

# Honest

## *Ephesians 4:25-32*

You make a decision to “put off” the old self and you change from the inside out by “putting on” the new self.

This was Paul’s thesis in last week’s passage.

And one of the great things about Paul is that he doesn’t just give or explain a principle and then just drop it and move on.

Paul now applies it for us.

Paul says to the Ephesians you have believed the truth and received the life, so now, walk this way.

In these few verses Paul mentions 5 different behaviors ...

Back in verse 17 he tells us to stop walking (living) like the pagans who live in futility and darkness ...

... and Paul mentions 5 different behaviors that Christians should avoid.

- Lying
- Anger
- Stealing
- Corrupt talk (which is different from lying)
- Bitterness

But don’t fall into the trap of thinking that Paul is just ranting about the bad things God hates.

This is much more...

... let me remind you of what is happening here in this letter.

Ch. 3,4—we need Christian community and the greatness of the church

v. 14, 15 he shows the results of that community ...

In these verses Paul is expounding on what we studied two weeks ago in verses 14 and 15.

*<sup>14</sup> So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. <sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, (Eph 4:14-15)*

That is radical supernatural character change...

... this is Christ character being reproduced in us.

**Loving honesty is important, it should be practiced, and this is who we should be.**

... to become a person of integrity and Godly character is POSSIBLE!

NOW ... If there is anyone here who has a realistic estimate of your own flaws, weaknesses, and the depth of your discontent

... this ought to make your heart yearn for more from God.

... to think that such a thing is possible out to (spiritually speaking) -make your mouth water.

And the message of Ephesians is that this can only happen by being plunged into a community of Faith.

... and that makes sense.

... because even before you became a Christian, what made you what you are with all your flaws and weaknesses was not just your individual decisions. (although they were important)

... but it was the fact that you came up in a particular family and it is the way the family treated you, how society treated you ...

... and if you are going to change then you need to be plunged into a community that is at least as intense as a family.

... This is more than just showing up to hear a sermon ... it means a place where you are confronted with “Truth in love.”

... that will change you from the inside out.

## **1. Loving Honesty is Important**

*<sup>25</sup> Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Eph 4:25)*

Truth telling isn't just something we do ... it is a sign of a supernatural change.

... the bible talks about Christians as being a “body part” of a larger body.

The things that keep the “parts” of the body together is truth telling.

If you start lying to people ... wait and see how lonely you feel.

Truth telling unites people ... Lying separates people.

**This is true, not just within the body of Christ ... it true in the larger society.**

Notice: Paul doesn't just say speak truth to other believers ... but also speak truth to your NEIGHBOR.

There is a sense in which truth telling is crucial to all human community

**Truth telling (harsh alone), and love (dishonest alone) must always go together.**

*“A father would not tell his teenage daughter how grievous and destructive her attitudes and behavior were. He didn’t want to confront her. He said, “I love her too much I don’t want to hurt her. But in reality, it wasn’t love ... it was selfishness because he didn’t want to go through the pain of her displeasure. So, her 20’s all filled with one blown up relationship after another because she was deprived of learning from her father, how her behavior influenced and was perceived by other people.*

*... every time you deny people of the truth you exploit them because you deprive them of reality. ”  
[not mine]*

If you are selling a house and you withhold the structural defects you have exploited them because you have deprived them of the reality of what it is going to cost to be in that house.

Truth and love are, in fact, inseparable.

## **2. How to Practice Loving Honesty**

Truthful speech never deceives, loving speech always edifies.

Let me unpack this ...

- **Untruthful speech is designed to deceive.**

We tend to think of lying as saying inaccurate words

In 1975 by Oxford philosopher **J.L. Austin** in a book "How to Do Things With Words" coined the term “speech act theory.”

—every word is designed to convey information but also to get something done—it has a purpose.

So, as you use words you need to evaluate if the words are true and what there purpose is.

**Example:** a theft at office and you know mr “a” did it but you don’t want to turn him in. The investigators ask you what you saw and you say, I saw mr “b” who was there but you know he didn’t do you ... so its an intentional “red herring.”

Deceit is any communication that is intended to hide reality from the listener.

Back in verse 14 and 15 Paul says that the opposite of “speaking the truth in love” is “craftiness and deceitful schemes.”

... those are words that mean trickery.

... it is exploiting someone.

Here are six kinds of false words:

- **Polite lies**—I would love to go but I’m going to be out of town---I think your writing is too sophisticated for our readers
- **Exaggeration**—inside marriage “you always do that” “you never” ... of course it’s not true because sometimes.
- **Word inflation**—It is such a blessing ... it was so incredible ... (I’m guilty sometimes too wonderful.) Hype keeps reality away from people.
- **Benevolent lies**—you cover up for an incompetent friend
- **Watergate lies**—(arrogant) the little people wouldn’t understand

- **Unloving speech is not designed to edify**

*<sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. (Eph 4:31)*

Malice is a kind of summary word and the other words are progressive.

