

Alright, greetings, good morning, I'm going to have Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4, the book of Ephesians is one of my favorite books, and Ephesians 4 I wanted to read with, we see what's happening around the world, and it becomes important that we as Christians love each other, support each other, and help each other, and this is the unit, basically the section on unity, and how I can do that.

Therefore, I, a prisoner, for serving the Lord, beg you to lead me life forth through call, for you have been called by God.

Always be humble and gentle, be patient with each other, making allowances for each other, false because of your love, sorry for my stuttering, I'm having a hard time seeing the words. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the spirit, finding yourself together with peace, for there is one body, one spirit, but as you have been called to one glorious hope for the Father, there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father who is over all and is in all and living through all.

I told a couple of people when I was going to do this, when I read out loud like this, I have a hard time sometimes, so bear with me as I read this and do my, stutter my wrong way through it.

However, he has given each other, each one of us, a special gift to the generosity of Christ, that is why the scripture says when we ascend to the highest, when he ascended to the highest, he led a crowd of Catholics and gave gifts to his people.

Notice that it was he ascended, this clearly means that Christ also descended in our lowly world and the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.

Now there are the gifts Christ gave to the church, the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and the teachers.

Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and to build up the church, the body of Christ.

They will continue until we all come to him, to succeed in our faith and knowledge of God's son that we still be mature in him, Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

Then you will no longer be, and we will no longer be mature like children, we want that to be done and blown about by every word of the new teaching.

We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever that they seem like the truth.

Instead we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way, more and more like Christ who is the head of the body, the church.

He makes the whole body fit together perfectly for each part, does its own special work. It helps the other parts grow so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

With the Lord's authority I say this, love is no longer as a Gentile would do, for they are hopelessly confused.

Their minds are full of darkness, they wander far from the light, the life of God, the life God gives them because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against them.

They have no sense of shame, they live for lustful pleasures and eagerly practice every kind of impurity.

But God is what you learn about.

But that isn't what you learn about Christ since you heard about Jesus.

But first, that isn't what you learn about Christ.

Since you are here and you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life which is corrupted by lust and deception, instead let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.

Put on your new nature created to be like God, truly righteous and holy.

So stop telling lies, let us tell our neighbors the truth for we are all part of the same body and don't sin by letting anger control you.

Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil. If you are a thief, quit stealing, instead use your hands for good, hard work and then give generously to those in need.

Don't use foul language or abusive language.

Let everything you say be good and helpful so that your word will be an encouragement to those who hear you.

And so do not bring sorrow to God, to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live.

Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be seated on the day of redemption.

Get rid of bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words and slander as well as all types of evil behavior.

Instead be kind to each other, tender hearted, forgiving one another just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

As I said, sorry I stumbled through that.

But I read this because I see what's happening in our world.

There are so many opportunities out there where Satan is raging and we have to be careful that we are paying attention to what God says, saying his word, praying and supporting each other as fellow Christians.

Because some places around the world, Christians are being killed for telling us we can't be in schools and other places where they gather.

So it's important that we are unified in Christ, we are supporting each other and where we get an opportunity or when we get an opportunity, trying to spread the word through helping

others and that kind of, so this is kind of the reason I chose this scripture is because we need to be united, we need to stand with each other, we get an opportunity to worship, come together, to pray, whatever the situation is that we need as a body, we need to keep Christ forefront of what we're doing because prayer is what keeps us in touch with the Lord and this is prayer.

That's all I have.

Anyways, that's about all I have but I just, as I look at this body and become a part of it, I'm so thankful because I see a lot of unity, I see a lot of people loving each other, supporting each other, but we can't let that fall apart.

We need to keep supporting each other, we need to keep praying for each other and as we talk about praying, I do want to put in a plug for the congregation of prayer that we have that we need to get, you know, if you're not doing anything, you find an opportunity, you need to come out and be a part of that because it is what's helping to build a church, it helps bind us together and in doing so we also know what we need to pray for.

We can pray in general but sometimes we really need to be specific about our prayers, especially

when somebody is sick or hurt or going through something like that, we can pray and bring that out.

Good morning.

I just level with you, I don't consider myself a teacher, I am a stretch of the imagination to be honest with you, I do have a little bit of trouble reading so I apologize ahead of time, the only lesson you take away from this is that you'll never let me speak up here again.

