephesians 4:25-30

The next step in walking like a brother is to "not grieve the Holy Spirit of God." Can you imagine a Christian doing that? Grieving God's Spirit? The Greek word for "grieve" is *lupeite*. It means "to cause pain, afflict with sorrow, to distress." How could we tiny human beings cause pain to God's Spirit? How could we possibly distress Him and afflict Him with sorrow? Paul answers the question with the rest of his statement: "by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

Remember what Paul taught the Ephesians at the beginning of his letter to them? "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also,

having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." (Ephesians 1:13-14) The Holy Spirit is God's seal on our life guaranteeing our inheritance until the Day He delivers us to God the Father and God the Son as Their purchased possession. God bought us with a tremendous price, the Blood Sacrifice of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit of God is our Seal and Promise that He will deliver us safe and sound to the Father and to the Son.

Where does the Holy Spirit live on earth? "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19) That's right - He lives in us! The relationship a Christian has with God is the most intimate of all the relationships we will ever have in this life. God's Spirit lives in us. Think about what the Spirit of God has done for us: He convicted us of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). The Spirit gave us the faith to believe in Christ for salvation, and when we believed God poured out on us abundantly the Holy Spirit Who washed and renewed us. (Titus 3:4-7) That washing and renewing included the Holy Spirit placing us into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13) and pouring out the love of God in our hearts (Romans 5:5). Paul went so far in his letter to the Romans to say that the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the

Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). And what about getting to Heaven one day? The Holy Spirit is in us and will deliver us to the Father and the Son on the day appointed for us to leave our temporary home on earth and arrive at our permanent home in Heaven.

The Holy Spirit has literally done every spiritual thing for us. That's what Paul meant at the beginning of his letter to the Ephesians - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." We have every spiritual blessing in Christ given to us by the Holy Spirit of God. So, why would we want to grieve Him?

People have been grieving God for thousands of years. "And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart." (Genesis 6:6) The Hebrew word for "grieved" used here is *atsabh* and means "to suffer pain, to be distressed, to be vexed." God felt so deeply about the sins of the human race that He considered destroying every one of them - "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." (Genesis 6:8) Fortunately for all of us, God responded with Grace instead of Judgment that day. How has the human race thanked God for saving them from destruction? By continuing the same behavior that grieved God in the first place - "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5) Even though God destroyed

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everyone on earth except for Noah's family, it wasn't long before the people born after the Flood thought only of themselves and wickedness was great in the earth again. God chose Abram to become the father of His chosen people, but it's easy to lose count how many times Israel turned their back on God and grieved Him. After Israel rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah, God showered His Grace on the Gentile world. How did Christians repay God for His great kindness toward them? Many grieved His Holy Spirit.

I find it interesting and insightful that Paul mentions grieving the Holy Spirit in the middle of his telling the Ephesian believers how to walk like a brother. It's a reminder to us that walking like a brother to other believers is fully spiritual. God's call to us is supernatural - not natural. It's so easy to be caught up in the natural aspect of life and miss the supernatural. Look around you. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you touch? The natural world. But we are also surrounded by the spiritual, the supernatural. God has pulled back the spiritual curtain between the natural and supernatural worlds hundreds of times in the history of His people to show them the great and mighty battle that is going on around them. God often showed natural men the supernatural world to comfort or embolden them, but He also showed the supernatural as a warning.

I believe Paul's words are a warning to Christians. We cannot walk like a brother if we are grieving the Holy Spirit of God.

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The two do not work together. In fact, the more we are pleasing the Holy Spirit, the more we will walk like a brother with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

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## The Unity of Our Walk

"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice." Ephesians 4:31

The next step in walking like a brother deals with the bad things family members can do to each other: bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking. One of the biggest shocks to young Christians is how mean Christians can be to each other. The words of Jesus and His Apostles in the New Testament hold out both the ideal and the real. The ideal shows Christians loving each other, serving each other, and honoring and preferring others before themselves. That's the ideal. The real is that Christians are forgiven sinners. God forgave us, but we still sin against Him and against each other.

