

A New, Loving Self

January 15, 2017

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Create in Me a Clean Heart by Keith Green

(Here is a song to help your group as you worship. You can go through it together or in groups in meditation and/or in prayer)

Create in me a clean heart, oh God
And renew a right spirit within me
Create in me a clean heart, oh God
And renew a right spirit within me

Cast me not away from Thy presence, oh Lord
Take not Thy holy spirit from me
Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation
And renew a right spirit within me

Icebreaker

Can you remember a time when a selfless act of love ministered to you?

Text for Discussion: Ephesians 4:25-5:2

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

Jesus has come to make us new. But what does it mean to “put on the new self” as Paul writes in Ephesians 4:24? We are to be imitators of God – to strive for righteousness and holiness, to imitate God and love as Jesus loved:

1. Put away falsehood; speak the truth.

Why are we dishonest? What compels us to deceive others? Some of us are trying to hide something: a mistake, a flaw, an ulterior motive. Some of us are people pleasers or desperately looking for acceptance. But the new self isn't just about being honest. It addresses the deeper reasons for why we're not honest in the first place. Dishonesty hinders unity by building walls, undermining authentic relationships. Honesty is therefore the daily little deaths to self-promotion and self-protection so we can love others; it is the foundation of authentic relationships.

2. Don't sin in our anger, but forgive.

This is not a warning against anger but against sinning in our anger. (There is righteous anger – anger about sin and evil.) But too often anger deceives us. Anger says, “I'm right and you're wrong.” Anger is certain, convinced that its response is justified. It attacks others while preventing our repentance and reconciliation.

Love is slow to become angry, quick to let go. But what enables us to forgive? Experiencing God's forgiveness helps us to let go of our own anger and therefore to forgive. The cross gives us humility to acknowledge our sin, freedom in our forgiveness, and joy because we are so very loved. As we forgive, we pay the cost of another's offense. And yes, paying that cost may take time; forgiveness is often a process.

3. Do not steal, but give.

Consider what stealing expresses: personal benefit gained without effort. It is selfishness married to laziness, combined with a disregard for others. It is emblematic of a life focused on comfort, pleasure, and relaxation. It is an expectation that we are entitled to that lifestyle. Paul points us to a very different goal. There is dignity and goodness in work; it is something to be pursued, not avoided. Our jobs are not primarily for our benefit but for the benefit and enrichment of others. Giving is why we work in the first place!

4. Do not tear down others, but build them up.

Words that bully or belittle, criticize or complain, discourage or slander – words that promote or protect ourselves – these rot and ruin community. But it's not enough just to clean up our language. Our speech is meant to build up. It's not that we endeavor to flatter and charm; that would be self-serving. Our desire must be to extend grace and love others. Sometimes the best thing we can do is listen – to give the respect and dignity of hearing what others yearn to say. To listen attentively is a powerful gift.

Ephesians 4 shows us how to be loving servants, spent for the good of others with our hands and with our mouths, with our work and with our words. Remember that this isn't a list of moral instructions for us to work on. We can't live like this on our own. The supernatural work of God in our lives empowers us to live this life of love. We step forward in faith, and as we do, we'll both express and experience God's love in and through our lives.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

How can we put on the new self and live a cross-shaped life?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- 1) Pastor Paul talked about 4 ways we could put off the old self and put on the new self. Which one stands out to you and why?
 - Put away falsehood and speak the truth (Eph. 4:25).
 - Do not sin in your anger but forgive (Eph. 4:26,27,32).
 - Do not steal but give (Eph. 4:28).
 - Don't tear down but build up (Eph. 4:29).
- 2) What areas of your life are hard to put off the old self (marriage, relationships, work, etc....)?
 - How might God be inviting you to respond in this process?
- 3) Pastor Paul explained that the Christian life is a combination of repentance and faith. In what areas of your life is it hard to put off the old self? In what ways can we grow in those two areas?
- 4) **Guiding Question: How can we put on the new self and live a cross-shaped life?**
 - What does it mean to live a cross-shaped life?
 - Do you have any practices in your life that help you put on the new self?
- 5) How can we, as a community, help one another put off the old self and live out of our new self?
 - How can we be a blessing to each other through our words (Prov. 25:11)?
 - Knowing that we can't live out of our new self just by our own strength, how can we encourage one another to trust the supernatural work of Christ to do so?

Praying for One Another

(Here are some ideas from the study to help focus your time in prayer as a group. Use by themselves or along with other prayer requests.)

- Thank God that He loves us and gives us grace, even when we struggle to live out of our new self.
- Take some time to share some of the challenges of living out the Christian life that you are currently facing. Pray that we could trust God in those areas.
- Pray that God would help each of us live a life of repentance and faith.

The Relationship Project

Do you want to revolutionize relationships within your CG? Is there a desire to cultivate healthy relationships in your personal life (i.e. marriage, friendship, dating, family, work, etc.)? We invite you to join the Hargraves on Saturday, Feb 4 (9am-12pm) as they illuminate the reasons for, and solution to, the relationship patterns that make us feel stuck and hopeless. This will be an interactive time of gaining new insights into healthy relationships of all kinds. Your CG can even attend this event together! Register [here](https://pacificcrossroads.tpsdb.com/OnlineReg/708):

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