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**“Trading Up”**

**Ephesians 4**

**September, 2018**

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**This Small Group material was based on a Sermon Series that focused on how to live Biblically.**

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**The 10 Simple Steps of the Small Group Model**

A small group stands out because it provides a place where participants can engage *personally* with the Holy Spirit. The Scripture-Based Model is an amazing approach as it puts your small group in *direct contact* with God’s Word, opening them to be transformed *directly* by God’s grace! It also allows you to participate with them by focusing primarily on establishing and maintaining a safe environment.

**Step 1 Welcome**

* Help everyone feel valued. Take special care of first-timers

**Step 2 Open**

* Mark the space as different than the world. Invitation to *tune-in* to the Holy Spirit.
* Ideas: Light a candle. Moment of silence. Ring a bell. Read a theme verse.
* Briefly summarize last week’s scripture and ask if it had any impact in their lives over the last week.

**Step 3 Prayer**

* Prepare hearts to engage with God

**Step 4 Purpose**

* Remind everyone why we gather as a small group to help each other live a little more like Jesus.
* To help each other discover and respond to how God’s spirit is moving in us.
* And, to grow the group and multiply into new groups

**Step 5 Ground Rules**

* Go over the “operating system” of a safe group as it defines how this group is unique

**Step 6 Context**

* Set the scene of the scripture by briefly explaining context. Try not to make points.
* Focus on what *you* relate most to in the scripture and why.
* Engage in the scripture *personally*. Pay attention to your connections, reactions.

**Step 7 Scripture**

* If the Scripture is familiar, try having someone (e.g. your partner) *tell the story* from memory. Then, ask if anything was added or omitted from the scripture. Rebuild the scripture as a group.
* Read the scripture directly from the Bible. Try a variety of methods and people to read.

**Step 8 Reflect**

* Offer a couple of minutes to silently reflect on the scripture, noting anything that stands out personally.

**Step 9 Share**

* Ask key question(s) as needed. Answer the question *yourself* first, modeling openness & vulnerability. Trust silence to do the work.
* Hold everyone to the ground rules. Help them to *stay personal.*

**Step 10 Closing**

* Pray over specifics which the group shared and wrestled during the discussion.
* Invite the group to name persons they would like to invite to the group, and offer a prayer on those person’s behalf.
* Blow out the candle, moment of silence, ring a bell, or re-read the theme verse.

**Small Group Ground Rules**

This is the “operating system” of a small group. These rules provide the boundaries of a space that is safe to be real, authentic and vulnerable so that Holy Spirit can do its work. We live, act, and talk differently in a small group! Developing this kind of environment takes time, team-work, and a whole lot of trust. It is helpful to remind your group *each week* of these rules, why they are important, and how to help maintain them.

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| *1.* ***Safe Environment*** *– This is a judgment free zone! Feel safe to be your authentic self.* | *6.* ***Pause****—Allow a pause after someone finishes to provide room to consider what was said before responding.* |
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| *2.* ***Accountability****—Everyone’s help is expected to make this safe.* | *7.* ***Silence****—Expect and welcome silence. Consider it sacred space for God to speak.* |
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| *3.* ***Confidentiality****—What is said in the group stays in the group, unless permission is given.* | *8.* ***Respect****—Don’t try to solve or fix each other. Just receive what they share (even if you disagree) as a gift. Offer encouragement, speak truth, point to Jesus.* |
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| *4.* ***“I” statements****—Speak for yourself-your beliefs, feelings, responses. It’s easy to talk about the issues of others, but we want you to put* ***yourself*** *on the table.  Use “I” statements rather than “them,” “the church,” “us,” “we,” “you.”* | *9.* ***Honor****-- Honor the different ways God works in individuals. Resist the temptation to console or offer condolences, as it may lead some to stop sharing, or try to fix.* |
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| *5.* ***Listen****—Try to avoid thinking about what you are going to say next. Avoid “cross-talk” and interrupting.* | *10.* ***Sharing****—Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Recognize that all group members are invited to share aloud only what and when they are ready to share.* |

**TRADING UP: Choosing to live Biblically**

1. ***Trading Reactivity for Proactivity***

“*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” Ephesians 4:1*

Week #1 Ephesians 4:1-17

**Welcome**

Warm-Up question: **Introduce yourself and describe a team you were on that you really loved.**

**Context**

*Today’s scripture comes from the letter to the Ephesians, who many scholars believe was not written by Paul himself, but one of his followers after his death. Chapter 4 expresses the uniqueness of this emerging community that unites Jews and Gentiles. It’s important to note that this is not a Jewish community with Gentile converts, nor vice versa. But an entirely new thing that comes with its own stresses to splinter. Today’s scripture describes the core value of unity, and the tasks of the various leaders to build unity on Christ’s image. As you engage today’s scripture, take note of what it takes to build this special kind of united community.*

As you consider today’s scripture, be thinking….

**… How are you united with other believers with whom you disagree?**

**Scripture**

**Ephesians 4:1-17** Unity in the Body of Christ

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2**with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3**making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4**There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, **5**one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6**one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

**7**But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift. **8**Therefore it is said, “When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.”

**9**(When it says, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4%3A1-16&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-29265a)] into the lower parts of the earth? **10**He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) **11**The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, **12**to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, **13**until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. **14**We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. **15**But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, **16**from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love. **17**Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds.

