

In a Manner Worthy

Ephesians 4

Bruce Stallings

Okay, you've got your copies of God's Word. Turn to the fourth chapter of Ephesians. We're going to spend a few moments this evening in this, just an incredible, chapter, really. As you know, Paul writes the letter to the church at Ephesus and he does so when he's in prison. And all of Paul's letters are unique. So as you go through the epistles, as you're looking at the different letters that Paul wrote to the different churches, they're all different for example, this would be different or unique from the letter he wrote to the church at Colossae. There's no evidence that Paul actually ever went to Colossae. And so that's what makes it a unique letter.

But this one to the church at Ephesus, he pastored them. He served there, he ministered to them. So he knows these people. He's writing back to them in an informed manner. And he takes the first three chapters of Ephesians to lay out the gospel and the work of Christ, and to put the emphasis, there's no way you can read the first three chapters of Ephesians and not feel the emphasis on sort of salvation on what God does, and certainly not on what a man does. And then at the end of chapter three, he says something that's really a benediction. It almost feels like he's ending his letter. Now to the Ephesians. He says in verse 20 of chapter three, *now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.* And you could almost think this is a three-chapter letter, and we're done with the book. But he then begins in chapter four with a new section, which is based upon what he's already said in the first three chapters. So let's start in Ephesians 4:1.

I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit, in the bond of peace.

There is one body and one spirit just as you were called to one hope that belongs to your call. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. The grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gifts. Therefore, it says, when he ascended on high, he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men in saying, he ascended.

What does it mean but that he also descended into the lower regions of the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the works of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to

and fro by the waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes, rather speaking the truth and love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head into Christ, from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Now this I say and testify in the Lord that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart, they've become callous and have given themselves over to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

But that is not the way you learned Christ. Assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life, and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God, and true righteousness and holiness.

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. Give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such is good for building up as fits the occasion. That it may give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as Christ in God forgave you. Therefore, be imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love as Christ loved us, and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Well, I'm going to take a page out of Pastor Reeder's playbook and use it on you this evening and just say to you that I only have three points. Really? You're going to do the entire fourth chapter of Ephesians and two more verses in chapter five, because somebody missed that line, in my opinion. But you're going to do all that and only three points? Well, yes. now, what Pastor Reeder also taught me was, whatever you do, just say, Bruce, you're only going to do three points. Don't tell them there are three sub points for every three points. And there's a life takeaway which has three sub points, because if you tell them you have 12 points they're going to disconnect from you. So, I only have three points tonight from the book of Ephesians. And those three points are pretty simple. There's when we talk about this walking in a manner worthy of the calling, we'll talk about three different types of callings, three objectives for those, callings and then three manners worthy of your calling. Well, three types of calling. There are many different callings the Lord may put on us. The Lord could call you to something in a

moment, and it could be done in just a moment. After that, the Lord gives you a word to say to someone. The Lord calls you to go minister to your neighbor in a time of need, so the Lord can place all sorts of different callings upon our life. But three that I would want to point out to you tonight, first of all, is a general calling, okay?

