

The church: new self, new relationships

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[0 : 00] Ephesians 4, 17-5, 2 Instructions for Christian Living 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.

They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to the hardening of their hearts.

Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in Him accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.

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, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

[1 : 30] Therefore, each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. In your anger, do not sin.

Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children, and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us, and gave himself up for us, as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

[2 : 50] This is the word of God. Amen. Good morning.

Let's pray. Lord, we just ask for your Holy Spirit to guide us. As we examine your word together, just pray, Father God, Lord, that you will enable us, Lord Jesus, to hear from you and to respond to you, Lord Jesus.

We just ask this in your gracious name. Amen. Amen. For those of you who are new here, we are actually going through a series on Ephesians over the last few weeks, and today we have reached Ephesians 4, 17 to 5, 2.

Let me set my time so that I don't keep you all for too long. Right. So today we have heard the reading from Ephesians 4, 17.

And I recently read on Channel News Asia about an 8-year-old boy named Koyuan. You have actually your outline with you in the bulletin.

[4 : 23] And Koyuan is an orphan from mainland China. He's already 8 years old, but he was never adopted because he had ear deformity.

He doesn't have external ears or an external ear canal, so he's actually got problems hearing. And so he's 8 years old. People have bypassed him.

But he was finally adopted by Mr. Yap and his wife, Dr. Lim, from Singapore. And they already had an adopted daughter named Ileana, 17, and two sons, their own children, named Elijah, 18, and Max, 16.

Now, Koyuan arrived in Singapore from Beijing on the 8th of February this year. And he was given a new name, Lucas Yap Kiyuan.

And this report came from Channel News Asia one week after his arrival in Singapore. Now, his new siblings have slowly adjusted to this new addition in the family.

[5 : 28] And 16-year-old Max, who used to be the baby of the family, has now become a protective older brother. And this was what Max had to say. I feel that I have known him for a long time.

He seems to really take well to me. Having him to hold my hands, having him to talk to me as his kereka, is something really special. Now, over the week, Koyuan had been helping with the laundry, raking leaves with his new siblings, helping Ileana with the dishes after dinner.

And he seemed to genuinely enjoy all these chores, because it made him feel part of the new family. He had to unlearn stuff from his days in the Chinese orphanage.

Eight years. Eight years of stuff. And to learn ways of his new family. Right? He never tires from physical affection. He loves to be hugged.

He loves to be kissed. Because he fears, probably he fears that, you know, these good events may suddenly end. But the Yaps keep on assuring him that he is now part of the Yaps family forever.

[6 : 42] Right? He will not be unadopted. But there's a little hitch in Koyuan's brand new world. He's afraid to sleep alone. Right?

In the past three years, he had been sleeping in a room with eight other children. So now, at night, if he realizes there's no one else in the room, he will cry. And so the Yaps siblings have been taking turns to sleep in his room, to chase away their little brother's night terror.

And asking Koyuan about his fears, he will answer cheekily in Mandarin, There are bad people who would kill me. When his mother protested and said, There are not so many bad people in Singapore.

He shot back, There are in my room from 6.30 onwards. Christians are a little like Koyuan. Right? We have been adopted into God's family.

In Ephesians 1.5. And we are his dearly beloved children, As we have seen read to us just now in Ephesians 5.1. Like Koyuan, we are learning the ways of a new family, A new family in Christ.

[8 : 01] Just as Koyuan brought some past practices from his old life to his new, Like not being able to sleep on his own, Christians also may carry with us baggage from our old life.

What are we to do about them? Now Paul addresses this issue in the passage we just read. Last week in Ephesians 4.1, We heard how Paul urged the Christians to live a life worthy of their calling. He wrote that if everyone does the work they are meant to do, The church will grow and will build itself up in love. And in this passage this week, Paul is going to show us that becoming mature in Christ Includes a change in our behavior, What we would call sanctification.

So, he tells us in verse 22 of today's passage, 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 mind, And put on the new self, Created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Paul is telling us to put off our old life, And put on the new. The old life came with it, Its former way of life. The new self comes with it, A new way of living.

[9 : 32] A life that was created, In verse 24, To be like God. Our new creation is to be like God, Not like God in divinity, But like God in character, To be in true holiness and righteousness.

The old self is being corrupted, Or decaying because of its deceitful desires. So, in verse 17, Paul is very emphatic, He insists on it in the Lord, That the Ephesian Christians Must no longer live like the Gentiles do, In the futility of their thinking.