We'll let Brian do their quiz and I'll feel better.

Yeah, yeah.

I am going to read and speak on John 8, 9, and 10 today, not all of it, so it's only about 20 minutes, so it might be a little shorter than a typical sermon but I would ask that as I read along that you kind of put yourself in these people's shoes.

Jesus' teaching is all very new to them.

We have the, we can look back and hindsight is somewhat 20/20 for us but this is all very new so just try to put yourself in these situations as they are listening to Jesus.

To set the stage, Jesus had already begun his ministry, he already performed many miracles, he's already been confronted by the Pharisees and the leaders of religious law, he's got a little bit of a following, some good, some bad, but a following nonetheless.

So starting at John 8, verse 31, Jesus said to the people who believed in him, and this is a very important part also, to the people who believed in him, he's speaking to followers and I'm not going to speak through all this, I promise I'm going to read through most of it and then hit a couple of little points, little key points and takeaways there but again, Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free."

But we are descendants of Abraham, they said, we've never been slaves to anyone, what do you mean you will be set free?"

Legitimate question at this point for their misunderstanding, you know, what are you talking about Jesus, tell us more.

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin.

A slave is not a permanent member of the family but a son is a part of the family forever.

So if the son sets you free, you are truly free.

Yes, I realize that you are descendants of Abraham and yet some of you are trying to kill me because there's no room in your hearts for my message.

I'm telling you what I saw when I was with my father but you are following the advice of your father."

"Our father is Abraham," they declared.

No, Jesus replied, "For if you were really the children of Abraham, you would follow his example.

Instead you were trying to kill me because I told you the truth, which I heard from God. Abraham never did such a thing."

"No, you are imitating your real father."

They replied, "We aren't illegitimate children, God himself is our true father."

Now you can start to feel the tensions kind of building as Jesus is telling them that their way of thinking is wrong.

So Jesus told them, "If God were your father, you would love me because I have come to you from God.

I'm not here on my own, but he sent me.

Why can't you understand what I'm saying?

It's because you can't even hear me.

It's because you can't even hear me."

Now obviously they are listening, but it's because you can't even hear me.

"For you are the children of your father the devil and you love to do the evil things he does.

He was a murderer from the beginning.

He has always hated the truth because there is no truth in him.

When he lies, it is consistent with his character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

So when I tell you the truth, you just naturally don't believe me.

Which of you can truthfully accuse me of sin and since I am telling you the truth, why don't you believe me?

Anyone who belongs to God listens gladly to the words of God, but you don't listen because you don't belong to God."

Boom.

Thank you, God.

Now, no sugar coating anymore.

This is a tack on their faith.

The people retorted, "You Samaritan devil, didn't we say along that you were possessed by a demon?"

No, Jesus said, "I have no demon in me, for I honor my father and you dishonor me.

And although I have no wish to glorify myself, God is going to glorify me.
He is the true judge."
I tell you the truth, anyone who pays my teaching will never die.
The people said, "Now we know you're possessed by a demon.
Even Abraham of the prophets died, but you say anyone who obeys my teachings will never die.
Are you greater than our father Abraham?
He died and said to the prophets, "Who do you think you are?"
Jesus answered, "If I want to glorify myself, it doesn't count.
But it is my father who will glorify me.
You say he is our God, but you don't even know him.
I know him.
I said otherwise I'd be as great a liar as you, but I do know him and obey him."
Your father Abraham rejoiced as he looked forward to my coming.
He saw and was glad.
The people said, "You aren't even 50 years old.
How can you say you've seen Abraham?"
Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth.
Before Abraham was even born, I am."
At that point they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus was hidden from them and left the temple.
For disciples of Jesus, for followers of Jesus, that escalated quickly.
Can we all relate?
When our understanding is questioned or our faith is being challenged, do we choose to ignore that part of scripture?
Are we ready to curl stones?
I am.
For example, let's just say we used profanity towards a co-worker and we were hit with,
"Oh, that's real Christian life.
You hypocrite."
I've heard that one too.
What if we met them with, "You know what?
You're right.
Every day I fall so short of the teachings of Jesus and every day I have an internal struggle.
Every day I have to ask the Lord to come in, clean me, forgive me, Lord, fix my broken human nature."
What are they going to say to that?
I don't speak from experience, but that part I still like to curl stones, but if anybody uses that, let me know what the comeback is for that.
But maybe that was the interaction that we were intended to have that day with that co-worker.
Moving on to John 9, starting at verse 1.
"As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth.
Rabbi, his disciples asked him, 'Why was this man born blind?
Was it because of his own sins or his parents' sins?'
'It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins,' Jesus answered.
'This happens so that the power of God can be seen in him.
We must quickly carry out the task assigned to us by the one who sent us.
The night is coming when no one can work, but while I am in the world, I am the light of the world.'"
Sounds a lot like us as we're indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
"Then he spit on the ground, made mud with saliva, and spread the mud over the blind man's eyes.
He told him, 'Go and wash yourself in the pool of Salaam.'"