At the beginning of this section in Ephesians, Paul wrote something insightful and powerful about the Christian life: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:1-3) Paul knew from the Holy Spirit and his own experience with Christian churches that walking like a brother would not be easy. Jesus came to save sinners, so that means everyone who attends church is a sinner. Some are lost

sinners and some are saved sinners, but we're all sinners. Our human nature is to sin, so we sin. God knows that, so He inspired Paul to write that Christians need to work hard to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. That's because of our sin nature. If we didn't sin, there would be no need to work hard to keep unity among believers. We'd do it naturally - if our nature were not to sin. However, because we are sinners we will do things that require hard work to keep unity among us. We do that through all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love.

Lowliness is the Greek word *tapeinophrosune* and means "lowliness of mind, humbleness." Unity in churches - which is of paramount interest to God - begins with humility. Next comes gentleness - *prautetos* means "meekness," but not in the sense we understand it today. Modern English looks at meek people as weak, but not so in the ancient Greek. Meekness in the Bible demonstrates great strength that comes from an understanding and acceptance of the decisions of a higher power. It is the quiet attitude of a heart and mind at rest in the choices of God. It is an attitude ready to do whatever God commands. It is a balanced lifestyle that demonstrates itself in great strength and resolve to do what is right.

Longsuffering is *makrothumis* and means "forbearance, patience, long temper." We may be hard pressed at times to suffer long with other Christians, but it's important to remember that God suffered long with us first. What if God

was impatient and had a short temper with us? I doubt any of us would be saved if that were the case. Fortunately for us and every other believer, God is patient and longsuffering. That's how He wants us to be with other believers: patient and longsuffering. Bearing with is *anechomenoi* and means "forbear, hold up, endure." God does that for us and expects us to do the same for other believers. There will be many times in a Christian's life that he or she will need to "endure" with other believers.

Endeavoring is *spoudazontes* and means "to make haste, to be zealous, be diligent." God wants us to be quick and diligent to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." That is the ideal of the relationship Christians should have with each other, but it takes hard work to get it and keep it. To keep is *terein* and means "to preserve, watch over." That ideal for Christian fellowship - unity in the Spirit - is worth preserving and watching over. If we don't have it in our church, we need to humble ourselves and do everything we can to bring it about. If we have it, we need to humble ourselves and do everything we can to preserve it.

That is the background of Paul's direction about step 6 in walking like a brother: "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice." None of these actions - bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, evil speaking, malice - are part of a humble lifestyle. If we are lowly, gentle, longsuffering, patient, bearing with one another, endeavoring to

keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, we will find that bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking with all malice will find no place in our hearts and minds. The two types of attitude - humble and proud - cannot exist together. They will war with each other. That's why Paul writes that they must "be put away from you." Let's take a quick look at the attitudes involved, then the action necessary to cleanse our hearts of the wrong attitude.

All bitterness is *pasa pikria* and is used without the article in the Greek. That means the definition is "every kind or variety of bitter fruit." The word *pikria* was used in ancient times of the fruit of a wild vine or bitter gourd that was so bitter as to be a kind of poison. Have you ever thought how bitterness between brothers is like a poison? If left unchecked, bitterness can destroy friendships and fellowships.

Wrath is *thumos* and means "indignation, wrath as the outburst of a vengeful mind, intense anger with passionate outbursts, rage, angry heat." *Thumos* is a quick emotional temper that usually settles soon after the outburst.

Anger is *orge* and means "violent emotion intent on getting revenge." *Orge* is an anger that takes longer to build than *thumos*, but lasts much longer.

Clamor is *krauge* and means "to cry an outcry, shout, uproar, brawl, contention" and signifies the tumult of controversy.

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Evil speaking is blasphemia and means "slander, defamation of character, speech that causes injury to another person's good name, abusive language, railing speech, wounding someone's reputation by evil reports."

