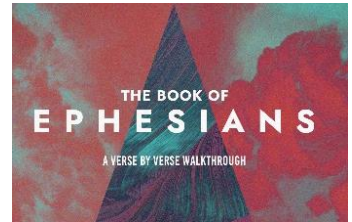


Title: Ephesians, Week 8, The Worthy Christian Life

Speaker: Charles Stone

Passage: Ephesians 4.1-16

Big idea: The Apostle Paul gives us 7 qualities that indicate a life well lived.



When we make a commitment to be a part of any kind of organization, whether it's taking a new job at a new company, joining a sports team, or enrolling in a class, we commit to certain obligations. Right? If you get a new job, what might be some of those new obligations?

- Be at the office at 8am, or if you work remotely at your computer at 8 am.
- Work 40 hours a week.
- Perform your assigned tasks as given.
- Co-operate with co-workers.
- Do what your boss says.
- Contribute to the good of the company.

If you join a sports team, you make certain commitments as well. Keeping those commitments indicate that you really are on the team. I wasn't much of an athlete as a kid, but I could run pretty fast, so I joined the track team at Berkmar High School in Lilburn, GA and ran the mile. Coach Hunt, the track coach, expected us to

- be at practice,
- run our miles at practice,
- be at the bus on time when we going to a track meet,
- wash our stinky uniforms after a meet,
- and encourage each other.

Just because somebody said they were on the track didn't mean much. Our conduct and behavior, what we did, was the real indicator we were on the team.

It's just common sense that when you commit to some cause or organization or team, certain behaviors and attitudes will indicate you really are a member of that organization.

Well, as we continue our study of the book of Ephesians, in the passage we'll look at today, the Apostle Paul does the same thing to describe what a follower of Jesus does that indicates they are truly the real deal, on the team, so to speak.

In today's passage, he pivots from theology and doctrine (right belief about Jesus) that he has already explained in first three chapters, to now describe the duty and conduct that reveals a person truly is a follower of Jesus. He's now going to explain to us the application, the practical ramifications of following Jesus.

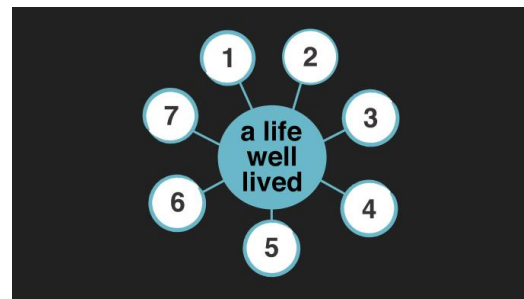
He writes these words.

**<sup>1</sup> I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.**

He's speaking to followers of Jesus. Just as we intuitively commit ourselves to certain responsibilities when we join a company or a team, on a much deeper level, Paul says that when you give your life to Jesus, you also are committing to live out certain beliefs and behaviors of this new relationship, described as *living a life worthy of your calling*, what I am calling in the title of today's message, A Life Well Lived.

A life well lived is a vibrant, flourishing, thriving, and genuine life that suits and fits our calling to follow Jesus. Paul describes what that life should look like, and he urges us to live in such a way.

Here is the Big idea: The Apostle Paul gives us 7 qualities that indicate a life well lived.



Today I'm going to ask you to do another self-evaluation. When we evaluate our lives, it gives us some direction about what we need to focus on. We're going to use emojis like we did a few weeks ago in our Revelation study. After we unpack the passage, I will give you these 7 qualities one at a time and give you these emojis so you do a quick mental check where you see yourself.



Today's passage is [Ephesians 4.1-16](#)

**Eph. 4:1** As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. <sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. <sup>8</sup> This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.”

<sup>9</sup> (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) <sup>11</sup> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

**<sup>1</sup> As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.**

Our calling we have received should result in a certain kind of purposeful living, a life well lived, a life where belief and behavior, your talk and your walk match. You practice what you profess. There should be a positive distinctiveness in a Christian's life and behavior in public and in private.

Worthy means to give something equal weight which means as believers we must live our lives equal to all the amazing blessings described in the prior chapter.