1. A **general calling** -- by general calling I mean this calling would be an invitation. You would be invited, to something. It would be like a marriage proposal, the aspect of a marriage proposal. "Will you marry me?" carries the opportunity that, at least back in my day, that you didn't know what the answer was going to be from the person that you asked. And so you were a bit nervous because you weren't sure if you're about to be accepted or if you're about to be rejected. You could accept an invitation of a general call. You could reject an invitation of a general call to some degree. John 3:16 contains a general call. *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever will and whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* That's in a sense, an invitation. 15 or 20 years ago I ceased to argue with people over whether or not that really was a general invitation to salvation. And I finally said, you're right, okay. It's a general invitation for all of mankind to be saved, as long as we agree that none of mankind is capable of responding to that call -responding to that invitation. The fortunate part of it is it is a call to the world. Unfortunately, every single one of us is a sinner and we're completely incapable of responding to the call.
2. Therefore, God has to shift from the general call, an invitation, to what we would call an **effectual calling**. In other words, this is the calling of the Holy Spirit. This is not an invitation. This is a compulsion. This is God causing something, to happen. And if it's confusing for you, that gets real clear when we look at Ephesians 2, this is what we refer to as the irresistible grace, the irresistible work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It's when God opens our blind eyes and our deaf ears for us, not gives us an invitation to respond to. But he literally opens our blind eyes and our deaf ears. Ephesians 2 says, and you were dead in your trespasses and sins. I would encourage you to spend a minute or a lifetime studying the word *dead*. You're going to come to the same conclusion at either end of that study, and that is completely incapable of any action whatsoever. Dead, completely incapable of saving ourselves. We were dead in the trespasses and sins in which we once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind. So he's speaking to believers, and he's saying, you used to be dead in your trespasses. You were just like all of mankind. Then verse 4, those beautiful two words, **but God**, but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, he made us. He compelled us. This is the effectual work of the Holy Spirit. He made us alive together with Christ. It doesn't say he responded to us. He

made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. And he raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. So in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship.* We are the word. There is a poem, where his work of art -- we are His Holiness project. He says, look what I can do with this sinful lump of clay, and I can turn it into this beautiful, beautiful holiness project. That's the *we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works*, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. The effectual call of the Holy Spirit on our lives is common to all believers. There aren't multiple ways you can be effectually called by the Holy Spirit. The Lord may deliver it in different ways, obviously we have different testimonies of how that played out, but at the end of the day, it's the same thing that happened to all of us. We were dead in our trespasses and God made us alive in Christ Jesus.

I would stop here since we are trying to ponder what it looks like to walk in a manner worthy of the calling? Sometimes we think maybe theology is just a little bit of a disagreement. Maybe you just see it a little different way, but is it okay if we all just end up in heaven?

I'm going to suggest to you that if you take one of two paths of theology and you convince yourself that what God has done is simply to invite people to himself, and you are smart enough to answer yes, you'll have one response for the rest of your life and the rest of your days on this earth. If you truly believe that you were dead in your trespasses and sins, and there's absolutely nothing you could have done for yourself and God by his own grace and by his own mercy, made you alive in Christ, then I doubt you wake a day without thanking him for that salvation and thanking him for that. And I'd say that alters the manner in what we learn from the Lord in our walk with the Lord.

This is the shift that I actually asked God to do. So when I asked Sonia to marry me, I was unsure of her answer. We'd not had that discussion yet. Thinking back, it might have been good to allude to that a few times before we had that question, just thinking back a little bit. And so I, instead of doing that, I was convinced that the Lord would have me ask her to marry me, and I ask that he turned my invitation of, Will you marry me into an effectual calling? Would you compel her? Would you instead of opening her blind eyes and deaf ears, would you darken her eyes? And would you close her ears and make her say yes, because she's a woman of her word, and she'll never go back on it? And it worked. And I've benefited every day since.

3. The third type of calling that we would look at a **general calling**. An effectual calling is a personal calling. Paul makes some reference here, by illustration, probably more than than direction, to this, personal calling. Whereas a general calling is an invitation and a