Malice is kakia and means "badness in quality, bad character, malignant, vicious character, ill-will, desire to cause injury to another, wickedness as an evil habit of the mind, depravity, desire to cause trouble and affliction to another."

Unfortunately, we can all probably put names to Christians we've known who exhibit one or more of these attitudes. I wish that were not true. My great desire for the Body of Christ is for unity because as we are one in spirit and purpose, we are able to bring the greatest glory to God. I'm reminded of our Lord's prayer just before His arrest:

"Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are ... I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." John 17:11b, 20-23

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The unity of His Body was paramount on the mind of Christ as He went to the Cross to die for our sins. However ... the history of the Church for the last 2,000 years demonstrates how little God's people care about what He wants. That needs to change, but how? "Let all ... be put away from you." Apotithemi means "put away, lay aside, cast aside." It is in the Middle Voice in the Greek. That means the subject of the verb initiates the action and participates in the results of the action. It's something Christians have to choose to do. It is the supernatural outcome of their putting off the old man and putting on the new man. Believers have to choose to put away all wicked behavior from themselves. If they do not make that choice - if they choose to act like they did before they were saved - they and those around them will suffer the consequences of their bad character and behavior. This is serious business. So much is at stake.

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## Forgiveness in Our Walk

Ephesians 4 is a great and powerful mirror that God places before His children. As we look at the mirror, we see ourselves and our great need for real and serious change. Millions of people may be "playing church" in our country, but God isn't playing. He's more serious about this than many of us imagine. This is how God wants us to treat each other in the Body of Christ:

"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." Ephesians 4:32

The Apostle Paul began Chapter 4 of Ephesians by telling us "that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk." That's the theme of this section of what is one of Paul's most comprehensive and powerful letters to the Church of the 1st Century. Becoming a Christian means we no longer look like or act like unsaved people in the world. There is a big difference between "saved" and "unsaved" in God's Economy. We should act "holy" because we are "holy," however, if at any time we think we have reached perfection in our Christian walk and no have no room for improvement we can look into God's mirror and see what He sees. That's one of the spiritual benefits of Ephesians 4. There's no getting around God's

Word. He says what He says and it's the truth - "But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus."

God does not ask us to do something without giving us the tools necessary to accomplish His commands. Take not walking as the rest of the Gentiles walk, for instance. We have everything we need to make all the changes necessary to do this. We have the Amazing Love of God the Father, the Blood Sacrifice of God the Son, and the Supernatural Power of the Holy Spirit living within us. We have the Writings of the apostles, the foresight and insight of prophets, the heart of evangelists, and the love and care of pastors and teachers to prepare us for works of service. The result of all that God has done for us should be "for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God." The goal? Unity. What brings unity into a family? Look at verse 32 again - being kind to one another, being tenderhearted toward each other, and forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Kind --- chrestoi means "good, good-natured, gentle, pleasant, gracious, mild, useful toward others."

Tenderhearted --- eusplanchnos means "compassionate, of good heartedness, pitiful, merciful."

Forgiving --- charizomenoi means "to bestow favor unconditionally, to give willingly and graciously, to pardon, to

graciously remit a penalty."

We come now to the 7th step in walking like a brother. KTV - Kind, Tenderhearted, Forgiving. Think about that for a minute. What would the Church in America look like if we all treated others like that? Picture the members of your church and other Christians in the community. Now picture them as good-natured, gentle, pleasant, gracious, mild, useful toward others, compassionate, merciful, giving to others willingly and graciously, bestowing favor unconditionally, pardoning, and graciously remitting penalties. What do you think would happen in just one week if every Christian in America acted like that? for just one week? Can you see it? Can you see the love as it permeates every family, every church, every community, every state in our nation? How would you feel if every Christian you met was kind to you? Tenderhearted toward you? Forgiving you for the wrongs you committed against them? How would other believers feel if you were kind to them? Tenderhearted toward them? Forgave them for the wrongs they committed against you? That's what our God wants from us. What will we do?

