

YOUR NEW VOCATION

Ephesians 4.1: Paul's exhortation and example of a worthy walk in our new job

Theme: Live your life according to your new vocation in Christ—live like a disciple to make disciples.

Today we start the second half of Ephesians: (Eph 4-6) Practical Application

- Remember the theme of Ephesians: It is a book about our new life “in Christ.”
 - ✓ Ephesians shows us all that we have “in Christ” (all that we have being sons of God).
- And we have just seen three great doctrinal truths of this theme in the first three chapters:
 - ✓ Ephesians 1: In Christ we have a new beginning (with all spiritual blessing).
 - ✓ Ephesians 2: In Christ we have all receive a big change (death to life, far off to brought near).
 - ✓ Ephesians 3: In Christ we have a new Apostle (Paul) that leads us in our new stewardship.
- Now it's time to take these doctrinal truths and put some shoes on them! Now it's time to see just how we who are in Christ are expected to live in this world.

The second half of Ephesians (Eph 4-6) speaks about our “walk” in Christ.

- It's wonderful to contemplate all the great doctrinal truths about our new position in Christ (and that's where we need to start!).
- But we also live each day in the world, and so our faith needs to be practical also.
- So, just as Paul does in most all of his Epistles, he takes the first half of Ephesians to lay the doctrinal foundation (teaching) and then he uses the second half to show us the practical application of that.
- In Ephesians 4-6, Paul is going to speak about our walk—about doing the “first works” in the Christ.
 1. (Eph 4) ...how to walk in the new man.
 2. (Eph 5) ...how to walk as a “children of light.”
 3. (Eph 6) ...how to walk in the spiritual warfare of the daily Christian life (the struggles we all have!).

(Rev 2.1-7) Remember that the message to the Ephesians is a good message for us at Harvest Baptist.

- Paul writes to the Ephesian church around AD 65. John writes to them 30 years later, around AD 95. John wrote to the Ephesians when the problems Paul addressed had 30 years to develop.
- (Rev 2.1-3) The Ephesians had a good church: They had sound doctrine and good works (we could say that they took their Christianity seriously).
- (Rev 2.4) But, they had a problem: They left their first love (they were given more to doctrine and works than to Christ Himself).
- (Rev 2.5) The solution is given in two parts:
 1. Remember! And that is what we did in the first half of Ephesians: Paul reminded us of what we have in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. But this in and of itself is not sufficient, so...
 2. Repent! Stop doing what is wrong and start doing what is right! Get back to the “first works” so that you will get back to walking with the Lord. This is what we are going to see in Ephesians 4-6.

Ephesians 4: Paul starts out his practical application for us by talking about our walk in the new man.

- (Eph 4.1-16) That means God wants us to do something. Our new life in Christ has resulted in a new vocation, and that means that there is something new that the Lord has give us to do.
- (Eph 4.17-32) That also means that God wants us to stop doing other things. So, in the latter part of Ephesians 4, we are going to see that we need to replace old, sinful behaviors with new Christ-like ones.

This morning, I want to look only at Ephesians 4.1: Our New Vocation.

- This is the central and key theme of the rest of the book, so we need to understand it.
- And we need to understand how to “walk” in this new vocation (how to actually do it, practically).

I. Your Vocation in Christ: The Work of the Ministry

A. Every saint (born-again believer) has a new “vocation” (you have a new calling, a new job!).

1. This is the work that God has given each and every one of us to do.
2. (v7) And along with the vocation, each of us has received the ability and the capacity to do it.
3. (v11-12) Each of us is also expected to get the teaching and training we need to do that job.
4. (v12, 16) Our new vocation is what Paul also calls “the work of the ministry,” and that is the work that results in the edification (the growth) of the Body of Christ (the Church).
5. In Christ, you have been given a new vocation, a ministry. You now have a new mission in life!

B. This, as I said before, is the central and key message of Ephesians 4-6.

1. These are the “first works” that will result in our walking with our first love, Jesus Christ.
 - a) If you want to walk with Christ (your first love), you need to do what He is doing. You need to get involved in and participate in the work that Christ is doing in the world today.
 - b) These are the “first works” that will result in our walking closely with our first love, Christ.
2. These are the “first works” that will also result in the Body of Christ being edified (growth!), because that is the work Christ is doing in the world today (saving the lost, edifying the saved).
 - Therefore, we could say it like this...