effectual calling is a compulsion. This is not really a personal calling and is not an invitation. God is not saying, would you like to be an apostle? Would you like to be a pastor teacher? Would you like to be a father? Would you like to be a wife? That's not what God's doing, but it's also not necessarily a compulsion that God makes you do that in terms of you have no choice and you were dead in that. In this we are very much alive. but this would be more termed as a command. This is the command that God gives to us in our personal calling. We are commanded to play a particular role that he chooses to play this particular role in the body of believers. Be very clear, a command of the Lord, a personal calling of the Lord can be resisted, but not without consequence. You can resist the calling of the Lord. We have examples all throughout Scripture of resisting the calling of the Lord. Jonah resisted the calling of the Lord, probably one of the great examples. And if you use that one, you don't have to use any other. So efficiency of time, you get it. He tried to resist the personal calling. God did not call everyone to go to Nineveh. He did call Jonah. Jonah said, no. God changed his no to a yes. You know the story, God works through us so that we would be entrusted with this personal call. And a lot of this is explained to us when Paul, in his letter to the church in Corinth, his first letter to them, when Paul in chapter 12, is explaining the church as a body and how the body has many different parts. He says this. He says now there are a variety of gifts, but the same spirit. There are a variety of services, but the same Lord. There are a variety of activities, but it's the same God who empowers them all and everyone to each is given the manifest version of the spirit for the common good. In other words, God has so determined the gifts that you are to receive, the services, the roles that you are to embrace and to engage in the activities that are going to be produced in and through you. And he's done that not simply for your success. He's done that for the common good of the church. Everybody has their role for the common good, he says. All of these are empowered by one in the same spirit who apportioned to each one individually as he wills. For just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body, though many are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one spirit we were all baptized into one body Jews or Greeks, slaves or free. And we're all made to drink of one spirit. For the body does not consist of one member, but of many. He declares that God arranged the members of the body, each one of them as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts. Yet one body God so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. Now you are the body of believers. You're the body of Christ, and individually members of it.

Well, when Paul is making his reference to his personal calling and there can be multiple callings on your life, you can have multiple roles at one time that God calls them. But Paul acknowledged that he was called to be an apostle. And if you go through all of his different letters, you will see him begin almost every one of those letters, in similar fashion to the church

at Ephesus and back in the beginning of Ephesians one, he said, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God. He says the same thing to the Colossians. To the Corinthians he says, Paul called by the will of God to be an apostle to Timothy. He said, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by command of God and Savior, and of Christ Jesus our hope. In the Galatians, Paul an apostle, not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father.

And then to Titus he references this call as being entrusted by the command of God. Paul was an apostle by the will of God. He didn't sign up to be an apostle. He didn't run for apostle. He didn't seek after being an apostle. He was called by God to be an apostle. And you noticed in the passage that we read in Ephesians four, there were multiple different roles or callings apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers, Dr Doriani reference, other calls of administration, health services, etc. leadership. These different roles, these different calls that we are given by the Lord. If everybody in this room is a believer, and I certainly pray that they are. But if every person in this room is a believer, that means that every person in this room has a different role, a different personal calling, and all of them, no matter what they are - And you would have multiple ones - It's by the will of God.

The reason you are that is because God has so determined that even giving you a desire for it, you might say, I think I chose that. Yeah, God chose that for you and caused you to want it. He altered the desires of your heart that you would actually want, and that you would embrace whatever that call is.

So, I have thought through in my life trying to figure out, okay, I need different statements for myself, different what I call compass statements that I would use. And so following in Paul's leading, declaring himself to be an apostle by the will of God, I am not an apostle. I don't care how small you make the "A," I am not under any circumstance an apostle. But, I am a father. I'm a father by the will of God. I'm not a father by my choosing. I'm a husband -- a lot better. I prayed about it hard. But I'm not a husband by my choosing. I'm a husband by the will of God. I'm a teacher, not a teacher by my choosing. I never sought out to be a teacher. But I'm a teacher by the will of God. And what God's trying to teach us the role is the insignificant part. The will of God part is the significant part. So, it's not that we focus upon what that role is, because that can change ten times in our life. It's the will of God that we are serving -- the will of God, that we are embracing and wanting to own, the will of God.