You're probably thinking there's no way it can happen. The Church is too far gone. There's no way all these Christians will ever get along. Really? Never? What do you think will happen the first minute we all get to Heaven? Do you think we'll hold grudges against each other walking the Streets of Gold? Do you think we'll enjoy seeing each other hurting and in pain next to the Pearly Gates? When we get to Heaven God will make

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everything right. He will literally change our hearts and minds. Take a good look at any Christian - even the ones you don't want to look at - and think what you will feel about them when you're both in Heaven. I've done that and it puts a smile on my face. No matter what anyone has done to you, when you are with them in Heaven you will have new thoughts and feelings for everyone there. You will be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving - "even as God in Christ forgave you."

I don't know how to say this any more plainly - we need to get over ourselves and do what God tells us to do here on earth. We are such a selfish bunch of children. We think everything's about us. "They said bad things about me." "They hurt my feelings." "I'll show them they can't treat me that way!" What in the world are we doing? Who do we think we are? Can't we see what God has done for us? HE FORGAVE US! God forgave us in Christ. Jesus had to suffer and die because of us. Not because of somebody else. He died because of us and our sin. We need to feel that deep in our bones. We need to get that fact through our heads - God forgave us in Christ - and our Savior wants us to forgive others in the same way. Is that asking so much? Is that so hard? Is that unfair of God to ask us to forgive others? I don't think so.

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## Purpose in Our Walk

The Apostle Paul was coming to the last years of a fruitful, but difficult ministry. He was in prison - again - for faithfully preaching the Gospel of the Grace of God. This time Paul found himself in the granddaddy of all prisons - in the city of Rome. The year was about A.D. 60. The journey had started a few years earlier and had been a difficult one. Jews from Jerusalem saw Paul as a turncoat and a great threat to their religion and way of life. They wanted Paul dead and some even took an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed him. Paul spent a lot of time in prisons between Jerusalem and Rome. He had faithfully testified about Christ to everyone who would listen to him - from angry mobs to soldiers to governors and a king. And now he was on his way to appeal his case to the emperor. Paul had been shipwrecked and bitten by a deadly snake, but nothing kept him from getting to Rome.

Paul didn't know when his last day on earth would be, but God knew. The Holy Spirit placed on Paul's mind and heart a powerful message that he wrote in letters to Christians he knew personally, and some he had never met. Three of those letters later became part of the Holy Scripture we love to this day: Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. The message God gave to Paul to share with the Church of that day is one we need to

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hear loud and clear today: Your life has been changed, so change your life!

Each of Paul's three prison letters from Rome are specific to the needs of those churches, yet there is a common thread you can hear throughout.

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Ephesians 4:1-3

"Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern." Philippians 3:15-17

"But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful." Colossians 3:14-15

As complex as Paul's letters can be, the message is clear about the importance of God's people being filled with love. It is a "bond" of perfection. We were called to be "one body" - not

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two bodies, not ten bodies, not a thousand bodies, not thirty thousand bodies - one Body of believers. We lost sight of that "oneness" a long time ago and as hard as it is for me to admit it, we will likely not experience the fulness of that oneness until we are all together with Christ in Heaven. God has the power to take all of the divisions that exist among Christians today, and make us one.

The way Christians treat each other is central to the theme of the Gospel of the Grace of God. The Gospel message we preach today is based on that oneness, but we don't actually have it. When I was an atheist, pointing my angry finger at the people of God, I used the many divisions in the Church as one of my major "proofs" that there was no God. I pointed another finger at the hypocrisy I saw in the church. Atheists often look to Christians to give them the best ammunition against Christianity. They see us as hypocrites, divisive, unloving, and no better than anyone else - certainly not proof that there is a living God in Heaven above. I had seen first-hand what divisions in churches can do to people and wanted no part of it, but God saw it differently. He saved me and made me a part of His Church. God also gave me a special love for His people and called me to teach them as He taught me.

What have I learned after 40 years as a Christian? "But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful." May

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this be our high calling - our ultimate goal - in 2012. Let's do everything we can do make a difference in the life of the Church by walking like a brother.

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