That was their old self. Now, the equivalent of Gentiles, In the context of this passage, For our present day, Would be the non-Christian world, Where we came out from.

Paul says, That the non-Christian way of life, Was a result of their thinking. Right? Paul describes their thinking as, One, In verse 17, Futile, Meaningless.

Verse 18, Darkened. And verse 18 again, Ignorant. A non-Christian who hears this, Will probably be upset.

[10 : 51] Because many of them feel that, They are the ones with the enlightened mind, Modern mind. While Christians are the ones, With the darkened, Backward, Narrow minds.

We used to think that way too, Before we came to Christ. Before Christ opened our hearts to the truth. And we realize now, How blinded we were, How futile our thinking, How dark, How ignorant, Because we did not know God.

We did not acknowledge Him as God. And because the non-Christian, Continues to deny, The loving God and Savior, Their lives in verse 18 says, Remain separated from God.

With hearts that are hardened. It doesn't matter, If they deny God completely, They say God doesn't exist. Or they believe in other gods.

As long as we do not have Christ, Our minds are futile and dark. And we will never be able to relate to God on His terms.

[12:00] And the person who has rejected God, As king, Becomes God himself, In his own mind. Self becomes number one.

His chief concern, Would be his own health, Wealth, Power, Security. And he would use all means to achieve it. Good or bad.

He would put himself first, His needs first, His ones first, Maybe his family first, His comfort first, His ideas first, His worldview first, His rights first, His plans first, Before anyone else.

Everyone else is expendable. My right comes first, Me, Me, And me. And as a consequence, In verse 19, Many give themselves over to sensuality, And to indulge in every kind of impurity, And are full of greed.

And the result is plain to see in the world around us, Isn't it? Just open up the Bronyo Post, Or just read the news online, What do we see?

[13:20] The use of violence, To extend a certain ideology, School shootings in the US, The astounding amount of corruption, That was uncovered by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission, Acceptance and promotion of sexual practices, Contrary to scripture, A redefinition of marriage, Societal fragmentation along racial lines, Political lines, Religious lines, And there's so much societal anger, Discord and distrust, We have slander, We have fake news, We see breakdown of the family unit, Marital unfaithfulness, Soaring divorce rates, Domestic violence, Child abuse, Poverty in the midst of plenty, And crime by way of robberies, House break-ins,

Snatch thieves, Car thieves, We even have Slipper and shoe thieves Happening in our church, Unfortunately, Sin will abound Until Jesus comes back again, And we can be involved In ways to try to make this world a better place, But more important than that, People need to change From the inside out, And Jesus is the only way for that to happen, I need a new me, I need a new way of thinking, A new mind, And it started when we gave our lives to Jesus, Our old self was crucified with Christ, In Romans 6.6, And we are now a new creation with a new self, But unfortunately, The old way of life, With its darkened thinking, Can still linger on,

Like Kehuan's fear of sleeping alone, And the fact that Paul insisted in verse 17, That the Ephesians stop living like the Gentiles did, It meant that some of them, At least some of them, Were doing just that, Living like the Gentiles did, Now notice, Paul was not doubting their salvation, He has already established, In Ephesians 2, Verses 9-9, 8-9, That salvation is by grace, Through faith, And it is not from themselves, It is a gift of God, Not by works, So that no one can boast, Look at what he says, About them, What is their identity, Look at verse 24, They are new creations, They have a new self, Look at verse 30, They are sealed with the Holy Spirit of God, For the day of redemption, Look at verse 32,

They have God's forgiveness in Christ, And look at chapter 5, Verse 1-2, They are dearly beloved children of God, Loved by Christ, So their status, As loved, Forgiven, And saved children of God, Is secure in Christ, As earthly parents, We know that the love we have for our children, Will not change, They do not cease to be our children, When they misbehave, But through their actions, Through what they say, They can cause us grief, Can't they?