So I developed my statement. ***I serve as the executive pastor at Briarwood, by the will of God, at the pleasure of the pastor, under the authority of the session as a whole*** and I repeated that to myself over the last probably 15 to 18 years. Okay. You say you've been here 23. It took me a while to figure it out. Okay. but for the last 15 or 18 years, I've repeated that to myself to remind myself, okay, why do you do what it is that you do? It's by the will of God. That's where it begins. The direction of the Lord. That's why I knew with the Lord putting a burden upon my heart and mind in terms of the future of Briarwood that's why I knew I needed to seek him and to, diligently pray and ask him what I should do next, as opposed to tell him what I thought he ought to have me do. And the Lord was faithful to provide the call that I go to Columbia with Dr.

Neil Stuart to serve in a very similar capacity that I served in here, for well over a year, maybe, maybe closer to two years.

A daily prayer was, what does my Lord say to his servant? To just humble myself and lay myself before him? What does my Lord say to his servant? With the full expectation that no matter what he said, no matter where he said go, no matter who he said do it with, I would simply do as that example. And Joshua tells us, I would simply do as Joshua did. And one of my favorite words in that book of Joshua are *and Joshua did* so here's a lot packed up in that. But what a what a wonderful declaration of obedience. And I want that to be a true of my life as well.

I hope you know the calling that the Lord has placed upon your life at a personal level. What is your personal calling? What are your services? What are your roles? What is it that God has put before you and that you know that is by the will of God? That you do that, therefore you do it as unto God, knowing that it's by the will of God. It's his determination. It becomes a stewardship issue for us that we would do it as unto him.

Well, next grouping, there are three objectives of the callings. Okay. So there are three types of callings. And so three objectives to the calling. The first one is easy and obvious.

1. The primary objective to the callings the Lord places in our life is **salvation**. That is the primary calling, hands down. Because if not, then what we're doing is we become hollow people trying to serve a Lord who's not really our Lord. If we're not truly believers, if we don't have the tested genuineness of our faith, and then we are living a very miserable, lifestyle so, the number one objective of the effectual call, the number one adjective, even of the personal call, is our salvation to be found in Christ alone. And that is the priority for our life. And it's the largest and greatest priority we could ever be used by God to give anyone else in any way. No matter what happens in our life, no matter what path, our life might cross someone else, there is no greater issue than our salvation and the salvation of other people. If that's not the predominant aspect of our prayer life, in gratefulness and in prayer fullness for other people that you would know in your life family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, whatever it may be that that don't know the Lord, then it ought to be. We ought to be beseeching the Lord for the number one objective of his work, and that is the salvation of our souls.
2. Number two is very close to it, though it's hard to separate. It's impossible actually to separate. Number two is our **sanctification**. So it's our salvation, but then our sanctification, sanctification. We are called to, as this Ephesians four passage says in verse 13, to attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature, the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes, rather speaking the truth and love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head into Christ, from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped,

when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so it builds itself up in love. When God saves us and opens our eyes and opens our ears or understanding of the gospel, when he saves us, he begins the process of sanctifying us. That's why Paul said earlier in Ephesians that, having believed we were marked, we were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. Why, that is God. I think sometimes I got this backwards for years and years and years. That is why God gave us his holiness. So always think about the Holy Spirit. And it's a bit confusing for me until I remind myself this is God putting his holiness inside of us. Holy is not the Spirit's first name. I say that with a little bit of sarcasm, because I used to think it was, And so it's not that it's not just Holy Spirit, it's not just a general descriptor. It is who he is. The spirit is holiness. It's God placing holiness inside of us to do many actions, but to work with us for our sanctification, which is to make us holy. Because when we become a Christian, we don't quit sinning. When we become a Christian, we know that we'll sin again. And we go through this process of becoming holy. And he gives what I think is the formula for sanctification. In verse 22 he says, to put off your old self. In Colossians he said, to put to death your old self, put off your old self which belongs to your former manner of life, and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new self-created after the likeness of God and true righteousness and holiness. So the formula is to put off your old self. That's anything that does not belong in the life of a believer. Notice he says this is corrupt through deceitful desires. Put an asterisk there whose deceitful desires man say, my old self is corrupt through my sinful desires, and unfortunately I still have to do battle with some of that remaining sin. I still have to wrestle with that remaining sin. I'm no longer under the dominion of sin. Praise the Lord, and I've still got to do battle with that remaining sin. Some of those deceitful desires. Who are those desires deceiving me? You know who my biggest adversary is in my walk with God? Me? I could blame a lot of other people. It's me. It's me dealing with me and trying to engage in this sanctification process to put to death that old sinful, desires and to put to life, to put on, to add to the new self, which is what it is created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. You're taking off sin, and you're putting on holiness and I love the way that, Paul and this this letter to the church at Ephesus, he gives some examples you'll see on there no longer speak falsehood, instead speak truth.

