

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

DEVO

JANUARY 27 - 31, 2025

THE STORY OF US

Sermon Series
Jan 5 - Mar 2



MONDAY

Read **Ephesians 4:1** (in several different versions)

Our Calling

“Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.”
(Ephesians 4:1 NLT)

Paul was a prisoner, living out a time of house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:16-31) when this book, along with Philippians, Colossians and Philemon, was written. Notice the similarity of Ephesians 3:1 and 4:1. It’s as if Ephesians 3:2-21 is a long tangent Paul has about his own sense of purpose and the calling of the Church. It concludes with an incredible prayer. In Ephesians 4, Paul returns to his original focus on how to be a part of the Church. He begins by sharing his earnest and strong desire that we live in a way that reflects God’s calling for us. We are reminded of our identity.

For many of us, when we consider God’s calling, we emphasize discovering our unique purpose and our spiritual gifts. While it is important to understand our gifts and God’s distinct call, this initial encouragement addresses the whole Church. Together we need to know who we are, whose we are, and what we are to do.

In the Old Testament, to “call” means to “name.” In Genesis 1, God created and called; God named creation. In the New Testament, the word “call” or “calling” is almost synonymous with our salvation. Salvation is more than a one-time event. It is ongoing transformation, becoming more like Jesus. We are called to be disciples or apprentices. That is what we are named, and we are to live that out. “Calling” is a metaphor for a life of faith. We are summoned. We have a divine invitation to a life that honors God. It gives us a shared sense of identity and purpose. It is reflected in Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 1:18-19a:

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in His holy people and His incomparably great power for us who believe.”

REFLECTION

- How would you describe God’s calling in your life?
- How are calling and hope related?

BREATH PRAYER

A breath prayer is a simple way of praying, following your natural breathing. It helps bring greater awareness of God’s presence and the desire of your heart. Each day of this devotional will include a simple breath prayer that is a response to the passage. Use this prayer now and throughout your day. You can also create your own.

Inhale: Almighty God, help me know ...

Exhale: ... the hope of our calling.

TUESDAY

Read **Ephesians 4:2-10**

Our Contribution to Unity

The most important thing in the story of us as a Church is given in these verses. We are reminded what characteristics and commitments ground us and how we can help create and maintain unity.

Unity was stressed in Ephesians 2:14-22 for Jews and Gentiles, as that reflected issues the early Church faced. Ephesians 4:2-3 offer us a wider view of personal characteristics that help bring about and protect unity. There are too many things that can attack and ruin unity, and we are reminded of the kind of people we need to be to help protect and maintain it. Unity is central to a thriving faith community.

In verses 4-6, unity is expressed by the commitments we have in Christ. Some theologians believe this was an early creed used by Paul. It is a reminder of the Apostles' Creed that we affirm at different times in our worship services. We affirm what is most important and foundational in our faith.

Paul's use of Psalm 68:18, and the explanation in verses 9-10, is challenging. The gifts Jesus gives are part of what he has done for us, but it is hard to understand how Psalm 68 relates. Early Jews

would have understood that Psalm 68:7-18 includes a reference to Moses who went up on Mt. Sinai to receive the law. Moses seems to be a prophetic picture of what Christ did. What is most significant is that Christ gives gifts as a way to build unity.

There is an old saying that summarizes unity: "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity." This was written by a fairly unknown theologian, Rupertus Meldenius. It was used to encourage Christ followers when religious tensions were significant. It calls for unity in the essential things, the core of truth in our union with Christ. In non-essentials have liberty (not the unimportant, but those things that if lacking do not prevent our union with Christ). Overall, keep love through Christ central.

REFLECTION

- What qualities contribute to unity?
- What stands out as a characteristic you want to develop?

BREATH PRAYER

Inhale: Compassionate God, help me see ...

Exhale: ... thow I can love someone today.

WEDNESDAY

Read **Ephesians 4:11-16**

Spiritual Gifts Contribute to Unity

Another aspect of unity comes from spiritual gifts. These verses in Ephesians describe some of the ways members of the Body of Christ are gifted. The other passages in Scripture include Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, and 1 Peter 4:7-11. These all describe the varied gifts of those who are part of the Body of Christ. It is important to consider that these lists are not necessarily exhaustive. God is creative and can empower people to serve in many different ways. In Exodus 31:1-5 we see how God gifts Bezalel and Oholiab with special skills to build part of the Tabernacle.

When we serve using our gifts, we each have a way of contributing to the unity of the Church. We are reminded from 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 that though there are differences, unity is significant and foundational:

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”

There is a place for each of us to be connected to the Spirit and with ourselves, to know what our gifts are, and to put our gifts to use. There is a relationship between each person using his/her gifts and unity in the Church. As individuals use their gifts, the faith community is strengthened and unified.

The final section of this passage implores us to use our gifts to grow into maturity. Christ, as the Source, gifts people to help bring this about. We are challenged to participate in this endeavor. A few metaphors that show people’s vulnerability include: babies who don’t develop, waves that toss people around, and winds that blow unpredictably. As we work together, each doing his/her part, our faith community matures and develops, becoming more discerning and less vulnerable. Each Christ follower has a part within the community. When each person does his/her part, it enables the body to function with interdependence and health. When we are connected to Christ in this way, love guides us, and love is what is formed in and through us.

