



SERIES: Beyond Nice

| Week 1: Living The Life Worthy | |
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| <p>Connect</p>  <p>5 – 10 min</p> | <p>Tell us about someone you admired when you were growing up, and what it was about them that you found them attractive. (For kids/youth you could word it “who is someone you think is great, and what is one thing you like about them.”)</p> |
| <p>Gratitude</p>  <p>10 – 15 min</p> | <p>Song suggestion: Doxology (Amen) – Phil Wickham Spotify: Acoustic version from Children of God Album YouTube: youtu.be/clMjk3_skCs or youtu.be/aRNX-kMcRhQ</p> <p>Share: What is one thing that someone else did this week that you are grateful for?</p> |
| <p>Discover</p>  <p>25 min</p> | <p>Ephesians 4:1 (NIV) urges us to “live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is that calling? Brainstorm your initial thoughts then read Ephesians 3:6-12 (especially verses 6 & 10-12), Ephesians 4:11-13, Ephesians 5:1-2 and discuss further. • Where and how do you see relationships being important in these passages? (Consider both relationships with God and relationships with others. What impact do they have on each other?) <p>Living the life worthy of the calling we have received in Christ gives us a different perspective on our relationships. It can change their meaning and purpose for us, and motivate us to be much more than just “nice” people. We are called to be people who see with God’s eyes and act with God’s heart.</p> <p>Ephesians 4:2-3 gives us some starting points for how to do this. Verses 4-6 outline why putting them in to practice is important for God. Read Eph 4:2-6 now.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look back at the four attributes named in 4:2 - Humble, gentle, patient, bearing with one another in love. In conjunction with the “Digging Deeper” notes attached, discuss each one and the impact that applying (or not applying) them has (or can have) in our relationships. Use real life examples. • Keeping unity through the bond of peace (4:3) is a fifth attribute to cultivate. Relational unity is a priority for God. (see note in “Digging Deeper”) |
| <p>Act</p>  <p>10 min</p> | <p>What action is God asking of you in response to what you have just discovered in God’s word?</p> <p>Dare To Go Beyond <i>Each week of this series we are going to ask you to accept a challenge “dare to go beyond” in your daily relationships. Give it a go during the week, and report back next week.</i></p> <p>The Dare: Without fanfare, do something that you “shouldn’t have to do” at home, at work/uni/school, or anywhere else. Eg. wash up other’s stuff in the office tea room, pick up litter in a public place, let that pushy car merge in front of you, speak a kind word to someone who has been rude to you... Brainstorm ideas with the group if that helps. If you are praised or complimented in the course of doing your thing, make a conscious effort to respond with grace and humility rather than brushing it off and disregarding the other person’s opinion.</p> |

Digging Deeper

Adapted from Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, "Ephesians" by Francis Foulkes.

Ephesians 4:2

Four particular aspect of such a life are now named, and they are more than personal qualities. For the life worthy of the calling of God is a life in the fellowship of the people of God; and if this is to be maintained then these four virtues are vital.

The first two words are "**humble and gentle**", or in other translations "lowliness and meekness". It is emphasised by the word translated as "completely" (eg. NIV), "always" (eg. NLT) or "all" (eg. RSV, ESV). To the Greeks humility was not a virtue. To them, as indeed to most non-Christian people in any generation, the concept of fullness of life left no room for humility. In Christ lowliness became a virtue. His life and death were service and sacrifice without thought of reputation (Phil 2:6-7). Because the Christian is called to follow in his steps, humility has an irreplaceable part in the Christian character. (It also means that we realise the greatness and glory and holiness of God, and therefore realise our own weakness and sinfulness.) The second word (gentleness or meekness, in Greek *prautēs*), was used in classical Greek in the good sense of mildness or gentleness of character. Meekness in the New Testament is used of a person's attitude to the word of God, but more often of one's attitude to other people. It is closely connected with the spirit of submissiveness spoken of later in the letter. Another commentary author, C.L Mitton, describes meekness as "the spirit of one who is so absorbed in seeking some worthy goal for the common good that he refuses to be deflected from it by slights, injuries or insults directed at himself personally, or indeed by personal considerations of any kind."

The third word is "**patience**" (Greek *makrothymia*), a word sometimes used of steadfast endurance of suffering or misfortune, but more often, as is the case here, of slowness in avenging wrong or retaliating when hurt by another. It is used of God's patience with humanity, and the corresponding and consequent quality that the Christian should show towards others.

The fourth requirement is "**bearing with one another in love**" or "forebearance". It is also a divine quality. It is the practical outworking of longsuffering. Commentator T.K Abbott says "It involves bearing with one another's weaknesses, not ceasing to love one's neighbours and friends because of those faults in them which perhaps offend or displease us." Such forbearance, and indeed all these four qualities are possible only *in love*. For love is the basic attitude of seeking the highest good of others, and it will therefore lead to all these qualities and include them all. Paul has prayed that his readers may be "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph 3:17), and now he exhorts (encourages) them to do their part, and to go on to possess all these virtues *in love*.

Ephesians 4:3

All that now follows in the rest of the letter may be considered an expansion of the appeal that has just been made. But its first particular application is to the unity of Christians. This unity is a gift of God, made possible by the cross of Christ, and is made effective by the working of the Spirit of God. Human beings cannot themselves create it; it is given to them, but their responsibility is to keep it, to guard it in the face of many attempts from within and without the church to take it away. Christians are to be eager to maintain the unity. The means to such unity is through maintaining the **bond of peace**. If by love people can live in the peace that Christ has bought them, then unity will be kept indeed.