

Ephesians 4:1-6 — How to Bring Glory to God

March 9, 2014

Good morning CrossWinds. We are in a series called, “Who Am I?” It is a study of the book of Ephesians. We just passed the halfway point in the book. In Ephesians, there is a hinge between the first and the second half of the book. The first half of the book is what we need to know about God, what he has done for us through Jesus and his amazing plans for us through Jesus. The second half of the book is how we live in response to what God has done for us. The first half is doctrine; the second half is duty. The first half is what we need to know. The second half is what we need to do.

In Ephesians 1:14 we learned that God planned a people for himself. We also learned that before time began, in his mind, he put us and his own son together. God’s plans were to redeem us for himself and to make us the most blessed beings in the universe. Being the most blessed beings in the universe through Jesus will not be boring, but like a mushroom cloud, God’s blessing will continually expand and get better forever and ever upon his people.

We also learned that as God’s people, in this life and for all of eternity, we don’t just sit around on an eternal coffee break. Ephesians 2:10 tells us God has good works which he planned in advance for us to do. God didn’t save us to sit. He saved us for good works.

We also learned that God didn’t just save us from our sin and bring us back to himself but God saved us from all the brokenness we have between one another. In the church, we see community and the effects of sin upon

relationships reversed. Racism, hatred, deceit, jealousy — all of it was destroyed by Jesus when he broke the curse of sin. In the church, people that would never be able to work together or hang together are re-created into family. People of different races and ages and backgrounds all love each other because the Jesus that joins us is bigger than any of the differences that divide us. Through Jesus, our differences become a source of delight rather than division.

Paul's big prayer for the Ephesians, and it is the prayer we should also pray for ourselves, was that God would enlarge the capacity of their hearts to enable us to understand the height, width, depth and scope of God's love for us through Jesus. The more we comprehend it, the more everything in our lives changes.

This morning, as we turn the corner in the book, Paul moves from, "Who am I?" to "How should I live?" How can I thank God for what he has done for me with my life? We don't live the Christian life so God will save us. We live the Christian life out of gratitude to God for having saved us. It is a response. It is an act of worship by which we bring glory to God. The cycle works this way. We receive God's grace through Jesus, which we don't deserve. We then respond by living a life that reflects the gratitude of our hearts for what God has done. In living a life of gratitude, God gets glory.

GRACE ➡ GRATITUDE ➡ GLORY

How do I live a life that brings glory to God?

I bring glory to God by living out my calling.

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called... Ephesians 4:1 (ESV)

As Christians, we are carrying the family name. Our lives should reflect the family name of Christ. My last name is Trucksess. With my last name comes a legacy from my father. My father is an amazing man. He is very intelligent and an extremely hard worker. He is not easily defeated. He perseveres no matter what the obstacles. He is faithful to my mother no matter what the ups and downs of the marriage. He has his flaws, but he set a high bar for me to follow. If my father won't give up, I won't give up because I am carrying his name. I am a Trucksess, and I want to carry the name well. I want to carry the name with honor so when people hear the Trucksess family name good thoughts come to mind.

I tell the same thing to my sons. They have their bad days. They come home and they have experienced times when they wanted to quit a sport or give up on a commitment. I tell them they can't. That isn't what the Trucksess family does. We persevere. We don't quit. We keep going when everyone else is gone. We finish our obligations in sports, in school and in life. I tell them we want positive things to come to people's minds when the Trucksess name is spoken.

One of the kids at church asked to borrow a pair of wrestling shoes my sons outgrew. I was happy to loan them out, but I did it under one condition. He couldn't quit the sport. These shoes bear the family name. We are not quitters.

If you borrow my shoes, you are stuck in the sport all season. So far, he is good to his word.

Remember the Christian life is a response. It is the way we express gratitude to God for what he has done for us through Christ. We experience God's grace and in response to his grace we live a life of gratitude to God that carries the family name of Christian well. When we do that, God gets glory through our lives. God's name is made famous in the universe through us.

When our behavior doesn't correspond to our new identities through Jesus, what should we do? Many of us think the answer is to try harder. Buckle down and get our acts together. The problem is that we keep failing when we try to change our behavior that way. What should we do? The way we change our behavior is by theology. It is sinking the teeth of our minds into God's love for you through Jesus. When our conduct is out of balance, it is because the eyes of our hearts have drifted from what God has done for us in Christ. We have lost comprehension of how much Jesus loves us and all he has done for us. The way we live our lives is just an indication of how much our hearts comprehend how much God loves us through Jesus.