C. Our mission (our new vocation) is discipleship: Being and making disciples of Jesus Christ.

1. This is the only way the Body of Christ can grow.
 - a) Through evangelism (the salvation of the lost) the Church grows in numbers.
 - b) Through edification (the sanctification of the saved) the Church grows in maturity/strength.
2. Key: Don't make the mistake of thinking that this new “vocation” is somehow divorced and separated from your daily life. It is not!
 - a) This new vocation/mission/stewardship is something you “walk” in daily, practically.
 - (1) I think a lot of times we think we “do church things” (evangelism, Bible studies, etc.) in our “spare time,” and when we don't have that “spare time” we feel guilty because we can't do the “work of the ministry.”
 - (2) That's wrong. There is a time of specific, intentional ministry. But, our “vocation” as ministers of Christ (as Christians!) goes way beyond this. It's our life!

- b) Obviously there is a time and place for specific ministry activities were intentionally speaking the Gospel or the Word of God to others.
- (1) Everyone of us ought to be involved somehow, some way in **intentional evangelism**: Making the time to get out somewhere and somehow communicate the Gospel to the lost.
 - (2) Everyone of us ought to be involved in the **intentional edification** of the saved: Making the time to get involved in another person's life to help them learn and apply the Scripture.
- c) But there is a whole lot more to the Christian life (to “walking” in our new “vocation”) than that! And this is exactly what Paul is going to speak about in Ephesians 4-6...
- (1) (Eph 4.14a) Part of our vocation involves growing up: Learning the Bible and how to apply the Bible (this is the enjoyable part of “sitting and soaking” in Bible teaching).
 - (2) (Eph 5.21-23) Part of our vocation involves working at making our marriages a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church.
 - (3) (Eph 6.1) Part of our walk as a Christian is about a right relationship with our parents.
 - (4) (Eph 6.4) Parents, our Christian “job” is about a right relationship with our children.
 - (5) (Eph 6.6-8) It's about being a good employee—doing the job our “master” (employer) has given us to do (not robbing time from our employer doing what we want to do).
 - (6) (Eph 6.9) It's about being a good employer (boss), if we have others working for us.
- d) I think we have the tendency to look at the “work of the ministry” as “church activities.”
- (1) If we are not “speaking the Word to others,” then we feel guilty because we aren't doing the “work of the ministry.”
 - (a) In part, this may be good! Some of us need to make more time to intentionally speak the Word to others (intentional evangelism of the lost; edifying the saved).
 - (b) This is definitely part of our vocation—it is essential! But, if you think about it, speaking the Word to others is a very small part of the work of them ministry.
 - (2) We spend a whole lot more time doing things in life than we do speaking to others.
 - (a) Very little time is spent actually speaking the Gospel to others or even speaking about the Scripture to others (even by a pastor!).
 - (b) We spend far more time doing things (just living life!) than we do speaking: living with our spouses, raising out kids, driving in traffic, working our jobs, etc.
 - (3) Here's the point:
 - (a) (Titus 2.1) Speaking sound doctrine to others (whether that be the Gospel to the lost or Scripture to the saved) is essential and we need to do that (intentionally!).
 - i) This is most definitely a part of our vocation and we all need to make time for it.
 - ii) Most of this kind of ministry, though, can be planned and programmed through the structure of the local church. For example:
 - A good edification ministry to help Christians grow in knowledge of the Bible and spiritual maturity (we used to call this “Discipleship”).
 - A good evangelism ministry to get out into the community and witness to people (like we are planning to do on March 17th, St. Patty's Day Parade).

(b) (Titus 2.9-10, a good example from your “job”) There is a *whole lot more* to doing the work of the ministry (your new vocation as a Christian) that just speaking.

i) Our works—everything we do (from family time to on the job)—is important!

ii) Our behavior (what we do and how we do it) ought to *adorn our words*.

iii) We need to speak, yes! But, we also need to live right in all areas of life.

