



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, August 7-13 (B) – Ephesians 4:25 – 5:2

Focus: *Be Imitators of God*

word of life

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Ephesians 5:1-2 (NRSV)

Read Ephesians 4:25–5:2

Ephesians 4 begins with a powerful passage about the Holy Spirit bringing unity and peace. It is the Holy Spirit who empowers us to claim and live a new life in Jesus Christ through baptism.

In other words, there are implications in following Christ. The actions of an individual impact the community – either for good or bad. We are to cease behavior which causes havoc and disrupts unity within a community. Like old clothing, we are to discard and put away falsehood, stealing, bitterness, wrath, anger, wrangling, slander, and malice.

1. *How have you seen these behaviors disrupt unity and peace?*
2. *How does the Holy Spirit empower us to put away these behaviors?*

Take a moment to reflect on anger. “Be angry, but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger and do not make room for the devil.” (Ephesians 4:26 NRSV) Often Christians are told not to be angry, but in this passage anger is acknowledged as part of the human experience. The question is what we do with our anger.

3. *What does it mean to be “angry, but not sin”?*
4. *Any tips on letting go of your anger within a day, before the sun goes down?*
5. *What happens to someone who holds on to anger for an extended time period?*

Another topic in this passage pertains to our words. “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.” (Ephesians 4:29 NRSV) What a beautiful image to have our words be a gift of grace.

The alternative is to grieve the Holy Spirit of God. See Ephesians 4:30. (Isaiah 63:10 also refers to the people grieving the Lord’s spirit.) The Holy Spirit brings peace and unity. Behavior which disrupts peace and blocks the work of the Holy Spirit has the potential of grieving the Spirit.

6. *What does it mean to you to grieve the Holy Spirit?*
7. *How does it make you feel that you might be able to grieve the Holy Spirit?*
8. *How can we help the Holy Spirit bring peace and unity?*

Instead we are to “be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.” (Ephesians 4:32 NRSV) We are encouraged to imitate God, like a child imitates a parent, and live a life of love. In doing so, we become “a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (Ephesians 5:2 NRSV)

9. *How does a Christian imitate God?*
10. *What is the smell of a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God?*

word among us

Viola tried very hard to put the best construction on every situation and every person. Her forehead would sometimes wrinkle as she tried to think of something positive to say. She hesitated to criticize, but tried to use her words to build people up.

She was particularly tested at work when a homeless man started living outside the small business, near the air-conditioner unit. On cold nights he would sleep on the front porch of the office, but he would always be gone before the office opened. He would leave signs of his last night's activities – a pack of sugar, an empty bottle of liquor, some chips, and other bits of food. A few times, he was seen walking away. The staff members would often clean up after him.

One day, Viola found two bugs inside her office. Quietly she spoke as she held up the bugs, "I am sure these are fleas. I wonder if they are from our friend who sleeps on the porch." Her supervisor grimaced and began to look around and said, "Oh, I wished you hadn't said that." With that Viola looked quite embarrassed, "You are right. I never should have said that about our friend."

1. *Do you know anyone like Viola who uses words to build up?*
2. *How do you use your words to build up people?*

"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." (Ephesians 4:29 NRSV) These words are not just for times we are with other Christians. Instead there is an all-encompassing aspect to this advice. In all times we are to build up with our words and actions.

3. *What are some examples of evil talk?*
4. *Give example of your words giving grace to someone.*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God's faithful people

In baptism, we are claimed by Jesus Christ and marked with the Holy Spirit forever. We are to allow God's Spirit to shape our lives and guide us in ethical behavior. That means putting away negative behavior and taking up positive traits which build up the community of Christ and others.

This new life in Christ is a direct reflection of God's love.

5. *What excites you about a new life in Christ?*
6. *What negative traits will you gladly put away?*
7. *What positive traits are you ready to embrace?*

Prayer

God, may we imitate you in all we do. May we reflect your love and grace in our words and actions. May our words be the sound of grace and our actions a fragrant offering to you. Amen.

last word

Pause before you speak
so your words
may be grace to those who hear.