Some Ephesian Christians, By walking in the way of the old life, Which has already been crucified with Christ, Have grieved the Holy Spirit of God, In verse 4-30, They have grieved the Holy Spirit of God, Now Paul wants them to walk in state, In true righteousness and holiness, To walk true to their new self, As a child of God, And by doing so, Instead of grieving the Holy Spirit, They can please their heavenly Father, Now Paul is not teaching legalism, Or moralism, Saying that, If you walk this way, God will love you more, He will bless you more, Or that, Only if you walk this way, Then God can forgive you and save you, No, Rather, Their change of status, At conversion, Will also change their lifestyle,

[18:07] A word of caution here though, If all a person knows, Is his own life, And nothing of the new man in Christ, If his lifestyle knows, No transformation at all, And if he indulges in, Any kind of purity, Or greed, Or any of the things, Paul will tell him later on, To put off, Right, If a person does all these things, And it brings no sense, Of conviction of sin, No regret, No, No, No, You know, No conviction of sin, This person's heart, Is truly futile, Truly, His thoughts are really dark, Ignorant, And hardened, And if he claims to be a Christian, He should really examine himself, To see if he has

truly repented, And is truly converted, In the first place, A Christian who does these things, Or does these things that belong, That belong to your old life, Would feel uncomfortable, He will feel not right, He will feel out of sync, With his new self, He would go, Wait a minute, I don't want this, This is not me, Now, Walking in the new way of life, Does not come effortlessly, Putting off, Putting off the old self, Putting on the new self, Implies, Conscious effort, But we are not alone, We have the power of the Holy Spirit, Working within us, To enable us to do it, And we can only do it, If we abide in Christ, Now in verse 20, The new way of life, Is to be taught, And it is to be learned, Right, In the great commission, The disciples were told, To teach other disciples, To obey all of God's, All of Christ's commands, They were taught, The disciples are to be taught, Okay, They are taught to pull off the, In verse 20, They are taught to put off, The old lifestyle, That brings grief to God, And to put on the new lifestyle, That pleases Him, And transformation of this lifestyle, Begins with a renewed mind, Right, In verse 23, To be made new, In the attitude of your mind, And this, How do we change our mind, We have to be taught Christ, And the implications, Of being in Christ, Right, This learning, Has to be intentional, Whether in a formal setting, Or otherwise, But it has to be intentional, You have to want to learn, We cannot just, Let go, And let God, And know that kind of philosophy, No, We have to learn, And we want to, Learn this new way of life, And in KAC, We have many settings, Where you can learn the Bible, Because it is from the Bible, That we can know, What God wants us to do, But we need, To prioritize time, To do so, Fridays, We have the, God's big picture, Right, Every one of you can come, Alright, We have, The ladies fellowship, We have the, Youth, English youth ministry, Focus, Right, Plenty, Of opportunities, And avenues, To learn, Now, How are we then, To live? In verses 24, To 32, Of chapter 4, Paul gives some examples, Of things to put off, From our old self, And things to put on, The result will be, That the new man, Begins to walk, The way he ought to, In accordance, To his new identity, And he has a new way, Of relating, Which will be, Which will be realized, In the one body, We all belong to, Which is the church, And this new way, Of relating to one another, Will then extend, To people, Outside the church, As we relate to them, And how do we, Relate to one another, How do you relate, To another person, Right, It is through our emotions, It's through our words, And through our actions, Right, These are, These are the things, That will build up, Or break down relationships, So let us examine, [22 : 55] Verses 4, Chapter 4, 25 to 32, Along these categories, And you'll notice, That things that we have, To put off, Are usually very, Self-centered things, And things that we have, To put on, Are the godly traits, That will benefit others, And will not cause harm, To them, Let's look at, The first category, Our speech, Now they are found, In verse 25, 29, And verse 31, Let me read that for you, Verse 25, Therefore, Each of you, Must put off falsehood, And speak truthfully, To your neighbor, For we are all, Members of one body, Do not let, Any unwholesome talk, Come out from your mouth, But only what is helpful, For building others up, According to their needs, That it may benefit, Those who listen, And verse 31, Get rid of slander, Along with every form, Of malice, In verse 25, Referring particularly, To church fellowship, Paul asked each of us, To put off falsehood, And to put on truth, Why? Because we are all members, Of one body, If you want to build up the church, There is no place, For falsehoods, Or lies, We can never build up, A united community of love, If our relationship, To one another, Is based on false premises, Lies, Exaggerations, If I cannot trust, What you say, How can there be any agreement? It will only breed, Suspicion and distrust, Let our yes, Be yes, Or our no, Be no, And people will be able to, People should be able to say this, About us as Christians, He is a person, Of his word, You can trust him, Not every Christian here, People must be able to say this, Of you, That you are a person, Of your word, You can trust him, Or her, Or her, We don't always have to agree, On a particular issue, Right? We can have our own opinions, But people will know exactly, Where you stand, And why, Without second guessing each other, To be a community of love, Of love in truth, Is a core value of KAC, There is another type of falsehood, That we want to put off, And they are wrong teachings, False doctrines, And counterfeit gospels, Let us be on guard against them, Right? [25 : 48] This will do tremendous damage, To the body of Christ, So we have to speak, We have to teach, Gospel truth, So that we will not abandon Christ, To follow other gods, And to be gospel centred, To be word driven, Is another core value, Of KAC, In verse 29, Paul tells us, To put off unwholesome talk, And to put on talk, That is helpful, To build others up, And why?