This is what cracks me up when people say that preaching is passé. This is why people are nuts when they think theology has nothing to do with life. In reality, that is backward. Theology has everything to do with life. The only way to have a change in your life is through theology. It is through learning how much God loves you and God's plans for you. It is coming to love and adore Christ more. Your life changes in response to Jesus.

That means if you want to change, listen to preaching. Read your Bible. Get involved in a Life Group. Let yourself enjoy being with God. That is where change comes from. This is why the first three chapters of Ephesians are theology about God's love for us through Jesus. If you don't start with that, your life will never change. Unless theology changes our heart and we understand how much God loves us, all we do is wear moral makeup. We try to look better on the outside while being warped on the inside.

I bring glory to God with my character.

...with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love... Ephesians 4:2 (ESV)

Today, character is not important. What is important is productivity. People don't care how you get the job done, just that you get the job done and are reliable in finishing it. That is not the way the Christian life works. God doesn't just care what you do but he cares how you do it. The way we express our gratitude to God for what he has done and bring glory to God's name is through our character. Paul described what God-honoring character looks like. The first element of character we want to cultivate is humility.

Humility

In the ancient world, humility was despised. It was thought to be the character of a slave. Nobody wanted to be humble. Pride, self-assurance and domination were all extolled virtues. The world hasn't changed much. Today, we value pride over humility. We call it self-esteem, self-help and self-actualization. Take pride in yourself. It's all about me. Life is about achieving my potential for my glory. It is all about me. That is pride.

Pride is the greatest sin in the Bible. It is the sin Satan committed.

Augustine, the early church father, called pride the root of all other sins. Pride is addiction to self. It is loving ourselves more than God or our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are not to be people filled with ourselves, our desires, our dreams, our wants, our demands. We want to carry out God's desires and give of ourselves for others. That is humility. It is putting God's desires above our desires. It is putting the needs of our neighbors above our own needs.

I saw a great example of this with Bill Cochran-Bray. As you know, Pressley, his daughter, has liver cancer. The chemo was successful but she still needs a transplant. Her chances of getting a donor liver are slim. As her father, he offered to give her part of his liver. Giving away part of your liver is a life-threatening surgery. Unfortunately, Bill's liver was not in a condition to make the operation possible. Now they are testing Coral, her mother. Both Bill and Coral are saying their daughter's life is more important than their own lives. That is humility instead of pride.

When we think of a humble person, we think of a weak person. According to the Bible, the exact opposite is true. A weak person is self-absorbed and self-consumed. A humble person is the strong person. It takes a very strong person to give himself or herself away and to consider others more highly than himself or herself.

Pride is the source of so many relational breakdowns. I see this all the time in relationships gone sour, when couples treat one another like trash. They don't show kindness. They don't go out of their ways to make things right. They

don't forgive. They say they won't forget. What is the problem? Is it that some irreparable wound has been inflicted? That usually isn't the case. Usually it is all about pride. It is selfishness and arrogance. Don't tell me the problem is that you are emotionally struggling or you have been hurt or wounded so you can't forgive. That is a cop-out. It is your pride and arrogance that keeps you from humbling yourself and forgiving and treating one another with respect. It doesn't matter if they hurt you. You treat them with kindness making Christ's name famous through your life.

The perfect picture of humility in action is Jesus. We see this in Philippians 2.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. Philippians 2:3–7 (ESV)

God humbled himself to become a man on earth. He humbled himself to be born in a stable, to live a hard life, to be mocked, to have his beard pulled out and to be scourged and beaten until he didn't even look human. He was crucified on a cross. Jesus, in his pre-incarnate form, before he fused himself with a human body in Bethlehem, is the part of the Godhead that created the entire universe. As Jesus was beaten and mocked, he didn't insist on his rights and zap people with lightning. He didn't get even. He didn't get angry because he was disrespected and hated and mocked. He said, "Father, forgive them." That is unparalleled humility in place of pride. That is what it look like to carry the

family name of Christian. That is the way we are to treat one another, especially those we find hard to love, just like Jesus treated those who crucified him.

Because of Christ's humility, look how God the Father treated him.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9–11 (ESV)

God the Father exalted him. God the Father applauded him for his greatness. Greatness in God's eyes is not found in pride and insisting on our rights but in humility and giving up our rights for others, just like Jesus did for us. Do you want to be great in God's eyes? Be humble when it hurts, just like Jesus. Humility is how we express our gratitude to God for saving us and when we live in humility towards others, especially those who have hurt us, we bring glory to God's name. His name is made famous through our lives.