Okay. How do you remove and put to death, put out of your life, falsehood? Well, I can tell you the Bruce Stallings' way. You won't like it. You might have tried it. It doesn't work. This is how I don't lie. You ready? You can write this down. Don't lie. Don't. Don't don't don't don't don't don't don't don't don't lie, don't lie. You know what I do then? I LIE!.

So what does sanctification say? It's not enough not to lie. How do you not lie? You speak the truth, so you pursue speaking the truth. Can't speak the truth a lot. Same time and the same topic. So you pursue speaking the truth and being a truth speaker. But it's

even better of an example. When he gets to the thief, he says to a thief, let the thief no longer steal. We would agree with that, right? But this is where Bruce comes up way short with my expectation and my goal of sanctification. I would say that when we get the thief to quit stealing, we've done our job. If somebody were stealing amongst us and we said, look, you can't keep stealing and hang around here, you got to stop stealing. He says, okay, I'll stop stealing. And he does. We'd be fine. But that's half of the process of sanctification. What he says is let the thief no longer steal. Instead, what's the opposite of stealing, which is taking from someone that which is not yours, and that is the opposite of that is to give to someone that which is yours. The Holy Spirit's not done until the thief becomes a sharer, until the thief becomes a giver. Let the thief get a job so he's got something to give and then let him give to other people. That is sanctification. So in every area of my life, it's not enough that I'm just trying to figure out what all the don'ts are and don't do those things. But I'm trying to embrace these things that the Holy Spirit points to us and shows to us and says, put this on in its place. As he gets down to verse 30, he says very specifically, indirectly, do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

What is the Holy Spirit trying to do? He's trying to put out of our lives the things that don't belong, by putting into our lives the things that do belong. And so look what he says in verse 31 and verse 32, let all circle, underline, highlight all that, **all bitterness, all wrath, all anger, all clamor, all slander. Let it all be put away from you along with all malice.** These things shouldn't belong in your life. What does he do? Look at verse 32 be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

The focus is upon sanctification has not ended its process until we embrace and become, a faithful follower of Christ. That is kind to one another. I got news for you. If you do verse 32, you won't have to worry with verse 31, if you fight and wrestle with verse 31, trying to find the line where you don't quite slander, but you certainly do speak ill, or you don't really clamor, but you do complain a pretty good amount, or you're not really anger. You maybe even want to justify. It is righteous anger, but we all know it ain't righteous, or you're not completely bitter. But where is the line? Just how bitter can I be? Then we'll just fail in our walk with the Lord. Instead, we focus on being kind to one another, being tenderhearted to one another. We focus on and commit to forgiving one another as we have been forgiven. That will cover a multitude of sins. If we're honest about the degree to which we've been given, we've been forgiven, then we will be able to forgive one another even before they end the question Will you forgive me?

