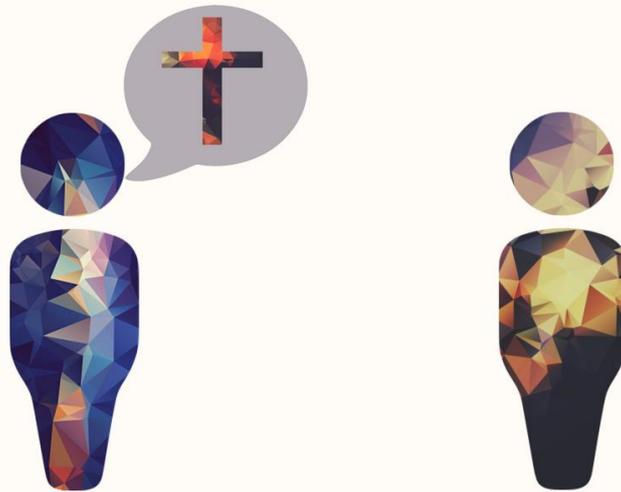




# discipleship & mission

GROWING IN SPEAKING THE GOSPEL IN COMMUNITY  
AND TO THE WORLD



## Session 8

WHERE FROM HERE?



## Ephesians 3-4

We've been walking through the book of Ephesians as we go through this course, and today we're going to start with the last instalment of that, as we look at chapter 4:25 through to the end of the letter.

In Chapter 4 Paul called the Church toward a gospel centred unity, where gifted leaders equip the saints for the work of ministry. Pivotaly we saw that the work of ministry *that every Christian is called to is the building up of the body into the likeness of Christ by speaking the truth of the gospel into every context of each other's lives*. The concept we have termed "gospel fluency".

The last section we looked at was 4:17-24, where Paul made the argument for what the Ephesians were not to do. Don't walk in sensuality, greed and impurity. His reason was not just that those things are wrong, but that Christians are not ignorant, but we know the truth that is in Jesus (the gospel) and that truth changes us.

And so we finished off last time with 4:24, where Paul calls the Church to

- "put on the new self, created after the likeness of God...". That is, living out your new identity of growing into the likeness of Christ, which looks like...
- "in true righteousness and holiness". And interestingly, if you translate those last few words quite literally you get "in the righteousness and holiness of the truth". So they are to put on their new identity, the image of Christ and God, and that looks like righteousness and holiness, which comes from the truth, and of course as we've seen, in Ephesians the truth of the gospel is the truth that is in view.

Paul then spends most of the final 2 chapters of this book practicing and demonstrating gospel fluency. Taking the truth and bringing it into specific situations.

He's already been doing this since chapter 4 started, where he brought the truth of the gospel to bear on the general life of God's people, but now he gets specific.

He takes key and common rhythms of life: first speaking about specific behaviours and then addressing relationships in the home, and he applies gospel truth to them.

He takes the truth of the gospel that he spent the first chapters of this book explaining and generally exhorting them towards, and he speaks it lovingly into the everyday stuff of the people's lives.

In 4:25-5:2 he continues the call that started in 4:17: Walk according to the truth that is in Jesus, that is the gospel, and not the lies of the world.

Notice how in 4:25 he opens this bit with an encouragement to speak the truth and put away falsehood, and then he gives a bunch of exhortations to live righteously, followed by the reason starting in 5:1:

*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

Basically we learn to be who we are, to live out the moral behaviour we should have, not by fighting to live morally, but by fighting to know who Jesus is and the example he has set.

In 5:3-21 Paul pushes it a bit further, he points to a bunch of sinful behaviours: sexual immorality, impurity, covetousness and so on. In verse 5 he says that the people who practice these things have no place in God's kingdom, and then in verse 6 he tells us why:

*Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*

The reason that people end up in these sinful patterns of living is because they are deceived with empty words. And then immediately in verse 9, he says that:

*The fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true.*

And once again, that word "true" is actually the noun "truth".

So even here where he is stressing the negative, what behaviours not to be doing, he points out that the source of those behaviours is believing lies, and the source of good behaviours is believing the truth.

In 5:22-6:9, Paul brings the gospel to bear on household situations. Here he is just clearly speaking the gospel into the everyday stuff of life. Read this more closely in your own time.

He calls husbands and wives to shape their marriages around the perfect marriage: Christ and his church (5:22-33). So he is calling them to both know the gospel in how they live, and display the gospel to the world around them through their marriage.

He speaks to parents and children, and makes it very clear that the role of the parent is to discipline and instruct their child toward the Lord (household gospel fluency, if you will).

And then finally he calls slaves and masters to treat each other well, and the reason for both to do so is their relationship to the true master, Jesus.