Salaam means sin.

"So the man went, watched, and came back seeing.

His neighbors and others who knew him as a blind beggar asked each other, 'Isn't this the man who used to sit in bed?'

Some said he was, others said no, he just looks like no.

But the beggar kept saying, 'Yes, I am the same one.'

They asked who healed me.

What happened?

He told them the man who called Jesus made mud, spread it over my eyes, and told me,

'Go to the pool of Salaam and wash yourself.'

So I went and watched, and now I can see.

'Where is he now?' they asked.

'I don't know, you look like him.'

Then they took the man who had been blind to the Pharisees because it was on the Sabbath Jesus made mud and healed him.

The Pharisees asked the man all about it, so he told them.

He put mud over my eyes, and when I washed it away I could see.

Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man Jesus is not from God, for he is working on the Sabbath.'

Others said, 'But how can ordinary sinners do such miraculous signs?'

So there was a deep division of opinion among them.

When the Pharisees again questioned the man who had been blind and demanded, 'What's your

opinion about this man who healed you?'

The man said, 'I think he must be a prophet.'

The Jewish leaders still refused to believe the man had been blind and had been now seized, so they called in his parents.

They asked them, 'Is this your son?'

Was he born blind, and if so, how can he now see?'

His parents replied, 'We know this is our son and that he was born blind, but we don't know how he can see or heal him.

Ask him.

He's old enough to speak for himself.'

His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders who had announced that anyone saying that Jesus was the Messiah would be expelled from the synagogue.

And that's why they said, 'He's old enough to ask him.'

Now I leave that part in there because as a parent, I know I speak for myself, and I would say I speak for pretty much every parent and everyone in here today.

If I had a child that was born with a defect or a disability, I would give them a lot more than just my sight to see that they were healed.

But the fact is, when challenged by this world and what this world may think of you, how strong will we stand in our faith?

The Pharisees, I'm going to skip ahead, but the Pharisees continued to question the man, and what I can only guess to be divine intervention, the man began to challenge them and come to

teach them until they had heard enough and they threw them out of the temple.

So I'm going to skip ahead to verse 35.

When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the man and asked, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?'

The man answered, 'Who is he, sir?'

I want to believe in him.'

'You have seen him,' Jesus said, 'and he is speaking to you.'

'Yes, Lord, I believe,' the man said, and he worshipped Jesus.

Then Jesus told him, 'I entered this world to render judgment, to give sight to the blind

and to show those who think they can see that they are blind.'

Some Pharisees who were standing nearby heard him and asked, 'Are you saying that we are blind?'

'If you were blind, you wouldn't be guilty,' Jesus replied, 'but you remain guilty because you claim you can see.'

Spiritual blindness.

Are we in the Word enough to recognize the truth regardless of the teacher?

Maybe more importantly, when we recognize the lies.

Do we see the messages and the miracles that are laid before us every day?

I've listened to Tony Evans, Billy Graham, Pastor Brian, Bill, all great teachers and all true to the Word, but there's one bit of testimony, one lesson that I took away from a messenger you wouldn't exactly expect, and that was our very own little sister, Willie. If you guys were here for that Sunday, best Sunday ever.

Right?

Father, renew in me a childlike faith like that.

Sorry.

Moving on now to John 10, verse 1.

I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold rather than coming through the gate must surely be a thief and a robber, but the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.

The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him.

He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

After he's gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice.

And they follow him because they know his voice.

They won't follow a stranger.

They will run from him because they don't know his voice.