3. The third objective is our **unity**. So we puts before us our salvation as an objective, our sanctification, and then our unity. Great news! We're all in this together. And guess what? We're all a work in progress. We're in it together. It's our unity. But none of us have arrived. There aren't any people then to put up to the front of the class and to say they're perfect, just do what they do. We're all a work in progress. Some in some areas

we're struggling. In other areas we might be having success, but God put us together intentionally. Look at all the oneness that he declares to us at the very beginning in verse four. One body, one spirit, one hope, one that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

We are one body of many different, varied, parts that each have its different role. And we're all a bit of a holiness project at different phases and at different, and at different, different levels. he chose God does an interesting thing in his makeup of the church. And I would say we can think of big C, church, meaning the church universal. We can think of Briarwood Presbyterian Church. God does an amazing thing. It's actually opposite as it usually is, of what we do. God says, be unified. We say, let's all think the same way. If we all think the same way, if we all act the same way, if we all try to mimic and each other, then we'll be unified.

God says no, no, no, just the opposite. I'm going to make you so unbelievably different that you will, have to depend upon one another. See this illustration he gives to the body? It's a beautiful illustration, he said. When each part is working properly, then the body builds itself up in love. But it doesn't build itself up in love. When everybody decides, let's all be a hand, or let's all be a foot, or let's all be an ear, or let's all be an eye. That's not that doesn't build the body up, that handicaps, the body. The body of believers is made strong when each part is doing its unique. God given, God called command entrusted stewardship to play that role, and the rest of the body looks and recognizes that they benefit from that.

I would just give you a testimony of some, small level of spiritual maturity in my life. And I mean that -- some small level. When I was younger, I'm not young anymore but when I was younger, I would want to work with people and around people and alongside of people that were very much like me. Now, there's a reason I wanted to do that, right? And y'all aren't going to make me declare it. Are you okay? You are all right. It's because I thought I was right, okay. And so if I want to work with a lot of right people, then they got to be just like me, right? Because I'm right. So for them to be right, they have to think like me. Only to realize how warped that was. That was about a year ago. I'm kidding. I then began to very much desire people that were the most unlike me, the people who had gifts and abilities and callings from me - I can't do any of those things. And I need those things, and I need to work alongside those people, those things.

And that's part of watching that body work together. I have no ability to accurately articulate, to you how, this body of believers has been used by God in my life. The people that are in this room that have poured into my life, the people that are in this room that are so unbelievably unique and different from me, they think differently from me. They approach things differently, from me. But the Lord has used them as godly men and women to shape and to mold my perspectives, to broaden my understanding and my view of God, to understand Jesus at a whole other level, because their relationship with the Lord brought to evidence new things and different things and insights and under and understandings.

And I have learned so much by watching them. I've learned so much by listening to them. And I've been challenged. I've been challenged by faithful, friends who loved me enough to speak truth into my life, and to give me patience and give me time to process and time to grow.

I was 36 years old when Pastor Reeder asked me to prayerfully consider, being his Executive Pastor. I laughed then -- I cry now , just thinking about, doing that, embracing that particular thing. But this church has loved me well, this church has been patient with me, and I appreciate that. And I'll say this. I know my family does appreciate it. I know my wife, appreciates, a little bit of spiritual growth and maturity. But on behalf of our whole family, we thank you. We thank you for walking with us in this, walk with the Lord. I think one of my favorite expressions of Briarwood being the body functioning, as the body and seeing different unique parts do their different things. As the walk-through nativity scene, when I watch people get so excited about parking, so excited about setting up a scene as if Jesus will come back if that building gets built just the right way. I'm thinking, you know, that's a hollow building. You realize that they're so committed using their gifts, people that invite people, people that share the gospel with people. People that encourage people. People that make what seemingly is impossible so easy to people and get them to do things they never thought that they could actually, do. That's the body, working together.

Well, three manners worthy of our walk. In other words, he says walk in a manner worthy of the calling that you have received. What would be a manner worthy? I'll put three of them to us that I think come out of this passage.

