



“I shall always be ready to remind you of these things...”
2 Peter 1:21



CABOT WESTSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1017 S. 2nd St. (Old Hwy. 367)
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cabotwestsidechurchofchrist.com

When We Meet

Sunday
 Bible Classes – 9:00 am
 Worship – 10:00 am, 5:00 pm
Wednesday
 Bible Classes – 7:00 pm

Our Elders

R.D. Hopper
 Norman Kemper

Our Deacons

Troy Hunter
 Kelly Kendall
 Tony Ramick

Our Preacher

Alex Hale

Measuring Spiritual Growth
 By Alex Hale

In this morning’s sermon, we are going to spend some time in Ephesians 4. Within this text, Paul explores several manifestations, or demonstrations, of spiritual growth (v. 25-32). We will reference these during the sermon, but I want to consider them in more detail here. In measuring your own growth, is your life characterized by...

...Lying or honesty (v. 25)? According to a recent *New York Times* survey, 91% of people regularly lie to those they are close to. 86% of kids say they lie to their parents, 75% say they lie to friends, 73% say they lie to siblings, and 69% say they lie to spouses.

Why do we live in a society of dishonesty? Perhaps we fear rejection, so we seek to cover our mistakes. We want others to like us, so we exaggerate our accomplishments. We do not like conflict, so we avoid hard conversations. However, as Christians, we are to “*speak the truth in love*” (Eph 4:15). Jesus tells us that we should not have to swear, but should instead always speak the truth (Mt 5:37). A friend is one who speaks the truth – not to hurt, but to heal (Prov 27:6, 17). Part of helping one another is being authentic, or real, with them. Be willing to open up to people. Tell them where you are struggling, and if someone else is struggling, be kind – but be honest with them (Gal 6:1)!

...Bitterness or forgiveness (v. 26-27, 31-32)? Any relationship will have disagreements and disappointments. Paul says, “*Be angry,*” as if it is something that is bound to happen! However, when it happens, we must be careful with how we express that anger. People often express their anger in one of two ways – they either withdraw or they attack. In his commentary on Eph 4:32, David Lipscomb writes, “Bitterness is that frame of mind which willfully retains angry feelings, ready to take offense and liable to break out in anger at any moment.” However, love does not keep a record of wrongs (1 Cor 13:5). We need to be willing to let our anger go (Jas 1:19-20).

...Selfishness or sharing with others (v. 28)? Certainly, we understand that stealing is wrong. However, being a disciple is about more than just “not doing wrong” to someone. In the parable of the good Samaritan, the priest and the Levite did not harm the man traveling to Jericho. However, they did not help him either!

One cause of the early church’s success was their selflessness (Ac 2:44-45). God’s people are to take care of one another (Psa 37:25). Who would you call if you ran out of gas? Who would you call if you needed a ride to the doctor’s office? Is there anyone in your life who would call *you*? Are we known for our willingness to help others?

...Speech which breaks down or builds up (v. 29)? Paul refers to *what* we say as well as *how* we say it. Unwholesome words should not come from our lips. Bitterness, wrath, and anger refer to the motivation behind unwholesome words. Clamor is a shouting which brings about confusion. Slander is saying things about someone which are not true. Malice is a heart full of hate for the person about whom you are speaking.

Paul is giving us a very fine filter for us to run our words through. Before you speak, ask yourself, “Does this build people up?” Edifying one another is a continuous task (Heb 3:13). It is not always easy. When you speak negatively and bring others down, you grieve the Spirit of God (Eph 4:30).

You may be thinking that most of these things relate primarily to our relationships with others. This may cause you to wonder, “What do these things have to do with our relationship with God?” Our relationships with others are a direct reflection of our relationship with God (1 Jn 4:20). Why should we be willing to forgive and edify others? Because we remember that God has done exactly that with us (Eph 4:32)!