Those who heard Jesus change this illustration didn't understand what he meant, so they explained it to them.

I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep.

All who came before me were thieves and robbers, but the true sheep did not listen to them.

Yes, I am the gate.

Those who come in through me will be saved.

They will come and go freely and will find good pastures.

The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy.

My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd sacrifices his life in the sheep.

A hired hand will run as he sees the wolf coming.

He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd.

And so the wolf attacks and scatters the flock.

The hired man runs away because he's working only for the money and doesn't really care about the sheep.

Jesus' powerful stuff.

There's a lot going on here in scripture, back in scripture and other parables and other things that we learned in other books.

I am the good shepherd.

I know my own sheep and they know me.

Just as my father knows me and I know the father, so I sacrifice my life for the sheep,

I have other sheep too that are not of the sheepfold I must bring them also.

They will listen to my voice and there will be one flock, one shepherd.

The father loves me because I sacrificed my life so I may take it back again.

No one can take my life from me.

I sacrifice it voluntarily for I have the authority to lay it down when I want an altar to take it up again for this is what my father has commanded.
Now as you can imagine, this did not go over very well.
Some believed and many still didn't.
So how do we recognize his voice?
How do we see his lessons in everyday life?
How do we hear his callings?
Just as he was for these people, he may be right in front of us.
How do we know?
Maybe that co-worker was the rude awakening that we need to remind us that day that we are living outside of what is honorable.
Maybe Jesus is intending for us to be the mud that restores sight to that co-worker.
How do we know?
And we all know the answer.
Make it personal.
Be in prayer.
Be in the Word.
Be in relationship and you will hear his voice.
Listen to him.
Follow it.
Let him guide you and you cannot be misled.
Invest in him and he will invest in you.
He will prepare you for any situation.
He will give you the words to speak when you need them.
Make it personal.
Don't let this be the only hour or week that you dedicate to him.
Make him a part of your everyday lives.
Incorporate him in all that you do and you will hear him.
And believe me, I'm not up here speaking like I'm holier than thou.
As Stacy said last week, I'm up here speaking to myself.
I still love the Earl Stones.
My defense goes up first thing.
I'm probably still the biggest sinner in this church, but the big thing is I know that the Spirit is in me.
I know where I was, where I am now, and I see who I want to be.
As I said, I'm not a very good reader.
I'm more of a listener.
Personally, I take my use of the You version of Bible app.
As I'm working on a gun or projects around the house or something like that, I'll have that there.
I hit play and I listen to it.
I try to every day, but I fall short.
But I listen to that doing the projects and different things.
Sometimes I don't get a whole lot done on the projects.
I find myself sitting there just taking in the scenery, sitting out front, watching the skies, watching the mountains, praying, being in relation.
Sometimes that's the most productive day I have in a while.
Same thing that you guys probably see.
I do a lot of hunting and fishing, things like that, I should say.
That's my intention.
I go there a lot of times and I do a lot more praying than I do hunting or fishing, but I go there, I pray.
It definitely, definitely helps when you don't see many deer.
As many of you know, I did not get one this year.

Same thing with fishing.

I get fishing and at some point I'm just overwhelmed with just the blessings that I'm able to be out in his creation.

I find myself sitting on the banks, praying and talking to him, being in relation.

And it looks different for everybody.

Maybe for you it's on your way to or from work or during your lunch break.

Then try to read the Bible and drive, but listen to it as you're driving to or from work.

Put it on in your car, technology, things they have nowadays and hit play and listen to them.

During lunch if you want to take a break, wherever you are, pray, be in relation, be intentional.

If you take anything away from this message today, it's to make it personal.

Listen and maybe most importantly, obey.

If you're feeling that spiritual nudge, take that leap of faith.

Run for counsel.

Participate in one of the ministries.

Pray before, during or after church.

Pray with the person next to you in the news.

Participate in feet washing when we have it.

Make yourself uncomfortable.

I can tell you that there is power in humility.

Ask anybody that comes to the prayer meetings, decided to open up the prayer meetings that we host.

There is absolutely power in humility.

So be uncomfortable.

Be intentional.

Make it personal.

Make that personal investment in Christ and he will make that investment in you.

Take that leap of faith.

That is all that I have for today.

So thank you all very much.