1. One is that we walk in a holy manner. We walk in a holy manner imitating our father. He says in chapter 5:1, *therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children*. Write that down on a three by five card and ponder it for a little while. Holy God calls us to imitate him. Wow! Walk in a holy manner. God is committed to our holiness. I have to ask myself a question. What percent of holiness have I embraced as an acceptable goal? Ask it again. What percent of holiness have I embraced as an acceptable goal? I'm not going to give you a number. I wish I could say it was 100%. It's a struggle. It's hard. Too many excuses, too many reasons to be able to say I can't be holy. God calls us to holiness. I know his number is 100%. You see, God has to make us holy for us to spend eternity with him. You do know there are no unholy people in heaven. You have to be holy to be in heaven. That's God's work, okay? That's God's work. That's why he gives us His Holy Spirit to embrace that word. But what he calls us to is a lifelong pursuit of holiness. Never satisfied, never throwing in the towel, never accepting some, sin, but pursuing a holiness by the power of the Holy Spirit. And that is why we are so grateful. The Lord has given us the opportunity to repent of our sins.
2. Secondly, to walk in a loving manner. So walk in a holy manner imitating your father. Walk in a loving manner, imitating your Savior. he says in verse two there and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to

God. I could say a lot about love. I do want to say a few things to you, but I could say a lot about it. But let's just all agree that love is not a declaration. It's a demonstration. We. It's too easy to say, you know, I love you, but still he said, I love you. But when you say I love you, then we should go. Okay? Love is patient. Love is kind. Does not envy your verbose, does not arrogant or rude. It doesn't insist on its own way. It's not irritable or resentful. It doesn't rejoice that wrongdoing. It rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things. Love believes all things. Love hopes all things. Love endures all things. Love never ends. Love is not as much a declaration as it is a demonstration. And that's what Christ did for us. He demonstrated his own love for us. He gave himself sacrificially, in loving us. And I, I really do feel like. And I mean this honestly, I feel like I could say, as Paul said to the, when he wrote to the church in Thessalonica, when he said, now, concerning Brother Love, you have no need for anyone to write to you. For you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, for that indeed is what you are doing. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more. And so I could say the same thing to you. Please. This is not an emotional farewell. Thank you. Saying I have been loved so incredibly well, I have no complaint to/before anyone. To anyone. We have been unbelievably loved, by Briarwood Presbyterian Church. That's you. We've been unbelievably loved by you. And we've benefited from that love. All I can say is, I urge you to do it all the more.

I do have a charge for you. That sentence surprise you? I do have a charge for you. And that charge, that I would give to you, is that you **start loving your next pastor**. Now, do you love him already? You can. Some of you know this. I'm not sure if everybody knows this, but, Ben, my son Ben, and our daughter in law, Kathleen are expecting our first grandchild. They're a little confused about that, but that's the way it is, right? So they're expecting our grandchild? I don't know if it's a boy or a girl. I don't know its name. If I've raised my son right, it'll be James Bruce. But I don't know that he's going to do that. Right. And so I'm not sure of the name. I don't know what it will look like. I have no idea anything about it whatsoever. But if you're a grandparent in this room, you know this. I love that grandchild already. Love that grandchild. Can't wait to see that, grandchild. When we were first starting to have children, we were just on the heels of this, when you delivered a baby the husband, as it should be, was often another wing. over there waiting in a waiting room. There was a nursery, and there was a window. And so they would take your baby into this nursery, and there were 12 other babies in there, and they would put it down, and then the nurse would point to the one, and now the father's in that room, and all the grandmothers and the mother and everybody else would look, and all this love that they've been building up for seven, 8 or 9 months gets poured into that one child that's like that. That's the and it looks just like me. Every one of them said the same thing. They look very different, but it looks just like me. That's the one.

Well, I would encourage you, don't wait. Start loving your next pastor. Now. You don't know him. I don't know who it is. Nobody to my knowledge, nobody on the face of this earth knows who the next Briarwood pastor is going to be what God does. But you don't have to know him

to love him. Start loving him. Start praying for him. Start asking the Lord to be at work in his life. Start asking the Lord to be at work in in your lives so that when you come all it takes us for God to go that one and all that love gets poured in and he and his wife, and if they have a family, are overwhelmed by all this pent up love that, gets poured out upon them.

