

GRACE AND GROWTH
Lavish Love and Life Together
A Review of Ephesians 4 for Parents

"Walk [parent] in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (Eph 4:1)

Ephesians 4:1-6: Pursuing the Unity of the Church

We discussed the five dispositional areas that promote unity: humility/lowliness, gentleness/meekness, patience, forbearance, and love. We were challenged to think about whether or not we pursue unity and if we're willing to move toward another Christ follower that differs greatly from us. We considered what identity we live out of and to what extent we live according to our ultimate identity in Christ.

How actively are you pursuing unity with your spouse or children? (VJ)

Ephesians 4:7-16: Unity through the building up of the church

We discussed God's beautiful plan to create unity in the church through the unique gifting of each member of the church. We learned that these unique gifts and strengths are given to each follower of Christ for the benefit of other believers. "Diversity is not for the sake of individual self-fulfillment and self-expression but to build the church." (KW)

Is spiritual growth and maturity (as part of the church) a central goal for my children? (KW)

Grace and Growth:

We revisited Ephesians 1-3 to remind ourselves of the grace that's been given to us while acknowledging the importance of linking grace with growth for ourselves and for our children. We acknowledged imbalances that show up in our lives and how we shouldn't emphasize grace more than growth, nor growth more than grace.

What goes wrong if we focus on grace separated from growth? Growth separated from grace? (KW)

Ephesians 4:26-27, 31-32: Anger

"Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil." (Eph 4:26-27)

Think of the last time you were angry...

Probing questions from David Powlison's book, Good and Angry.

1. What is my situation?
2. How do I react?
3. What are my motives?
 - When you get upset, what do you want? What does the desire mean to you?
 - Why does that matter so much to you?
 - What are you afraid of? What dire thing do you believe might happen?
4. What are the consequences? (how did it affect others?)
5. What is true? (What does scripture say about this situation and my reaction? Who are you? Who is God?)
6. How do I turn to God for help?
7. How could I respond constructively in this situation?
8. What are the consequences for faith and obedience?

Ephesians 4:17-32: "Putting off" and "Putting on"

We discussed the imagery of changing clothes as it illustrates our new identity in Christ. We have to actively identify our sin and corrupt behavior to "put off" the old while also actively walking in the way of the Lord to "put on" the new, both of which we cannot do apart from the grace of God.

... we tend to wait too long to speak into our children's lives. We need to offer them biblical help before they are deep into a struggle or sin pattern, past the point where we can influence the way they think about an issue. (p.71)

...we are always paying attention to the subtle patterns that creep into our children's lives or our family's lifestyle. (p.72)

Do you tend to emphasize the "putting off" (identifying sin and corrupt behavior) or the "putting on" (walking in the way of the Lord)? (HL)

Putting On the New Self:

With intentionality, availability and God's grace we can nurture the following areas in our families:

Relationships (p.30)

Philippians 2:3-5: ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus

In my counseling, I am concerned to see more and more passivity entering into modern-day parenting. Although I am sure that this is not entirely new, I notice that many parents desire to occupy their kids rather than engage them. Much of the time, they are trying to keep the children busy and involved while they maintain their own busy schedules. (p.73-74)

Conversations (p.33)

Ephesians 4:29-32: ²⁹Let 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. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Are you building up or tearing down? And do your words give life or decay? (p.34)

Forgiveness (p.36)

Ephesians 4:29-32: Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Forgiveness... draws those around me to the power within me. It fosters a home filled with graciousness, a willingness to overlook an offense, and a persevering love that does not give up on another. It leaves an indelible impression on those who are watching – whether it is our children, our relatives, or fellow believers. (p.37)

Sacrifice (p.38)

Ephesians 5:1-2: Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ²And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

In what ways do you nurture relationships [conversations, forgiveness, self-sacrifice] in your home? Are there things that get in the way? (p.42)

Discussion Questions:

Is spiritual growth and maturity a central goal for my children? (KW, adapted by TJ)

In what ways is this evident (or not) in my conversations with them and decisions for them? (KW)

What competes with this vision for them? (KW)

How might an ongoing, organic integration of grace and growth transform me and bring changes in my family relationships? (KW)