The first word is bitterness ... in Romans 3:14 Paul says that the sinners mouth is full of cursing and bitterness ...

... but it doesn’t stop there ... it is progressive.

It goes like this.

**Bitterness** (attitude) gives way to **wrath and anger** (words) producing **clamor** (action/fighting) and **slander** (destruction of someone’s reputation.)

Paul is forbidding being caustic, sarcastic, belittling, and insulting.

But it is not just verse 31.

***29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Eph 4:29)***

“corrupt talk” is not the same thing as untruthful.

Look at the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the verse ... a corrupt word is any word that is not designed to build up, not designed to benefit.

Here is what this means. You are going to tell someone the truth, and you are going to do it nicely, without sarcasm ...

... so, are you free and clear to do it? NO

... Paul says, “what’s your motive?”

... “Why a going to tell this person? ... what is your motive ...

- Are you telling that person to show that you are in control?
- Are you telling for the joy of winning the argument?
- Are you trying to make points with someone else?
- To punish them

... If your motive is not right, don’t do it.

The timing, the way we do it, the words we choose are all wrong because our motive is wrong.

... wait until your heart is at the place where you are telling them because you want to build them up and you want to deepen your relationship with that person.

*Jesus said, “woe to you Pharisees because you love the important seat ... load people down with burdens” ...*

*... there are people who use the bible truth, the law, to get over on people, to belittle people, to dominate people.*

*Jesus used the gospel to show us that we should not get our worth and value from “lording over people”*

*... instead that we should get our worth and value from the free grace of God... not from being the most right.*

... If you really want to speak the truth in love ...

... wait until your heart is at the place where you are telling that person the truth because you want to build them up and you want to deepen your relationship with them.

... you want to be closer to them.

### **3. How can we become people of loving honesty?**

**When you study speech act theory you will find that philosophers say there are three kinds of lies.**

**Approval seeking lies**—I lie about who I am because I want you to like me/or to avoid conflict because I don’t want you to dislike me.

**Power seeking lies**—I lie so I can make money, take advantage, or get you to do things for me you would not otherwise do.

**Control seeking lies**—I lie to avoid accountability, stay away from punishment, to get people off your back.

These are the reasons we lie ... why?

We can’t live without approval, power, and control ... we don’t want to live without it.

... We are not going to live without it.

... this controls us!

### **What is the solution?**

You got to have approval, power, and control that comes to you in such astonishing degree that it changes you very nature.

<sup>32</sup> *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (Eph 4:32)*

Paul is talking about truth, love, not sinning .... Etc ...

This verse looks like a tag on verse.

... Something Paul just adds at the end.

NO!

**Stay with me ... the ultimate action of truth and love is FORGIVENESS!**

Do you want the joy, love, and peace of forgiveness?

It comes through forgiveness received ... and forgiveness given.

We become people of loving honesty by forgiving each other as Christ has forgiven us!

*A place in the sermon on the mount where Jesus says don't swear by the city of Jerusalem or your head but let your yes be yes and your no be no ...*

*... Here is what Jesus meant.*

*... In those days it was understood that if you swore by the name of God then you couldn't ever break your oath.*



*... But, if you swear on something else (father's grave, Jerusalem, on head ... that is different)*

*... A promise like that can be broken.*

*Jesus is saying don't believe that, Jerusalem is God's city, your head is God, made by God ... everything you say, every idle word is under oath.*

Jesus is the way because He is the truth!

**... and if we are living in that truth we can't help BUT be people of forgiveness.**

**... and (I know its circular) but if we are people of forgiveness we can help BUT live in the truth!**

In John 18 (2 trials before high priest and then Pilate.)

Before the High Priest Jesus says, "I testify to the truth" and they hit him—they abused him.

Then before Pilate Jesus uses almost the exact same words ... (knowing that it will result in his death)

... and Pilate responds to Jesus "what is the truth." And then they kill Jesus.

No approval/power/control seeking lies ...

... the only thing Jesus was seeking was your redemption.

Let me ask you ....

Did Jesus go to the cross for truth ... to show God's law can't be broken and that God's righteousness has to be satisfied ... or did Jesus go to the cross for the sake of love?

Which? The answer is YES! ...

... the truth of God was satisfied, and the love of God was infinitely satisfied because now he could embrace, pardon and receive us.

... The cross brought truth and love together ... FOR OUR FORGIVENESS!