

## **The Gospel Makes a Difference in Our Families**

**Ephesians 4:17-32**

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### **Sermon Introduction**

What is a Christian home? Consider some possible answers.

- Where Christians live
- Where Christ lives
- Where Christian principles govern relationships
- Where people go to church
- Where Christ is taught
- Where people go to heaven

Three Truths

- The Importance of the home and family to our society
- The Importance of the people in the home
- The importance of God in the home

Just as God builds the church, 1 Pet. 2, so also God builds a home. The home depends upon God; the home depends upon the people in the home.

Specific Bible backgrounds: Jesus, Ephesians 5-6; Colossians 3; 1 Peter 3. In this lesson, primarily we are going to examine principles from Ephesians 4.

We must understand the great principles of Christianity better. We must learn objective truth, subjective applications. Do we understand anger, forgiveness, the connection?

### **Analyzing the Text**

Beginning in Eph, 4:17 to the end of the chapter, Paul addresses a number of significant factors in our imitation of Jesus, in the lifestyle appropriate to Christians who desire to reflect the Lordship of Jesus, the gifting of grace, and the values of God for his people. After briefly summarizing in principle the major concepts of the first three chapters, he moves to the how of Christianity. If chapters 1-3 give us the theological roots--identifying who we are, the last three chapters are focused in practice and how we should live.

A number of lessons can be drawn from the end of chapter 4, but one of the great challenges for most Christians is how we handle relationships. This is designed to be a practical lesson.

### **Four Key Concepts for Marriages/Families**

Commitment

Communication

Conflict

Coping: this lesson deals primarily with this last concept as it reflects the first three

### **Coping: Two Important Words Defined**

**Forgiveness** is simply releasing my right to be hurt. Forgiveness is not reconciliation. They are distinct, although related. Forgiveness is one thing, reconciliation another. Forgiveness is the ability to look through an event, past an event. Biblically, this is Joseph in the last chapter of Genesis. This is Jesus, 1 Pet. 2:21-24; Heb. 12:2-4.

**Anger** is unrealistic expectations unmet. This is simple, yet hard to accept. We think our expectations are realistic. We must rethink our motives, actions. Virtually all of us have unreal, unmet expectations from our childhood. How shall we respond?

### **Coping Effectively**

How can we handle conflict without casualty? What is the role of communication in managing conflict? How important is the commitment of those involved? Specifically, how can marital conflict be handled to avoid terrible consequences? Is there a way we can handle anger and conflict, to facilitate forgiveness, and to restore healthy relationship?

Four ways conflict/anger can be handled. The most effective of these depends on strong commitment and effective communication in order to cope.

#### **I. Express it.**

This is usually called venting. Venting is the easiest response. Venting does the least to solve the problem. Venting gets anger out in the open, but often makes the situation worse. Often justified by citing the need for communication, but this is seldom effective communication. Others pay the price.

#### **II. Suppress it.**

This approach is like a compressed spring. Eventually it explodes, and when it does it usually displaces everything around it, negative consequences. All parties pay a price.

#### **III. Repress it.**

I mean by this the failure to acknowledge anger, the tendency to misidentify it, to deny it. I am not angry, or the tendency to justify self. Such a person pays the price.

#### **IV. Process it.**

### **Look at Text**

→Put off falsehood, speak truthfully. This applies to others, self. I must be honest with myself.

→Acknowledge connections, relationships, togetherness. My anger usually hurts me as much as it hurts another. We are members together, in the family, in the church.

→In anger, I must avoid sin. I must handle it promptly. Failure to do so gives Satan a foothold.

This means we must properly identify our anger. What is the source? What is this I am feeling? Is there a legitimate concern, or is this just me? Have I encouraged this feeling? Am I partly or wholly to blame? Only when we process properly can we begin to use anger productively. We can develop a plan of action which allows the modification of our expectations, with the involvement and help of all involved.

### **Reestablishing, restoring relationships**

What is the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation?

Forgiveness is not reconciliation. They are two different things.

Forgiveness is the release of my right to be hurt. I can look through, look past the event. Consider Joseph in Genesis 50 as an example.

Reconciliation is the reestablishment of relationship.

### **Conclusion**

Apply this to relationship with God. God can extend forgiveness but that does not guarantee reconciliation. Forgiveness can be unilateral, but reconciliation requires two parties. God wants us to accept the forgiveness, for therein is genuine reconciliation.

We seek wholeness, integrity. Therefore, notice vs. 31-32 which express the result. Here is the genuine ability to forgive, and to be forgiven.