

## **Sermon Series - The Building Blocks of Healthy Relationships**

### **Sermon Title - The Building Block of Authenticity**

**Sermon Text - Ephesians 4:25** Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

**Additional Scripture Support** - Proverbs 6:16-19, 10:18, 12:22, 19:1&5, Acts 4:36-37, 5:1-11, Psalm 1:1, 101:7, 15:1-5, Ephesians 2:1-10, 1 Peter 2:1, 3:9-11, Romans 12:9-16.

**Sermon Summary** - As members of the Body of Christ we are to put off falsehood and speak truthfully to one another. We are to be authentic in our attitudes, our speech and our actions by putting off falsehood and speaking truthfully with one another. This study is designed to inspire you to live lives of authenticity by putting off falsehood and speaking truthfully to each other as members of the Body of Christ and to discover ways in which this is accomplished! Three steps must be taken to make the building block of authenticity a part of our relationships: What we don't do, what we do, and what we realize! Authenticity affects our relationship with others, but also impacts the health of our relationship with God.

### **Full Sermon Notes:**

Introduction: "this I know with all my heart His wounds have paid my ransom" I've often asked the question, where would I be if Jesus had not paid the ransom for me? I would still be stained with the guilt of my offense had Jesus not come to my defense! Would I not still be lost had Jesus not offered God's love on the Cross? Folks when Jesus said, "I have come to seek and to save that which is lost," He was being as authentic and truthful as anyone had ever been. When Jesus said

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

He wasn't lying! There was nothing fake about Jesus and when He said something it was authentic and true! Followers of Jesus should seek to have the same level of authenticity and truthfulness in their lives, because we have been saved out of our old way of life and are now ambassadors of Christ! Let's pray and ask God to teach us why the building block of authenticity is so vital to healthy relationships! Pray!

Nobody likes fake, false, insincere, or inauthentic! I don't know if any of you saw this news story the other day, but here's the picture that went with it...

### [PICTURE of GUITARS](#)

Here's the story from WTOP news in Maryland- "Fake Gibsons, Fenders and other electric and acoustic guitars are among the stash of counterfeits confiscated at Dulles International Airport in Virginia recently. U.S. Customs and Border Protection found 85 counterfeit guitars coming in from China on March 31"

Some of these were signed with fake autographs of famous guitar players and were to be sold for as much as 8,000.00 dollars. Here's the deal, they may have looked genuine, and even sounded genuine, but if you spend 8,000.00 dollars on a guitar, you really don't want a fake. You

want authentic! And that's with a guitar. Is it not exponentially more important for our relationships to be authentic? I think so. Our text today is Ephesians 4:25. Let's read it...

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

Our text has to do with authenticity in our relationships! Paul had already talked about speaking the truth in love, but the building block of authenticity and truthfulness is so important he reiterates this concept. Today we're going to see how we should also be very authentic and honest when we speak to others. You might be speaking in love to someone if you tell them the song they just sang was amazing, but you might not be speaking the truth. It's nice that you didn't want to hurt their feelings, but you may have encouraged them to pursue something they're not good at and at some point they're going to discover the truth and that could hurt even more. And then there's some who don't care about how what they say, or the way they say it, could hurt another person. Their attitude is: "Well, I'm just brutally honest!" To which I would reply, "Well, there are ways to be authentic and truthful without being brutal with your honesty!" Let's look at the steps we must take in order to make the building block of authenticity a part of all our relationships so they can be healthy, and let's remember this is extremely important for the family of God, The Body of Christ!

### **Step #1 - Put off Falsehood!**

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood

The first step in authenticity is what we don't do! There needs to be genuineness, sincerity, and transparency in a Christian's relationships if they are to be healthy, and that can only happen if we don't do certain things! Falsehood, deception, and subterfuge should never be a part of our relationships! If you're unfamiliar with the word subterfuge, according to the Webster Dictionary...

"Subterfuge suggests the adoption of a scheme or the telling of a lie in order to escape guilt or to gain an end."

In other words, plotting to use falsehood or lies for personal gain! The writer of Proverbs gives us some of the most powerful insight on why we are to take off falsehood. Proverbs is a powerful book on human relationships. For many years, I read the chapter of Proverbs that corresponds with the day's date. There are 31 Chapters of Proverbs. I can't tell you how insightful it has been for my relationship with the Lord and with my fellowman! In Chapter 6 he talks about seven things the Lord hates and 3 of the 7 have to do with falsehood and the other 4 are things that come out of falsehood. Listen...

Proverbs 6:16 There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him:

Proverbs 6:17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood,

Proverbs 6:18 a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil,

Proverbs 6:19 a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.

Listen to these other examples concerning falsehood from the writer of Proverbs...

Proverbs 10:18 Whoever conceals hatred with lying lips and spreads slander is a fool.

Proverbs 12:22 The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy.

Proverbs 19:1 Better the poor whose walk is blameless than a fool whose lips are perverse.

Proverbs 19:5 A false witness will not go unpunished, and whoever pours out lies will not go free.