He doesn't lay down the law with harsh commands. Rather he describes it as a call, a softer way to persuade us to freely act. When you hear someone say, this is my calling, it is something that comes from deep within. We are called by God Himself to live this worthy life.

## **2 Be completely humble and gentle;**

In the Greek world, humble was a derogatory term to describe groveling servility, a cowering cringing slave. It was not a virtue, but rather something to be despised. Christianity, however, redeemed it to mean a word that contrasted with the proud elite of the day. It came to mean a true estimate of yourself. Truly seeing yourself as who you are, not an overestimation or underestimation of yourself. It implies awareness of our absolute dependence on God. We are the created and he is the creator.

Aristotle's defined every virtue as the middle ground between two extremes. He defines gentle as the middle between too angry and never being angry. So, one way to look at it is the idea of being rightly stirred to anger for true wrongs, a righteous anger at sin and injustice, but not overly anger. So, to be gentle would be to be angry at the right time but not at the wrong time.

Another way to describe gentle is the Greek word used for an animal that was trained until it was completely under control. It possessed a strength yet had that power restrained. It was gentle (meek) but not weak. This word was used to describe Jesus. Jesus was God Himself and had all power. Yet, he lived with that power under control.

## **be patient,**

Patience literally means a slow fuse with others. It's a reluctance to avenge wrongs or get easily provoked. It's the ability to overlook the irritable habits of others and even bearing insult from others without getting bitter.

In our American culture patience is opposite of what we want. Speed is king---we want faster web browsing, faster trains, planes, and commutes. Faster everything. Covid has slowed that down.

To be patient means to be long tempered.

## **bearing with one another in love.**

Paul is a realist. He knows that every person in the body of Christ will not naturally get along with every other person in the body of Christ. He's not being idealistic. This kind of love is not a warm fuzzy feeling you must have toward every other believer. Rather, it is a willful choice to tolerate and love others.

To bear with another means knowing that although we may have the power to take revenge, we don't. We refuse to retaliate.

## **3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.**

He qualifies the effort we must exert to keep the unity.

He says keep because the Spirit of Christ has already created this new unity, this new spiritual race. The Holy Spirit has already provided this unity and believers are responsible for maintaining and fostering it, make every effort to keep the unity, do your best, give intentional determined effort to keep unity.

The clearest picture of unity is not seen necessarily in a carefully crafted definition of it but seen by what Christians do to build it. We should be known by our love for each other.

- Unity does not mean uniformity (we are unique and different from each other).
- Unity does not imply we compromise scripture or biblical values to keep unity.
- Unity does it mean that we avoid conflict at all costs.
- It does not mean that we agree on every minute detail in the grey areas of the bible or church growth strategy.

It is seen when we embody these qualities Paul talks about.

In the next two verses he mentions the word one, for unity 7 times, providing a theological and practical basis for unity. The multiple use of one adds weight to unity.

**<sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**

The unity in the trinity anchors this basis for all unity (one Lord, one God and Father, one Spirit). And it speaks the eternal nature of unity and that it can't be broken.

- Our **one hope** is our common goal to honor God in all that we do and to spread the good news of the Gospel.
- Our **one body** in Christ (the Church) means that in Christ we are one, yet multiple mini- expressions we see on local churches.
- Our **one faith** means that we are bound together because we have made a common act of complete surrender to Jesus.
- Our **one baptism** speaks of how we testify to our new faith, we get baptized. If you have not yet been baptized, email us and we will set up a time for that.

**<sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.**

This grace refers to grace gifts for serving. To each one means that every Christian has been gifted to serve. It's not reserved for professional, paid staff.

Just because you don't have some public role in Christ's work does not mean you are not gifted to serve in a unique way.

He next writes something rather puzzling when he writes this.

**<sup>8</sup> "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." <sup>9</sup> (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)**

I won't spend much time on this, but I will say that scholars tend to agree that this probably alludes the pre-existent Christ in the incarnation. He descended to earth (the lower earthly regions), and ascended when went to heaven after his resurrection.