So that our speech, Will be beneficial, To all who hear, Now unwholesome talk, Would include swearing, The use of four letter words, Or expletives, It would include obscenities, Slander, Gossip, Malicious speech, And abusive language, Such speech, Not only defiles the person, As Jesus says in Matthew 15, But also harms the church, And society at large, Now it's very sad, To hear the use of swear words, Which has become very common, In speech, As well as on the social media, And worse still, When God's name is used in vain, And use of these words, Must not be part of our vocabulary, But for some of us, Who don't usually use these words, There are times, In unguarded moments of anger, Or frustration, We utter them, We have to repent, Jesus warns in Matthew 12, That every careless word, That we utter, Will be subject to judgment, Because they reflect, The sin that is in our lives, If we know, We are supposed to put off, Unwholesome talk, What would you do?

What would you do, The next time, If you are with a group of friends, And they start, Making, Sharing obscene jokes, What if you receive such jokes, Or pictures, In your WhatsApp group? What if they start slandering, Saying false things about, Other people, Damaging their reputation, And what if this is spread around, In your social media, And in this election period, We can expect more and more, Of it to happen, What if they talk maliciously, About harming another individual, Or, Or they wish, Ill to other people, Such talk, Belong to the old self, So what would you do?

[28 : 32] What would you do? What would your new self do? What about abusive language? Making contemptuous comments, About someone's look, Dressing, Size, Or lack of, Lack of eloquence, Education, Work, Would fall into this category, Of making, Of abusive language, But some may protest, And say, We're just being truthful, Right?

Right? But unless it is, Biblical truth, I would call this, Relative truth, Because, They are usually your opinion, Or your bias, Right?

And furthermore, We are told to speak the truth in, Love, And when we speak in a manner, That tears people down, It's no longer loving, Look at the example of Jesus, We see in the Gospels, That even when he was rebuking his enemies, His motive was never to tear them down, But rather to help them see the truth, So that they would believe God, And be saved, Parents, There are people, Who are already in their 30s, 40s and 50s, Who will weep, When they recall the hurtful things, Their parents said to them as children, The English idiom, Sticks and stones may break my bones, But words can never hurt me, Is absolute nonsense, Because words can hurt,

And they hurt deeply, Words like, I wish you were never been born, It's your fault, Your mother died, It's a shame, Your mother's abortion failed, Because you are the worst mistake of my life, You are so stupid, Why can't you be like your brother, You would be beautiful, If you lost all that weight, You are so ugly when you smile, There's no need to say anymore, There's no need to say anymore, But what then, Is words that build up, Others according to their needs, And benefits those who hear, Well, They can be words, That affirms, A person's worth in Christ, They can be truths, That will help a person grow in their faith, And in their service in God, Words that will urge them to turn from sin, And to remember God's grace,

In times of failures, Words that will help the discouraged, To continue to trust in the heavenly father, And telling those who serve, How much you appreciate their work in the Lord, And appreciating people for their work in society, Thanking them for the love shown, Right, These are all words that will build people up, And even telling those who turn up to church service, How much you appreciate their presence, Which serves to encourage one another, I tell your neighbor, I'm glad you're here today, Yeah, Number two, In your handout, Attitudes, Emotions, Or I put that heart, Right, The speech was mouth, Now we talk about heart, And it's found in verse 26, 31, After 26, 27, 31,

[32 : 25] And 32, I read them to you, In your anger, Do not sin, Do not let the sun go down, While you are angry, And do not give the devil a foothold, Get rid of, Verse 31, Get rid of all bitterness, Rage, Anger, Brawling, And slander, Along with every form of malice, Verse 32, Be kind and compassionate to one another, Forgiving each other, Just as Christ, Just as in Christ, God forgave you, So now Paul asks us to put off anger that sin, And we are to put on kindness, Compassion, And forgiveness, And why?