**Reflect:** *Take two minutes in silence to reflect on what the Holy Spirit is trying to tell you in this scripture*

**Share** *(invite the group to wrestle with one or more of the following questions)*

* What stands out to you, bothers you, confuses you, or is otherwise important for your life?
* In a world where division seems preferable, how are YOU actively “making every effort to maintaining the unity of the Spirit” with others?
* How would you describe your level of spiritual maturity (v. 13)?
* What teachings, trickery, or schemes (v. 14) tend to get you off track in the goal of seeking unity in Christ?
* What areas of your life would you like to trade being “reactive” for “proactive?” What are you willing to do about it? How can this group help you take a step?

**TRADING UP: Choosing to live Biblically**

***2) Trading Popularity for Purpose***

“*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” Ephesians 4:1*

Week #2 Ephesians 4:17-25

**Welcome**

Warm-Up question: **Introduce yourself and describe if you brought or bought your lunch when you went to school? Did you ever make trades?**

**Context**

*Today’s scripture comes after the writer spent considerable time calling the new community to seek unity in the Spirit as a core value. Today’s scripture builds on that theme by calling the people to reject an old way of life in order to embrace a new life in Christ. Listen closely to how the Spirit may be nudging you to put something “away” so that you can respond to the call to a new self.*

As you consider today’s scripture, be thinking….

**… What in your life do you long to be made ‘new?’**

**Scripture**

**Ephesians 4:17-25** The Old Life and the New

**17**Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds. **18**They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart. **19**They have lost all sensitivity and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. **20**That is not the way you learned Christ! **21**For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus. **22**You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, **23**and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, **24**and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. **25**So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another.

**Reflect:** *Take two minutes in silence to reflect on what the Holy Spirit is trying to tell you in this scripture*

**Share** *(invite the group to wrestle with one or more of the following questions)*

* What stands out to you, bothers you, confuses you, or is otherwise important for your life?
* How would you describe your spiritual growth over the last five years? How would you like to see it over the next five?
* Do you believe that you were “created according to the likeness of God?” (v. 24)
* In what ways do you long to trade your old self for the new?
* How have you wrestled trading “popularity” for “purpose?”
* What might the Holy Spirit be stirring up in you?

**TRADING UP: Choosing to live Biblically**

***3) Trading Tearing Down for Building Up***

“*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” Ephesians 4:1*

Week #3 Ephesians 4:25-29

**Welcome**

Warm-Up question: **Introduce yourself and describe a time when you were *really* angry.**

**Context**

*Today’s scripture builds on the writer’s desire to build a new kind of community that has never existed--a united community that is rooted in Christ. He has stressed that this new life in Christ requires one to put off the old self, so that one can begin to put on the new self. In today’s scripture, the writer gets very practical of what behaviors reflect the character of Christ, the character that is not natural to us, but one that we need the community’s help in order to form in us. Listen for a behavior that you may be struggling with in your desire to be like Christ.*

As you consider today’s scripture, be thinking….

**… What one behavior would you really like to work on?**

**Scripture**

**Ephesians 4:25-29 Practical behaviors for the new community**

So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. **26**Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, **27**and do not make room for the devil. **28**Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. **29**Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.

**Reflect:** *Take two minutes in silence to reflect on what the Holy Spirit is trying to tell you in this scripture*

**Share** *(invite the group to wrestle with one or more of the following questions)*

* What stands out to you, bothers you, confuses you, or is otherwise important for your life?
* Anger is a natural human emotion, neither right nor wrong. How do you usually deal with anger? When does your anger become sinful?
* What grade would you give yourself on putting verse 29 into practice this last week?
* Where in your life do you need to “trade tearing down” for “building up?” What are you willing to do about it? How can your group help you or hold you accountable for your next step?
* Lately, how have words interfered in your relationships with other Christians? With Christ? What are you willing to do about it?

**TRADING UP: Choosing to live Biblically**

***4) Trading Bitterness for Forgiveness***

“*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” Ephesians 4:1*

Week #4 Ephesians 4:29-32

**Welcome**

Warm-Up question: **Introduce yourself and share a recent complement that you received.**

**Context**

*Today’s scripture continues to build on the call to become a unique, united community by individuals seeking to overcome the vices of the human nature, as well as cultivating the virtues of Christ-like character. The writer either wrote or drew upon Colossians 3:8-13 to reinforce this critical way of life. Today’s passage highlights the partnership that the Holy Spirit has with us to shape the community. Namely, the believer’s responsibility to be concerned about his or her own behavior because it affects the holiness of the whole community.*

As you consider today’s scripture, be thinking….

**… How could your behavior affect the holiness of others?**

**Scripture**

**Ephesians 4:29-32 Behavior Matters**

29Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

**Reflect:** *Take two minutes in silence to reflect on what the Holy Spirit is trying to tell you in this scripture*

**Share** *(invite the group to wrestle with one or more of the following questions)*

* What stands out to you, bothers you, confuses you, or is otherwise important for your life?
* Which negative attitude in this list (v31) do you struggle with the most in this season of your life? Which positive attitude (v32) do you desire to cultivate more?
* How have you wrestled with trading “bitterness” for “forgiveness?”
* What did it take for your to truly forgive someone?
* How have your behaviors affected the holiness of your community of believers? Is the Holy Spirit encouraging you to do something?