

that I can change. The last thing I want to be doing is destroying the people Jesus gave his life for with my words.

The last lifestyle practice I'd like to highlight is; "do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." (Eph. 4:30) I can think of two ways to grieve the Holy Spirit. First don't bother to ask for his help as I try to live a Christian lifestyle. That's the most common way I break the second commandment; 'Don't take God's name in vain'.

God has made himself available so that I have

all his power to live the lifestyle Jesus gave his life for me to celebrate with him. Ignoring God and seeking to do it on my own totally misses the core of a Christian lifestyle, sharing Jesus' life with him.

When I go it alone, guess who gets all the praise when I think I've done the right thing? Me! That's the second way I grieve the Holy Spirit. Instead of thanking him I take the credit myself. A lack of gratitude will scuttle any relationship.

This week I'd like to encourage you to read over this section again and make a list of skills that Paul mentions for living the Christian

lifestyle. Then for each one add a practical exercise you can do to help grow and develop that lifestyle skills. And then importantly share it with another person here to help you both grow as the person Jesus gave his life for you to become. Jesus calls us to a shared lifestyle where we support and encourage each other, daily.

Let us pray.
Jesus this week open our hearts and minds to how you want us to be living, so that we live true to your nature, bringing you praise, glory and a great reputation among those we live, work and play with. Amen.

9 August 2009

LIVING A CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE

Ephesians 4:25—5:2

Today let me tell you a story about Paul. He wanted to be the best at his sport. It was his dream, his total passion, to be an AFL footballer. He went to netball practice, not twice, but three times a week. He played an hour of tennis every second day. He watched every AFL game played that week.

Paul knew all the fielding positions on the cricket field. But for all his efforts Paul couldn't get a game of football. He was working hard, he was applying himself, he was dedicated, he was passionate, so why couldn't Paul get a game?

The answer is obvious. If you want to play AFL football you need to develop football skills, not netball. Netball training is fine,

if you want to develop as a netball player. To be an AFL player just any training won't work, you need to focus on the skills and fitness needed for AFL.

Nobody here would call that being mean or discriminatory; would they? If Paul walked out onto the football field with a hockey stick you wouldn't be labelled discriminatory insisting he left the field until he got rid of the hockey stick. There's just no room for hockey stick in football.

Just like we don't have anything goes if you want to play AFL football, likewise we don't have anything goes if you want to be living a Christian lifestyle. That's not me being mean and discriminatory. There

are some actions that reflect Jesus and others which are just inappropriate.

Paul in his letter to the Ephesians encourages them; 'to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.' (Eph. 4:1) What does a 'life worthy' look like?

Paul elaborates what a 'life worthy' looks like in today's reading from his letter to the Ephesians. Paul isn't laying down the letter of the law, but he is describing what a Christian lifestyle looks like; so we know that we have the right set of skills, and don't end up investing ourselves in a lot of effort and passion only to discover we'd invested our lives in the wrong game.

Christ Church Lutheran

Worship Times - 9.00am & 10.45am

Pastor: Tim 0427326553

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Reaching Out with the Love of Jesus that All my Know, Worship & Grow in Christ

Practice netball all you like, it won't make you a good AFL football, just as dedicated AFL training won't make you a good netballer. Netballers just don't appreciate the fine art of the hip-and-shoulder. They don't marvel at you sticking your foot in the opponents back taking a screamer.

So what skill sets does Paul encourage the people at Ephesus to develop, so that they can be living as Christ would. So that their lives are a true reflection of Christ's presence in their lives.

Paul lives a Christian lifestyle by; "speaking truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body." (Eph. 4:25) There simply isn't any room for lying. Lying doesn't create the love and trust that Jesus gave his life for, but it destroys relationships, creating doubt and mistrust. Yet I know in

life I'm tempted to change the truth, or only give half the truth because I mightn't like the outcome, or I want to avoid a situation. Jesus not only spoke the truth, he embodied it, and that's how he empowers those who are part of his body to live. So I practice speaking the truth in

Live a life worthy of your calling.

love. Next Paul writes; "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold." (Eph. 4:26,27) Notice Paul didn't say; 'don't get angry', but when you get angry do it in the right way and for the right reasons. If I get angry because I want the remote control, because I want to watch a certain show on TV, I

doubt that me being selfish is a good reason to get angry.

On the other hand when I see someone being exploited, the vulnerable being hurt, justice for another being denied, then out of love for the other person I'd hope we'd all get angry, and take a stand for that person.

So one of the first steps in not sinning when I get angry is knowing why I'm angry. Here is where it is good to speak the truth because I know I'm good at shifting the focus off me and making the other person look like the problem. If only they changed then everything would be fine. If only they gave me the remote and enjoyed the shows I do, then there'd be no problem. Maybe I need to look at myself and ask what are my motives, ask how am I contributing to this

conflict. Then I could ask myself how my actions are glorifying Jesus. The moment I'm in a conflict to win, to be proven right, to exert my rights, my motive is wrong. If I'm not living to glorify Jesus, to give Jesus a good reputation by what I do, then I need to change.

This quote also reminds me not to hold onto hurt feeling, not to hold onto feelings of revenge, of getting even, of how terrible that person is, of how unfair they are being. Don't hold onto those sorts of feelings or emotions, don't let the sun go down on your anger, leaving it in the dark to fester and breed. Always bring it to Jesus that he might heal you, freeing you to act from the love he has for you and the other person, so his gracious nature grows in you and in your relationships.

Paul then says; "Those who have been stealing

must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful – why – that they may have something to share with those in need." (Eph. 4:28) Paul leads me from being selfish to being caring, giving for the other person's good. I find it worth noting that the reason to work wasn't to look after

What a Christian lifestyle looks like.

yourself but to be better equipped to care for those in need. There isn't any room in a Christian lifestyle for selfish behaviour. Do what is best for the other person, because you know that Jesus will do what is best for you. Jesus has come to liberate me from slavery to my possessions, that I might use the gifts he has blessed me with, to love other people, for no reward.

Jesus also wants me to bless other people with my words; "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." (Eph. 4:29) What a good question to ask myself; 'is what I

say meeting the other persons need and benefiting them'. Or am I simply saying what I want them to hear because I figure they need it. Or am I simply giving them a piece of my mind – which might be an example of speaking the truth, but not in love.

So I practice saying thankyou, and please, using manners as a way of affirming another person's value to Jesus, seeking to build them up. What a great gift we have in our words. So if you catch me using less than helpful words please let me know so