3. The third, manner is to walk in a **unifying**, manner to imitate the Holy Spirit. He is our unifier. He said that in verse three, we were being eager to maintain the unity of the spirit with the bond of peace, eager, eager to maintain unity. You know, when eager to maintain unity gets challenged when someone disagrees with you, when someone says something that's different than the way that you would say it, then you're either going to be eager to make your counter point, or you're going to be eager to maintain the unity, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Notice that not only did he say eager, but he said maintain.

Here's a perspective that I would pass on to you. It took me a while to understand this and to try to apply it into my life. when he says maintain the unity of the spirit that does that means that God does not call us to create unity in the church. If we all have the Holy Spirit in us, in us, we have the bond. We are bound together by peace with God in Christ Jesus. That's our bond, okay? Therefore, we are unified. The first step to maintaining the unity in the spirit, in the bond of peace, is to quit creating division. It's not that you have to go figure out how to get unified, it's that you have to stop dividing. And so, he says, be eager to maintain what I've already placed there. I've already given you one spirit. I've already focused on one Savior. I've already united you that you have peace together. And what you have in common is the most unique thing in the world, in all of the earth, that we are saved from our sins with every tribe, nation, language, and people group. That's a bond of peace and we have unity in the spirit. Now, may we not walk in a way that would create division for that. He explained some things that will help foster, that unity that he gives to us, to help us maintain the unity of the spirit, and that is to walk in all humility and all gentleness with patience, bearing with one another in love. Why would he have to add bearing with one another in love? Because we're all holiness projects and we're all different levels, and we're all having different experiences. And so it has challenges for us.

Well, I'll end with a life takeaway, and I'll admit that I worked hard on this life takeaway. I'm going to go ahead and tell you it won't fit on a bumper sticker, right? Won't fit on a bumper sticker. But life's not lived on the back end of a car. What a statement. That was a wonderful statement and I can't quite make it the way pastor made it... ***Walking in a manner worthy of your calling as a walk of deep appreciation, empowered imitation and loving participation to the glory of God.***

Deep appreciation for the effectual call we are. We have been saved from our sins. Nothing can ruin that. Nothing can take that away from us. Empowered imitation. Thank the Lord that he

gave us this Holy Spirit. What if he called us to imitate himself without the spirit? What if he called us to imitate His Son without the Holy Spirit? But he's given us the Holy Spirit so that we would be empowered, and a life pursuit of imitating God, seeking to be holy and then loving participation. I thank the Lord we get to be one body, many parts. I thank the Lord he didn't call us all to be the same. What a pleasure, what a joy, what a learning process, an appreciation, for, for one another that we could, in a loving way, participate in this, together.

I'll end, and then I want to conclude giving you just a moment of prayer. But I'll end with just wanting to make sure that, you know, how much Sonya I have loved serving the Lord with you these last 23 years. We will always treasure our time here with you. We have learned so much from you. You have said way too many times how we have done something for you or in your life. We have received 100 fold of what we have given. That's the way the Lord works and we thank him for that. It is hard to leave. It is hard to go. but the Lord says, go. And we say, yes, Lord.

Well, I'm going to give you just a moment, and a conclusion, just to spend a few moments and time to process. Is your walk, worthy of your calling? Is it a grateful walk, or do you need to yet again tonight, just acknowledge to the Lord how grateful you are and that maybe you haven't been doing that on a regular basis.

Is it a walk that pursues a holiness? Do you need to confess, an acceptance of much less than holiness? Is it a walk of love, demonstrated love not just declared, love? Is it a walk? Deferring. Deferring to the needs of others, so that you would be eager to maintain, unity of the spirit in the bond of peace?

Take a few moments in prayer.