Gentleness

Did you ever wonder why Jesus did not sin and get angry when his rights were violated? Why did Jesus not call down legions of angels to zap those who were striking him in the face? Not only was Jesus humble but he was gentle.

Most of us do not think of ourselves as proud. Pride is always somebody else's problem. How do you know if you struggle with pride? Ask yourself how gentle you are with people. If you are prone to get angry with people, that anger comes from your pride. Proud people are easily offended. Proud people are quick with their tongues and sharp with their attitudes. Proud people are the ones who lash out and strike back. Humble people don't do that. Humble people concern themselves with serving others before themselves. If you struggle with

gentleness, the reason you struggle with gentleness is because you struggle with pride. If you are the person who yells and screams and throws a fit, your problem is that you worship yourself and in those moments you have lost sight of everyone else on the planet and all that matters is your pride, which was offended.

Living with humility and gentleness in our relationships shows our gratitude to God. It carries the family name well and brings glory to God.

Patience

This is probably one of the hardest for us. We can get in a car and drive across the country. We can download information on our smart phones from the other side of the planet while in a coffee shop. We have instant access to the world in our pockets.

I struggle with patience. I take my family out for pizza and I eat my pizza like it is a race to the finish. After I am done, I am wondering why everyone else is still eating. What really annoys me is when people in my family stop eating and start talking during the meal. One or two sentences I can tolerate but a whole paragraph of words drives me nuts. My mind is already on the next thing. Stop talking, start eating and let's get out of here. This is a complete meltdown for me because I am not patient by nature.

One of the worst for me is getting behind a driver of a slow car. When you go to make a quick errand during the day, that is when all the drivers who shouldn't be on the road because they can't see the road come out to play. They

get in front of you, and I am convinced they drive in first gear. I have absolutely no patience for those drivers.

I know that I am not the only one who struggles with patience. Most of us are that way. Why are we this way? It all goes back to the issue of pride. I am very important. My agenda is important. My to-do list is more important than your to-do list. I have things to do and you are slowing me down. Where do we find patience? Look at God. God is patient. He is patient with us.

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 2 Peter 3:9 (ESV)

God is patient with us and thank goodness he is patient with me. If I was God, I would have given up on being patient with me a long time ago. Thank goodness he hasn't given up. It is as we learn to thank God for being patient with us that we learn to be patient with others.

In the church, it is relatively easy to learn the information we need to know. The basics of the Bible are clear. We can study the Bible and learn that stuff. Learning information isn't the hard part of the Christian life. You can learn dates and facts and look like a Sunday school genius. The problem with the Christian life is working with people. They don't microwave well. Working with people takes time.

I find myself constantly falling short in this area with my kids. I thought I taught them. I thought I had the perfect kid programmed, but they go off in another direction. You go back to square one and start again and reteach. I find myself getting angry. Why can't they remember? Why don't they listen?

I want to confess. The problem isn't with my kids. They are kids. The problem is with me. I am not patient. I am wanting every lesson to be one and done. Kids don't work that way. You need patience with them. Where do we find that patience? By looking at how patient God has been with us.

Bearing with one another in love

Patience leads to bearing with one another in love. This literally means to put up with people because you love them. This is what it means to be the church. We put up with one another. In the church, when we have annoying people that bug the tar out of us, we put up with them. Sometimes we can't fix them or change them. We love them. This is the way we bring glory to God in our lives. In the church, we put up with people that annoy us. That doesn't mean we don't encourage them and challenge them to improve. We do. We don't give up on them and we don't shut down our love for them. We put up with them in love.

This is also the way a marriage works. I love watching starry-eyed couples when they get married. In premarital counseling I warn them that the person they are marrying is statistically the person most likely to murder them. Why is that? People start to annoy one another. People get irritating. People decide not to put up with one another out of love.

In my marriage, I got the better half of the deal. I have to put up with a wonderful wife that is like Ivory soap. She is 99.99 percent pure and perfect. She has her moments, but they are few. She has the rough end of the deal. To begin with, she is aging much more gracefully than I am. In addition, she

reminds me almost every morning that I get her up in the middle of the night with my snoring. When my snoring first started, she was a little annoyed and would kick me in the side. Now she gently rolls me over. What I am amazed with is that I don't find her on the couch every morning. She bears with me in love. She puts up with me. Why does she put up with my nocturnal Jabba the Hut imitation? The reason she puts up with me is Jesus. She looks at Jesus and how patient he is with her and from that she finds the ability to be patient with me and to love me, because God has been patient with her.