In Roman days a conquering king would give gifts to members of his party. Jesus as conqueror over the evil one has given gifts to each of us. He has apportioned out the grace for serving with different roles, responsibilities, and influence according to what he sees fit. Some are given more responsibility than others. Yet, everyone has a role.

Within this gift set are categories of gifts that provide overall leadership, direction, and teaching to the church.

**<sup>11</sup> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God's people for works of service,**

These apostles and prophets are NT age leaders. A little context here helps. There is a difference between certain offices that were active in the early days of Christianity and ministry today.

In the early church the apostles were those leaders whose authority influenced the whole church, like a Peter and a Paul. One of the qualifications for an apostle was they had seen Jesus and had witnessed the resurrection of Jesus. These guys are gone.

Today, the ministry of apostleship might be seen in a person who is coordinating a movement of many churches or a large group of spiritual leaders. It could even be expressed through a church planter who starts a church from scratch.

When I was leading a church in Chicago, we partnered with a woman in Nicaragua, Maria Magdalena Zeos who fulfilled this function. She is the pastor of a church outside the Managua city dump. She's started several churches there and provides influence and leadership to many other pastors.



As to a prophet, in the OT a prophet was a Hebrew whose prophecies were never wrong. Some of the priests then taught people about God but their hearts would grow hard and stubborn, and it took a prophet to reorient the people back to God. There was also a type of prophets in the NT age that were like itinerant missionaries that went from village to village. Those guys are gone.

Today, some people have the prophetic ministry to take God's word and preach it in such a way that it penetrates people's hearts and leads them to repentance and re-orienting themselves back to God. You might say that instead of foretelling they forth-tell the will of God.

Evangelists were also wanderers that went from house to house, church to church, and village to village. They would talk to people naturally about Jesus. Some people today have this gift. I think that Pastor Mario who pastors our Spanish congregation has this gift.

Next, pastors/teachers were not wanderers but permanent servants in one congregation. Because books were so rare, and the few that existed were so expensive, that pastors and teachers would teach the people orally, with the spoken work. The pastoral role was to see that the needs of the people were met.

This is my role. My job and our pastors' job is to teach and train WestParkers to do the work of the ministry, help you live out your calling in a worthy way, *to prepare God's people for works of service.*

So overall, these specific gift categories could be seen as the foundational gifts or even offices, that God used and uses to prepare believers for ministry. The word prepare means to set a bone or put a joint back in place or mending nets. The basic idea is to put something into the condition it ought to be. That's my role to educate, guide, and set in order the outworking of our faith in this local church called West Park.

Every believer does the work of the ministry. Some, however, are given the role to equip, train, and instruct believers to do the work of the ministry, which means they need to be good followers of good leaders who have their best interest in mind.

The result when leaders lead, believers reflect these qualities...so that the body of Christ may be built up.

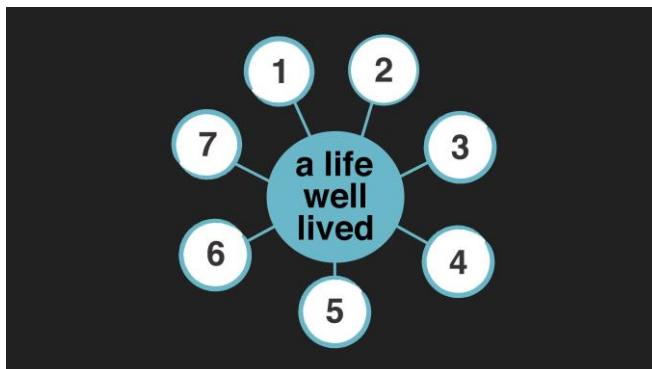
**<sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.**

As pastors and teachers, do their job, they give stability to the church, help it grow, and protect the body from yielding to false and deceptive teaching. So, as leaders do their part, they build up the church.

**<sup>15</sup> ...we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.**

So, the worthy Christian life, a life well lived, as every part does its work, results in a healthy church being built up, unified, and mature enough to not be swayed by false teaching.