REFLECTION

- What is (are) the gift(s) you have to offer the church?
- In what ways do you need to grow to be more mature?

BREATH PRAYER

Inhale: Loving God, show me how ...

Exhale: ... I can partner with you today.

THURSDAY

Read **Ephesians 4:17-24**

Putting Off and Putting On

It is evident that Paul longs to see the people in Ephesus grow and mature. This crucial passage emphasizes the radical transformation that occurs when one becomes a disciple of Christ. Paul instructs Christians to “*put off*” the old, the sinful part of ourselves, and to “*put on*” the new self that reflects Christ’s character to be able to live a life that is aligned with the new creation reality brought about by Jesus’ work on the cross.

We believe both the teaching of the gospels that stress that the human heart and mind are the source of evil behavior (Mark 7:14-23) and what we know from Ephesians 2:4-5 is that God is the One who truly changes our hearts and minds.

“But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.”

There is God’s part and our part in this journey of transformation. We are called to reject the old patterns of behavior associated with the “*old self*” (influenced by the world and sin) and embrace our new

identity in Christ, marked by renewal in how we live. It is not just a mental change but a complete renovation of our thoughts, actions, and desires, reflecting the reality of being made new in Christ. This new life in Christ also has direct implications on how we interact with others, demonstrating Christ-like characteristics.

This putting off and putting on is ongoing in our journey with Christ. Again, there is our part and there is God’s part. We are both new and being made new in Christ. Engaging in spiritual practices is one way we can make room for the Spirit to bring about renewal in us. Author of *The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, Adele Calhoun, says that “Spiritual practices make room for God to show up in our life. Prayer is a practice that intentionally opens us to the presence of Jesus. Singing, making music, praising God—all open us up to more of God.” Reflective reading, solitude and silence, serving, contemplative prayer, and so many more things are just a few spiritual practices that create space for God to bring about transformation.

REFLECTION

- What do you want to “*put off*”?
- What spiritual practice helps you to put on a Christ-like quality?

BREATH PRAYER

Inhale: Spirit of God, renew me ...

Exhale: ... from the inside out.

FRIDAY

Read **Ephesians 4:25-32**

Be Kind, Compassionate and Forgiving

In these verses we see the practical implications of a new life in Christ. This process emphasizes the need for us to actively put off old behaviors like anger, bitterness, and malice, and cultivate a life of love, forgiveness, and compassion. We are called to mirror the way God has forgiven us through Christ. Paul describes very practically what a renewed mind and a “new self” look like.

The passage is not just about personal behavior, but also about living out the reality of being part of the Body of Christ, where old divisions and hostilities are overcome. By putting on kindness, compassion, and forgiveness (Ephesians 4:32), we are called to actively embody the character of Christ.

Kindness is a virtue not often considered, but it remains central to faith in Christ. Kindness is one of the purest forms of how we can reflect the character of God. These verses not only challenge us in our behavior but remind us what God is like. We are called to unity, as this letter and especially this chapter stress. It is much easier to do this if we focus on kindness.

Once again in this passage Paul uses references from the Old Testament, quoting Zechariah 8:16 in verse 25 about speaking honestly to others. In verse 26 in dealing with anger, he quotes part of Psalm 4:4. It is important to note that he does not say you should not be angry, which is a natural human emotion. We are instructed to not let our anger lead us into sin. We are to live as those who have God’s mark of the Holy Spirit on us. This mark most likely refers to the official stamp on a document, marking it for a particular purpose. It indicates who it belongs to and what it is for. The Spirit is God’s stamp on us. We are reminded whose we are and what we are to do, our identity and our calling.

Those who are enslaved by anger or bitterness are in bondage and not free to be themselves. Since we are marked by the Spirit’s presence, it grieves the Spirit if we behave in ways that do not reflect the light and love of God. Fortunately, we have a God of compassion, forgiveness, and restoration. We also need to remember we can reach out for help when life becomes unmanageable. There are those who are skilled to help us navigate the challenges. We are part of a faith community and not made to handle life’s difficulties alone.

REFLECTION

- Which behavior listed in these verses do you struggle with?
- Which character quality do you most desire to develop?

BREATH PRAYER

Inhale: Merciful God, help me to forgive others ...

Exhale: ... as You have forgiven me.



Sources

- N.T. Wright, *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians & Philemon for Everyone*, 20th Anniversary Edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2023).
- Adele Calhoun, *The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015).

These devotionals are written by a team of Glenkirk volunteers who represent a range of beliefs within the evangelical spectrum. As such, some of the expressed views may not necessarily represent those of pastoral leadership. If you find yourself challenged by a devo, explore why that might be and, should you have questions or concerns, please reach out to Pastor Kate Wallace Nunneley at KNunneley@GlenkirkChurch.org. If you are interested in joining those who pen Glenkirk devotionals, please contact Pastor Kate.

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