



WEEK 3

EPHESIANS
DAILY
DEVOTIONAL

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Day 1 | Open Your Gifts

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“But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.”

Ephesians 4:7

How is the church expected to demonstrate the power of God and thus influence society? The apostle suggests clearly that the power of the church lies in all Christians discovering and intelligently exercising the spiritual gift that was given to them when they became a member of the body of Christ. That is largely a forsaken principle today, and that is why the church is so weak. If we ever recover the strength God intended the church to exert in human society, it will be by a return to that simple thing, the exercise of each person's spiritual gift.

After all, is that not the way a physical body functions? In the body of flesh and bones, there are a variety of cells. The body operates, not by the cells getting together and voting about what is the best thing to do, but by simply doing what they individually and particularly were designed to do. It is the function of the head to correlate this and bring it all together and make it operate effectively, but each cell gives itself to the task of functioning according to its design.

The body does not operate when the cells revolt. Did you ever experience a rebellion of the muscle cells of your stomach? We call it indigestion! It means that the body is sick, and it is not operating the way it was intended to. This is the whole problem with the church today. In so many places it has forgotten it is a body and has tried to operate as another human organization; therefore, it has no more power than any other human organization at work in the world. But Paul reminds us that the

secret of the operation of the church is that each Christian has a gift.

It is our responsibility to recognize and fulfill that gift. If you are a Christian, if you have new life by the Spirit of God by faith in Jesus Christ, you have a spiritual gift. The church begins to live and exercise its impact and influence upon society when you begin to exercise your gift.

Do you know what your gift is? Have you ever asked yourself this question: What is the gift God has given to me since I am a Christian? What does He want me to do as a general area of ministry? Do you know how to recognize a gift? Do you know how to develop it once you know what it is? The impact on the church in this area is directly related to how you answer those questions. Your own joy and fulfillment as a Christian depends on how you answer those questions.

Lord thank you for the spiritual gifts you have given me. Let me not only discover them but use them to edify your body and glorify your Son in the power of the Spirit.

Life Application

Many Christians today are still naive on how the Body of Christ really functions which results in unhealthy churches. Have we discovered and exercised our spiritual gifting?

Day 2 | What is your gift?

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It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...

Ephesians 4:11

The eyes of the heart is a strange expression, isn't it? Eyes are the instrument by which we perceive things. The mind also has eyes. If you listen to truth in any area, the eyes of your mind are grasping ideas. But the apostle tells us here that not only does the mind have eyes, but the heart as well. The heart needs to see things, needs to grasp truth and understand it. And the heart is always used in Scripture as the seat of our emotions.

Remember the episode in Luke 24—that walk to Emmaus when the risen Lord appears to the two disciples? The Lord joins them, but they don't know who He is. He walks along with them and unfolds to them all the Scriptures concerning the promised Messiah. Afterward, they said to one another, Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us? (v. 32).

That burning of the heart represents the heart's eyes being opened. It is the inflaming of the heart, so that it comes alive and is deeply moved. It is this burning of the heart that the apostle desires for these Christians. When the heart begins to burn with truth, when it takes root in you and you simply must respond to it, that is when you know with certainty that God is real.

There was a young man who became a Christian and married a girl who had grown up in the church. At first his Christian life was glorious to behold. He eagerly read the Scriptures. But after a

while it all began to ebb away. He lost his interest in the Scriptures, and quit coming to church. He was no longer interested in fellowship with other believers.

Naturally his wife became concerned. So she and a friend decided that they would pray together for her husband every day. She decided in her heart that she would not nag him, because she didn't want him to come unless his heart genuinely directed him to. She resolved simply to pray daily. For a month or more nothing happened. But she kept on praying.

Gradually her husband's attitude began to change a bit. One day she found him reading the Bible. She didn't say anything to him, but it was a note of encouragement. Then, one Sunday, he announced that he was going to church with her. Again she rejoiced inwardly. After a while, he said to her " You know, dear, I've really been way out of it! Somehow or other I lost all my interest in the Lord. But God has moved in and met me and brought me back."