[Summary of the book: Gospel centre of Ephesians](#)

Before we look at the last handful of verses of the book, let's summarise the whole book so far so that we have the big picture before doing the final part.

1:1-14 The **gospel**

1:15-23 Prayer to know the full truth of the **gospel**.

2:1-10 The change the **gospel** brings

2:11-22 The reconciliation the **gospel** brings

3:1-21 Prayer that they would be strong to know the love of Christ (in the **gospel**)

4:1-16 A call for the church to be unified in the **gospel** and built up in the **gospel**.

4:17-5:2 Call to walk according to **gospel** truth and not lies.

5:3-21 **Gospel** applied to behaviour

5:22-6:9 **Gospel** applied in the everyday rhythms of the home.

Now can you see how much Paul is beating this drum here:

Believe the gospel!

If you cut it into two sections it would be know the truth of the gospel (chapters 1-3) and live the truth of the gospel (chapters 4-6).

And now we come to the final exhortation. The full armour of God.

Paul calls the Church: Be strong in the Lord, in His strength.

And he gives us 6 tools for this, all of which firmly fit the drive of this book: the gospel.

1. the Belt of truth. Gird yourself with the gospel truth.
2. Guard your heart with the breastplate of righteousness (and as we saw in 4:24, righteousness comes from the truth of the gospel)
3. Your shoes are to be the readiness given by the gospel of peace. Walk in the peace of the gospel everywhere you go.
4. Shield of faith. That is, the faith we have been given by grace through the gospel.
5. Helmet of salvation. Guard your mind by remembering what has been won for you in the gospel: your salvation from the penalty of sin in the past, the power of sin in the present, and the presence of sin in the future.
6. And this is the one offensive weapon we have in our fight against the devil: “the sword of the Spirit, the word of God”. And I don’t think that Paul, writing before the new testament canon was closed, primarily has scripture in view here. He has the gospel in view here. And he makes the point: this weapon is accessed only by those who live in prayerful dependence on the Spirit.

So all 6 of these drive us in different ways to be strong only in the gospel truth of what God has done. He points to the Spiritual war we are in, and says “you fight this war only in dependence on God through the truth of the gospel”.

And finally Paul prays that they would have peace and grace, but only if they love Jesus.

Do you see the unity of this book? It is, start to finish, an exhortation to believe and live out the gospel.

And that’s why I chose it for this course: because that’s what discipleship is: living out the gospel in community. Learning to increasingly submit all of life to the empowering presence and Lordship of Jesus.



Now we're going to spend some time focusing on what we've learned and more importantly, where we go from here.

But first, try to answer these two questions, thinking through what you've learned:

What is a disciple, and what is discipleship?

Disciple:

Discipleship:

In this course we have hammered concepts like  
the big story of God,  
gospel fluency,  
life-on-life discipleship,  
life-in-community discipleship,  
life-on-mission discipleship,  
and the mission that is fuelled by these types of discipleship.

Spend some time now brainstorming over this one question:

**How can we live it out?**

Maybe another way to ask it is, what are the areas of your life where you feel called toward change, to live a life as a disciple of Jesus who makes disciples for Jesus.

[jot down thoughts that will help you think this through more late]

Some suggestions for application areas in life.

If you are involved in a home group or a grace group, or even if you are just in the habit of meeting up with other Christians, take this there.

Ask questions like: are we growing as disciples whose lives are formed by the gospel, or are we just growing in our head knowledge?

Are we caring for each other *and* living out the mission to take the gospel to the world, or are we separating those two?

If you're married, you might consider: are we showing the priority of applying the gospel in everyday life in the rhythms of our household? And are we opening that up to other believers so that they can speak the gospel into it, and to unbelievers so that we can show them what the gospel looks like and speak it into their lives?

If you're single and share housing, those questions could easily apply to you too.

Maybe for you the next step is just organising to have a few Christians who you are open with and who are committed to growing together by applying the gospel in each other's lives.

Let me just throw in the recommendation again, if that's you, you might consider starting that journey by reading the book *gospel fluency* by Jeff Vanderstelt together.

#### Feedback forms

Please fill out your feedback forms!

#### Thank you!

Thank you all so much for walking through this Sunday School with me. I've found it to be a richly rewarding time, and I hope you have as well.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.*

(Ephesians 1:3-4)

We have been so blessed by God, that those who have faith are saved and have become sons and daughters of God. Let's live out the call to be his children, to live as disciples of Jesus, by ever focusing more on Him, ever letting the truth of the gospel make us more open to our brothers and sisters, ever letting the truth of the gospel instruct our hearts to trust him more, ever letting the truth of the gospel transform us in every way into the likeness of Christ. And let's do it looking forward to that day when Jesus returns, when our transformation will be complete, because we will finally see fully, we will be like Him because we see Him as He is (1 John 3:2).

John