Because in Christ, God forgave us, And we do not want to give the devil a foothold in our lives, Do you realize that anger is a choice?

Anger is actually a choice, No one can make us feel angry, We must do it all on our own, We must own it ourselves, Think about it, We decide what triggers us off, And how much anger to show, It's

not like it's out of control, You know, We express anger only when it is safe, And virtually never to those we fear, Or we respect highly, True or not?

You get angry at your boss, You scold him or not? You don't, Right? Instead, what do you do? Anger is most often directed at the wrong person, The spouse, And the children at home, Or someone else in the office without power, We show it to them, But to the big boss, Yes boss, Right? Even though you're boiling inside, Anger that is prolonged, Allows the devil a foothold in our lives, Leading to other sins, Sins like, Unconscious, Sorry, Unwholesome speech, Bitterness, Rage, Brawling, Brawling or quarreling, Fighting, Slander and malice, Right?

[34 : 43] We have seen in the news, How anger can lead to abuse, Violence, Even murder, We know how anger can lead to bitterness, And the breakup of a friendship, Or relationship, And sometimes in anger, We say terrible things, And when we cool down, We say, Oh I'm sorry, I didn't mean it, But actually we meant every word of it, It's often in our anger, The unfiltered thoughts come out, Those words reveal, What we have been keeping in our heart, They just come out, And the flesh rears its ugly head, So anger is never a good emotion, For building relationship, And the message here is, Get over anger quickly, Remembering that Christ has forgiven us, And so we forgive the other person,

Jesus had every right to rage, At what they were doing to him on the cross, But instead of calling the armies of heaven, To strike down the perpetrators, He asked his father to forgive them, Can't we just let go of minor issues, That rub us the wrong way, The act of Christian to forgive those, Who hurt them, Or killed their loved ones, Continue to astound the world, Even today, Let us be kind and compassionate to one another, Forgiving each other, That should characterize the Christian, Let us in KEC, Show kindness and compassion to one another, Does the person next to you, Need a word of encouragement, Do they need practical help, Have they just had a new baby, And there was no extended family to help, Are they ill, And there is no family to care for them, Or help with their meals, Have they suffered a death, And in need of help, Of what to do next, As we show love to one another, It pleases the Father, Let us also forgive each other, For the things done that have hurt us, Do not let bitterness take root, Unforgiveness have led members of the body of Christ, To avoid each other, Some to the point of not even attending, Church service, It has created factions, Within the church, And have led to church splits, All this grief the Holy Spirit of God, Because it hurts the body he is building, And remember, How did God forgive us in Christ, He remembered our sins,

He remembered our sins, No more, So if the person who wronged you, Repent, Came to you and said sorry, We should be careful not to bring up his sin again, Before him, Or before other people, Or even in our own minds, Are you struggling to forgive someone today?

Third category, Actions, Hands, Now, Some Christians in Ephesus, In Ephesus may have, Survived by stealing, Right, They may have been thieves, Or pickpockets, Or shoplifters, And in Malaysia today, You can add, Snatch thief, Car thief, Money launderers, Online or phone scamming, Get rich schemes, Scams, Embezzling of public funds, Overcharging of clients, You can add all this to the list, Self-centeredness says, Take what you can, No matter the method, And to such people, Paul writes in verse 28, Put off stealing from now on, Put on work, Doing something useful with their hands, Why?

[39 : 15] So that instead of taking, They have something to share, With those in need. For the average Joe like me, This month is the month for our tax return, Time to give back to Caesar, What is Caesar's?

And so let us do it conscientiously, And with full honesty, Perpetual borrowing of things, We never return, Is something we sometimes do, Right?

Hopefully, Hopefully, It is not something we do consciously, But out of forgetfulness, Borrow, And then forget to return, It's time to return those items, Yeah?

Let us be careful, Not to use office supplies, For personal use, In another hospital, I used to work in, I remember my chief clerk, Having to issue a warning, Against the pilferage, Of kitchen supplies, Meant for the patients, We had problems with contractors, Who would shortchange the government, For works done so poorly, And badly, For the amount that they charge, But we miss the point, If we only concentrate, On the putting off, Even more important is that, We are to work, Earn an honest wage, Or profit, Via legitimate, And moral business practices, To keep for ourselves, No, So that we can have something, To share with those in need, Our social concerns ministry, Is helping many in need, And they are always in need of funds, If people give more,