What a wonderful testimony to the power of prayer to open eyes! It isn't enough simply to teach truth. You never affect the whole person until the eyes of the heart are enlightened. When truth is moved from the head down to the heart, it has gripped the emotions. Then the will is properly motivated. Then the person begins to grow tremendously.

Father, open the eyes of my heart. I see that for that to happen there must be the bending of the knee, the imploring of the Spirit in prayer, so that truth becomes vital and compelling.

Life Application

Faithful prayer shortens one of the longest distances known by humanity which is the distance between our head and our heart. Have we felt the power of His presence?

Day 4 | Slow growth



From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and guilds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Ephesians 4:16

Growth is God's method. That tells us two encouraging things about this matter of becoming mature, not merely mature as a religious person, but mature as a human being: First, maturation is something that does not take place suddenly. It is a process. I know many Christians who are greatly disturbed when, having become Christians, they do not find themselves suddenly, remarkably, completely transformed into angelic creatures. They are greatly disturbed when they find the old life still very much present. They wonder if they are even Christian at all. Of course, they are Christian if they have exercised faith in Christ and are resting upon Him, but there is a process of growth that must follow, and it takes time for this to occur. Remember how the writer of Hebrews says, 'In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again' (Hebrews 5:12). That is, they had been Christians long enough to be teachers, but something else had arrested their development. Yet he makes clear that there is need for time. Often this is the way the Christian life works. We come into it as newborn Christians, and for a long time we resist the great principles that make for Christian development. It takes a while for us to really learn that God intends to do something quite different with us than we thought He would when we grew up as natural men and women. We resist these changes. Finally, he brings us to the place where we give in and we accept and understand the principles, but then we learn it takes time to practice these principles even once we

grasp them. It is like trying to learn how to swim by taking a correspondence course in swimming. You cannot learn it that way. You must get into the water. You have to grow spiritually that way.

Then, as we go along, we discover that growth seems to be so slow. We think we have mastered something, and then, suddenly, something will happen—we will be put with the wrong person and out it all comes again. Then we are discouraged. We go to the Lord and say, 'Lord, what's the matter? Why don't you hurry up this process? I'm so tired of being immature.' But God has His own time, and sometimes it takes almost a lifetime to grow up fully. After all, it takes God years to grow an oak tree, but He can grow a squash in three months. God is not interested in growing Christian squashes.

Nevertheless, I love to see evidence of eagerness for growth. I remember asking a girl once how old she was. Quick as a flash she said, 'I'm twelve, going on thirteen, soon be fourteen.' I like that eagerness to grow up. But it is encouraging to us to realize this is a process of time, and we do not need to be discouraged if we do not find we are completely like Christ yet. What we need to ask is, are we moving in this direction?

Father, thank you for this reminder of my need to be patient in this process of growth. Help me to accept this fully and to trust that you will complete the good work that you began in me.

Life Application

Speaking the truth in love we grow in Christ, but growth is a process that takes time. Are we characterized by our eagerness or our impatience in learning to love others?

Day 4 | A radical change

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So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

Ephesians 4:17

In the opening verses of the fourth chapter of Ephesians, the apostle has been dealing with the nature of the church and the part each Christian has to play in its operation and growth. But now, with verse 17, he turns to the Christian in relationship to an unbelieving world. Though this account was written almost two thousand years ago, it is impossible to read this thoughtfully without seeing that the world today is exactly the same, and the Christian's reaction to it must be exactly the same.

He says, 'you [Christians] must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. Paul is saying, 'the place to start in living as a Christian is to recognize you must think differently than the world does.' He does not start with actions. He starts with the thought-life, with the mind, and he declares that the world's thinking is empty. This is the vital appeal that he makes to Christians, 'you must not think like the world does, you must not adopt the world's philosophy of living or follow the world's systems of value.' Why? Because the world, he says, 'lives in futility, emptiness of mind.'