Proverbs 26:28 A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

One of the readings for this week concerns an incident that happened in the book of Acts. It is perhaps one of the most difficult passages to read in the Bible, but at the same time, one of the most revealing passages in the bible concerning the importance of putting off falsehood. The story is found in Acts 5:1-11.

Acts 5:1 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property.

Acts 5:2 With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

Acts 5:3 Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land?"

Acts 5:4 Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God."

Acts 5:5 When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened.

Acts 5:6 Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

Acts 5:7 About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

Acts 5:8 Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?" "Yes," she said, "that is the price."

Acts 5:9 Peter said to her, "How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."

Acts 5:10 At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

Acts 5:11 Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

That's a tragic story. It's a true story. It's a story that has implications and lessons for our lives today! When we read this story the focus is inevitably on the tragedy of death. However, in this story there are other tragedies we must not miss: The tragedy of being a bad example (who are you leading and how)/The tragedy of seeing a bad example (who are you following)/The tragedy of deceiving and being deceived/The tragedy of the consequences of sin! Many have wondered

about the harshness of what happened and why God would have reacted in what appears to be an unmerciful manner. However, we must remember that God knows the heart. He knew that these two had complete deceit in their hearts and wanted to look good to others so they could have positions of power and use this power for personal gain. How do I know this? The two verses just before these verses give us the clue.

Acts 4:36 Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement),

Acts 4:37 sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet.

Barnabas had set a great example and the apostles called him the Son of Encouragement! Ananias and Sapphira wanted the same kind of recognition but for all the wrong reasons. They were about to infect the very DNA of the brand new church, the church that would be given the responsibility for sharing the gospel message with the whole world. Millions of souls rested in the ability of the New Testament Church to accomplish its mission. If God allowed that kind of deception and falsehood to become a part of the leadership of the New Testament Church it would have crippled or destroyed its mission! God had to act quickly to protect the DNA of the church, His family, the Body of Christ! Had Ananias and Sapphira been allowed to follow through with their deception, the leadership of the New Testament Church would have been infected with the virus of deceit, self-promotion, vainglory and the list goes on and on. Now we know that God doesn't strike us down everytime we sin, or lie, or engage in falsehood. Aren't you glad? If He did, none of us would be here. But God knows the heart and He knew what Ananias and Sapphira were up to. I believe that God knows if a person has already made that final decision to reject God. If there is any hope of repentance, I believe God will give them every chance. It is His nature to be merciful, however, for those who ultimately and in finality reject His mercy, they then take on the full responsibility for their own sin. And if you are worried that you may have crossed that line, let me just say to you this:

If you have any desire to repent of your sins, any true sorrow, any yearning or longing to know God, then that is evidence of The Holy Spirit convicting you and drawing you to a relationship with God and that means you are not beyond hope!

With that understanding, let me share with you some very practical considerations before we leave this point of putting off falsehood.

### **Who you follow matters!**

The influence of others on our lives is strong and the examples we choose to follow can determine the very course of our lives. Sapphira looked to her husband and followed his lead. She did exactly what he led her to do. It cost her her life. Who are you following? The Psalmist says...

Psa 1:1 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers

The choice you make concerning who you will follow is critical. A bad choice in this matter can either make or destroy your whole life.

### **How you lead matters!**

How many times have I heard someone say, "I just wish I could go back and do things differently. My bad example influenced others in a bad way." We can't undo what we've done, but we can be forgiven and learn from our past mistakes and by the grace and strength of God we can do better! Remember, someone's always watching you! You may not think it, but you are the person someone looks up to, whether you are worthy or not. You are an example, either good or bad, but you are an example.

Ananias and Sapphira are powerful pictures of why we must put off falsehood! They showcase the extreme of what can happen when someone gives themselves over to falsehood. But you might think, well, I'm not into falsehood to that extent! My lies are just little white lies! The Psalmist quotes the Lord on how falsehood affects our relationship with Him...

Psalm 101:7 No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence.

So while God does not strike us down physically when we are being deceptive, lying, or living in falsehood, it does affect the fellowship part of our relationship with Him. Have you ever noticed when you're living in sin, you seem far away from God? Guess who moved? It wasn't God, it was you! Our sin affects our fellowship with God. God doesn't kick us out of the family when we mess up, and we don't lose our salvation when we make a mistake! But sin, including falsehood, does keep us from enjoying the blessings and the beauty of a daily walk with God! Again, a part of the reason for feeling far from God is that we, like Adam and Eve, try to hide from God and do not seek Him out when we are living in active sin.

Peter wrote this powerful admonition...

1 Peter 2:1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

Peter later says this...

1 Peter 3:9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

1 Peter 3:10 For, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep their tongue from evil and their lips from deceitful speech.

1 Peter 3:11 They must turn from evil and do good; they must seek peace and pursue it.

And this takes us to the "to do" part of our message!