Many of you struggle with patience and putting up with others. What should you do? The answer is not to try harder. The answer is to spend more time with Jesus. Really come to understand how much God loves you and how patient he is with you. As we understand that, it will flow over into our relationships with others. We will be humble like Jesus. We will be gentle, like Jesus. We will be patient, like Jesus. We will put up with one another, like Jesus puts up with us. Living with patience is how we express our gratitude to God for Jesus and how we bring glory to God through our lives.

I bring glory to God by living in community.

...eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. Ephesians 4:3–6 (ESV)

Paul was making the point that none of us live independently. We live interdependently. We live transformed lives, and our connection to Jesus shows up in the way we treat one another. One of the things that is misleading is you hear of people talking about a personal relationship with Jesus. That is true. The

problem is that we are not just saved for a personal relationship with Jesus. *We are saved to live in a corporate community called the church.* Autonomy and individualism are a result of sin. Sin separates people and makes them into individuals. Grace comes and takes away our sin and reconciles us to one another and forms us into a community called the church where we need each other and we are literally bound together like one great family.

What really annoys me are the people who play home church. Think about it. They don't want themselves or their children polluted by brothers and sisters in Christ so they worship alone because they are so much better than everybody else. They focus on their personal relationships with Christ, neglecting their corporate relationships with Christ in the church. It is a lie from the pit of hell to play that game. The reason God puts us in a church with other people is because we can't survive on our own. We will go off into heresy on our own. We are gifted to serve others and we need to be served by others in the church. Isolating ourselves from others is like trying to breath with a bag over your head. You spiritually kill yourself because you become too self-absorbed. Isolating yourself from others is pride, not humility, gentleness and patience. It is arrogance that says you are so much better than anyone else in the church that you can't be part of the church. One of the reasons God puts us in the church is to put us around annoying people. Annoying people surface our sin and our pride so we can work on it.

Don't try the crazy idea of saying you are so spiritual you need to do home church. Satan has tricked you. How many home churches of people sitting by

themselves in their living room do you find in the New Testament? You don't find them because that is not the way God designed us and saved us.

This is why Paul said we are to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. He says there is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father of all. The first thing we notice is that God is one. He isn't divided.

If you look closely, there is something interesting here. Paul said there is one Spirit, one Lord and one God and Father of all. He mentioned all three members of the Trinity. What this means is that while God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are different, they are not divided. There is one God that exists in three persons. All members of the Trinity share all their attributes together but they are not divided from one another. *God's desire is to create a people in the church that looks like himself— different but not divided.*

In the church, when we love each other, get to know each other and operate as a church family together, we are living out trinitarian theology by loving each other, by putting up with each other, and it is when we do this that all people will know we are Christ's disciples, because we love each other. In loving each other in the church, even when we don't naturally get along, we are demonstrating that God has done something in our hearts that is bigger than our differences.

Notice that he does not say unity is something we are to strive for. Unity is something we have as a gift from Jesus and it is something we are to strive to maintain. The hard part would be creating unity. Paul said it is already there.

Now don't try to destroy it. How do we destroy it? By making some things bigger than Jesus.

Some people think that the idea is all churches with their unique callings and personalities should go away and that different churches show a lack of unity among God's people. They think we should obliterate all our distinctives and have one big world counsel of churches. That is not what Paul was teaching us. It is OK to have different churches. As long as they agree on the basics of the Bible, you can agree to disagree on secondary things. This is why I love the EFCA. It is a denomination that majors on the majors but refuses to divide over the minors. Perfect unity is not the goal. The goal is to bring glory to God by living in a way that shows our gratitude to God by the way we treat others. The goal is displaying our God-honoring character in the midst of our diversities. That is the goal.

Our goal is not to tolerate sin and heresy and pretend we are unified. The goal is God's glory. This means we don't need to agree on everything in the church. We must agree on the gospel. We must agree on Jesus Christ. We must agree on our sinfulness and God's holiness, but we will allow room for differences without division. Just as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are all different but operate together like a well-oiled machine, that is what we strive for in the church, to the glory of God.

Conclusion

How do our lives bring glory to God? By comprehending God's grace, which moves us to live lives of gratitude which brings God glory, which is our act

of worship. This week, we are going for focus on our character: The humility of considering God and others more important than ourselves instead of pride; the gentleness of not getting irritated and raising our voices at other. Be patient with others like God is patient with us. Put up with others out of love like God puts up with us.

In the church, keep the unity that God has given us through Jesus and refuse to let things tear us apart.



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