D. God, in Christ, has give us a new vocation: The mission of the work of of the ministry.

1. We use the term “discipleship” to describe this work, this ministry, this vocation.

a) Our job as Christians is to *be* and *make* disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

b) And there is a whole lot more that goes into be being and making disciples that just participating in church activities in our “spare time.” It is an all day, lifetime affair!

2. And that is why Paul says that we “walk” in this new vocation...

II. Your Vocation in the World: The “Walk” of the Minister

A. Your “walk” is your lifestyle—it is how you live (your constant way of doing things).

1. (v1) We are to walk (live) *worthy* of our new vocation—worthy of the job we have been given to do (the ministry and mission of being and making disciples).

2. (v17) That implies a change in lifestyle (walk) from how we used to live/walk when we were lost.

a) (Php 1.27) That involves living in such a way (constantly, daily) that we adorn the Gospel.

b) (Col 1.10) That involves learning how we should live, and then changing our behavior (what we do) so that we actually live according to how the Lord says we should live.

3. And again, I think it needs to be said: This deals with our *works* as well as with our *words*.

a) (1Thes 2.1-2) We need to be *bold* in speaking God's Word to others (the lost and the saved)!

b) (1Thes 2.9-10) But we also need to *live and work* in a way that adorns and exemplifies what we are preaching.

4. Our “vocation” is our “walk” in this world (it is our life, it is how we live!).

a) Being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and striving to make other disciples is something that affects every area of our lives, not just our “spare time” that we dedicate to church activities.

b) We need to see our family time, our commute to work, our time on your job.... all of it is part of being and making disciples.

c) Yes, we need to speak the Word to others. But, as Paul says, we need to so much more! We need to *walk* in a way that is *worthy* of our new vocation (the work of the ministry).

d) And that is why Paul spends the entire second half of Ephesians teaching us and instructing us about how to live the new life we have in Christ.

B. Your “walk”—your lifestyle of ministry—is to be patterned after Paul.

1. Paul is going to give us specific teaching and instruction about what to do in key areas of life.

- But, don't miss out on following his example, also! Yes, Paul gives us the inspired instruction manual for the Christian life. But, he also gives us a good example to following *doing* that.

2. (v1) Paul says that he is the “prisoner of the Lord” (he was in jail when he wrote).
 - a) This is important (and for most of us, it's a hard pill to swallow):
 - (1) Sometimes life's circumstances hinder us in what we want to do in the ministry (what we are called to do!).
 - (2) Paul was in prison. He couldn't visit the churches he started to edify the saints through the teaching and preaching of the Word. He wanted to Spain and Europe to preach the Gospel to the lost and start new churches, but his circumstances limited him!
 - b) (Php 1.12) But, as always, Paul is a good example: Even though he might not have liked it or enjoyed it (even though he would have rather been free to do what his heart desired to do for the Lord), he understood that even the difficult, limiting circumstances in life happened to further the mission. It was all part of his “job/vocation” as a Christian (follower of Christ).
3. Life's circumstances don't change our “vocation” and therefore they should not change our “walk.”
 - a) Our vocation is the same always: We are called to the work of the ministry, the work that results in the edification (growth) of the Body Christ.
 - (1) We call that discipleship: Being and making discipleship of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (2) We are all called to be saved and sanctified; we are all called to evangelize and edify.
 - b) So, regardless of where we are in life's circumstances, we need to walk worthy of that vocation.
 - (1) And that is what we are going to study in Ephesians 4-6: Just how do we do that?
 - (2) And we'll see not only Paul's instruction, but also his example of how to live it out daily.

Conclusion: All of Paul's practical instruction in Ephesians 4-6 starts with “...therefore...”

- (Eph 1-3) Because of all that we have in Christ... (Eph 4.1) We ought to therefore live worthy of that.
- That means we need to make changes in our lifestyles (in our behaviors, in what we do and how we do it).
 - ✓ It is essential that we speak the Word of God to others, yes! Absolutely!
 - ✓ But it is also important that we live in a way that adorns the Word we speak.
- That's our “job” as Christians, that's our “vocation.” That's what it means to be and make disciples.
- And it is so important that Paul is going to spend three chapters teaching us how we can live in a such a way as to please Christ and adorn the Gospel we are preaching.