## **Step #2 - Speak Truthfully to Your Neighbor!**

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor,

The second step in authenticity is what we do by being honest and speaking truthfully to our fellow human beings! How do we do that? God's Word is chock full of how-tos on how we speak truthfully to one another! Get ready because I'm about to speak some Biblical truth into your life and having been a fireman and being the Chaplain for our Fire Department I know how to use a fire hose and I'm about to open the nozzle! Are you ready? Paul puts it this way in Romans 12...

Romans 12:9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

In other words, be authentic, hate falsehood, and grip and hold on to what is good!

Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

When we're truly devoted to one another in love we will put others before ourselves! Selfishness is out the door and true, Godly humility walks into our lives in a powerful and life changing way!

Romans 12:11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

Having zeal, excitement, motivation and passion in what we do is a good thing if we don't lose our spiritual fervor, in other words, if we allow the Holy Spirit to direct those, our zeal, excitement, motivation and passion to serve the Lord and not our own selfish desires!!

Romans 12:12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

When we are living this way we have a blessed hope and joy is a part of our lives even when we face affliction and brings us patience and leads us to become faithful in prayer!

Romans 12:13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

When you are putting off falsehood and speaking truthfully to your neighbor, you will begin to care more about their needs than your own, because you know God is going to meet your needs and you will find great joy in meeting the needs of others! In doing this you will be practicing hospitality!

Romans 12:14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

So Paul reminds us that not all of our neighbors are going to be good neighbors, but speaking the truth in love, as we talked about a few weeks ago, causes us to bless the neighbors that

don't like us and may even be persecuting us! We bless and do not curse! That's allowing God to speak the truth of His love through our actions to those who don't know Him!!

Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

Paul's not talking about a fake or insincere rejoicing when someone else gets a promotion, or their life is going really good, but truly being excited for them and celebrating with them from the heart! Anybody in here know what I'm talking about when I say, "That's a Dad joke?" That usually means, that's a corny, not so funny joke. When my kids were still at home and I would tell a silly Dad joke, one of my daughters would laugh and then say, "That was a courtesy laugh!" Meaning that wasn't funny but I'll just laugh to make you feel good! Just being courteous is not what Paul is talking about here. He means truly rejoicing with those who rejoice. And when someone is mourning or hurting, our sympathy needs to be genuine, real and from the heart.

Romans 12:16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Speaking truthfully, and in love, to one another is one of the most effective ways to promote harmony. In marriage, in family, with our neighbors, co-workers, and in the Body of Christ! In order for us to do this well, we must humble ourselves and be willing to have this authenticity with all people, even those in low positions, because in God's eyes they are every bit as important as people who hold important positions in this world! This kind of authenticity can only happen when you refuse to become conceited!

And how might this speaking truthfully to our neighbor affect our relationship with God? Listen to what King David had to say in one of his songs of prayer?

Psalms 15: title A psalm of David.

Psalms 15:1 LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain?

Psalms 15:2 The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart;

Psalms 15:3 whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor, and casts no slur on others;

Psalms 15:4 who despises a vile person but honors those who fear the LORD; who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind;

Psalms 15:5 who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken.

By the way, I do not believe verse 4 implies that we are to hate a vile person, but despise the behaviors of a vile person! We should despise the deception, the lies, the hurt, the evil and the consequences that follow someone who is wrapped up in a vile lifestyle and unrepentant, but we know from other Scriptures that we should pray for those who are lost in sin and feel deep

pity and great concern for their soul. So when we are to put off falsehood and speak truthfully to our neighbor! Why? Because, Paul says we must...

### **Step #3 - Realize we are one body in Christ!**

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

So the first step in authenticity is found in what we don't do, the second step is found in what we do, and the third step in authenticity is what we realize! Why does realizing we are one body in Christ matter? Because if we are one body in Christ, then what you say or do affects not only one or two individuals, but all of us! As Christians, we are in this together. We are no longer "Islands unto ourselves," but bound to one another as sinners saved by grace, called to walk a new life in Christ and to be on mission for Christ! We are the body of Christ, the family of God, a team. Paul says to speak truthfully to your neighbor. Many times we forget that our closest neighbor is not the person next door, but the person in the next room. Our family members, and that also applies to the family of God, the church! If we aren't putting off falsehood and speaking truth within the family of God, how are we going to treat people in the world, and what will our witness be to the world? It will be terrible! In the Body of Christ, which includes any true believer in Christ, around the world, but especially The Body of Christ right here in our church, we should seek to put off falsehood, speak truthfully to one another and realize we're all in this together! And all of us should remember what Paul said in chapter 2 of his letter to the Ephesians. I'll close with these 10 verses because they should help us realize some of the common bonds we have as members of the Body of Christ.

Ephesians 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,

Ephesians 2:2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

Ephesians 2:3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

Ephesians 2:4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,

Ephesians 2:5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Ephesians 2:6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

Ephesians 2:7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—

Ephesians 2:9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

(And let me just say - If you're saved by grace and not by works, you stay saved by grace and not by works! Paul finishes by saying...)

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

The building block of authenticity, Don't build a relationship without it! Let's pray!