The word futility means void of purpose or appropriateness, or pointless. If this is true, you can see why there is such a fundamental cleavage between Christianity and the world and why the Lord Jesus drew a distinct line of demarcation between the world and the Christian in the areas of thinking, direction, and destiny. This is why the Scriptures tell us that a Christian cannot love the world and the Father at the same time (1 John

2:15). There is a fundamental difference between the two. This is why friendship with the world, in the words of James, is enmity with God (James 4:4 RSV).

Fallen people pride themselves on their ability to reason. We consider this the highest function of humanity and take great pride in the human ability to ferret out knowledge and to put various items of knowledge together to produce practical gadgets. We point with pride to the technological perfection of our modern developments, to the skill with which science has harnessed the forces of nature and made them the servants of humanity. Humans exalt their reason, but in the eyes of God human reasoning is empty and vain.

But see how the apostle brings Christians face to face with the fundamental issue? Either God is right, or the world is right. It cannot be both. Christians must choose on which basis they are going to live their lives. Those who choose to follow Christ must be willing to change their thinking. When you become a Christian, this is the first issue you face. You must be willing to have your whole fundamental outlook on life drastically altered. Christianity is not merely a change in outward actions or a bit higher moral or ethical level. Christianity is a revolutionary change of government that results in a radical change in behaviour.

Lord, change my thinking, because growth and change begin there. Teach me to think not in accord with my own human instincts but with the truth as it is revealed in your Word.

Life Application

The world prides itself on its growing knowledge apart from God. Since human reasoning apart from God is empty and vain, do we need to change our outlook on life?

Day 5 | Put On and Put Off

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You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self...

Ephesians 4:22-24a

Putting off the old and putting on the new is the principle by which the possibilities that are in Christ can become evident in our experience. Notice there is a recognition of the pull of the old life on the Christian. The admonition of the apostle is to be constantly recognizing and rejecting these false, underlying assumptions that come from the old self, the old way of living. It is not merely deeds, you will notice, but outlooks and attitudes. This is what causes the problem, and this is what we must reject.

Put off means to divest yourself of something, to take it off. Paul is using the simplest of terms to illustrate what we must do in the realm of thought, of the attitudes of life. We must reject those basic assumptions that have caused our trouble—putting them off, rejecting them, divesting ourselves of them—just as you would put off your dirty clothes.

We must do this because the corruption of life comes from these wrong attitudes. Paul says the former manner of life is corrupt—decayed, dead, foul, selfish, unhappy, restless. These are the things that have made life unhappy or miserable. He points out we can recognize these attitudes by the way they operate. They are deceitful lusts. Unfortunately, this word lust is greatly misunderstood in our day. We invariably associate it with something sexual. But this word is much broader than that. It means any urge or basic drive. We will get closer to the essential

meaning of this word if we use the term urge. These deceitful urges are constantly coming to us as we react to various situations in which we find ourselves.

The first step in experiencing what God intends for us is to recognize that. Put off the old. That is the first step. The other is to recognize the wonderful possibilities of the new life. In that phrase, to be made new in the attitude of your minds, you have the fundamental difference between a Christian and a non-Christian. It is true that non-Christians sometimes realize that things are wrong in their lives, and so they change them. But they merely change to another expression of the same basic egocentricity. They change the outer form, but the problem remains basically the same.

But of all human beings, Christians alone have the possibility of doing something entirely different, living by an entirely different principle, because they have been renewed in the attitude of their minds. And that happens in the regenerated life as the Spirit of God comes into the heart that believes in Jesus Christ. When we believe in Jesus Christ and receive Him as our Lord and Saviour, we are renewed in the attitudes of our minds. The new self is in the likeness of God: it is the life of God; it is the image of Jesus Christ; it is His life lived in you. So put on that kind of life, because it is available to you.

Father, help me to understand and put into practice this great principle of putting off the old self and putting on the new.

Life Application

Deceitful lusts fool us, because we think they will make us happy. Are there things we still do because we have not renewed our minds in the Truth that dwells in us?