Let's go back to our big idea again.



Some of these qualities overlap a bit. But I'm going to give you the quality and then the emoji scale. I'd like you to mentally put a tick mark where you'd honestly place yourself.

### 1. I have a healthy self-concept. (humility)



We actually saw this same quality in the passage we looked at two weeks ago. If the Bible repeats something, it takes on an even greater weight.

It means that you are not proud, arrogant, or haughty or that you show false humility. It's not self-deprecation, disparaging yourself, groveling, coming down on yourself, or being a passive doormat.

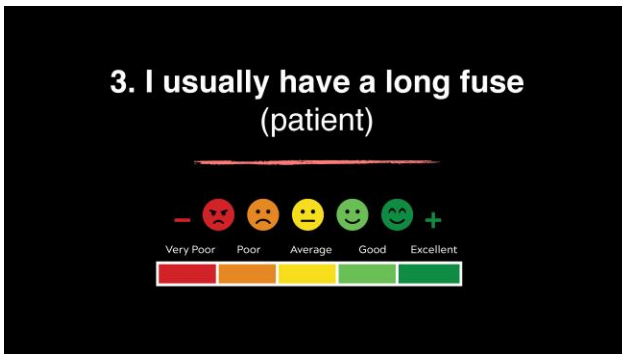
Biblical humility means believing what God says about you over anyone else's opinion, including sometimes your own. It requires embracing who you are in Christ. It's a modest view of yourself, viewing yourself as God sees you.

### 2. In stressful circumstances my responses are measured. (gentle)



I think before I speak. I don't react.

### 3. I usually have a long fuse (patient).



In other words, I can put up with others who irritate or rub me the wrong way. Stressful people have a way of revealing if we have a short or a long fuse.

### 4. In conflict, I respond rather than retaliate (bear with each other).



This can be subtle. Retaliate is not necessarily instant or some loud blow up. We can retaliate, get even, make the other person pay by cutting them off, closing down, wishing ill will upon them, or plotting how to retaliate later. Whatever behavior we choose, when we retaliate, we want to make the other person pay for what they did.



**5. I'm a peacemaker and a unifier (make every effort).**

**5. I'm a peacemaker and a unifier**  
(make any effort)

Why is this so important? Because unity is a core element of the Christian faith. Paul wrote the whole book of Ephesians to help Jews and Gentiles see that in Christ all believers are a new spiritual race. We still retain our unique cultural, language, and ethnic distinctions which reflect God's creative design. But spiritually, we are one and should live as a unified people, not pacifying, not compromising truth, not peace at any price, but living in unity. True brothers and sisters in Christ are to live in unity.

If you are a troublemaker, constant criticizer, a divider of people, you are not living out a life well lived in Christ.

**6. I have a defined place of service in the body of Christ (to each one of us has been given grace (7); as each part does its work (16)).**

**6. I have a defined place of service in the body of Christ**  
(to each one of us has been given grace (7); as each part does its work (16)).

This place is usually a local church, like West Park. It could also be another Christian para-church ministry or organization or both.

**7. I'm a good follower (prepare God's people for works of service).**

**7. I'm a good follower**  
(prepare God's people for works of service)

Remember those gifts, those categories of leaders God gave for the church's benefit? For it to work, not only do leaders need to lead well but followers need to follow well as well. And realize that the Scripture places huge expectations on leaders to not abuse their power and influence.

Now, let's look at all of them on one image.

**A Life Well Lived**

1. healthy self-concept - [smiley faces]
2. measured responses - [smiley faces]
3. long fuse - [smiley faces]
4. respond vs retaliate - [smiley faces]
5. peacemaker - [smiley faces]
6. defined place of service - [smiley faces]
7. good follower - [smiley faces]

Which one is your strongest? Thank the Lord for His work in you in your strongest area. Which one needs some work?

I'm going to pause for 60 seconds, and I'd like to review this list in silence and zero in on the area you need to give the most attention to and ask yourself some questions like, why is this area my weakest, what factors contribute to it, what is God's spirit impressing on me to do with his power, to strengthen this area?