

# A Christlike Posture

## Ephesians 4:1-7

(Expanded Sermon Notes)



Danielle and I don't watch a lot of TV. Recently, though, we've watched a show called "Port Protection" for the first couple of seasons. This is a reality TV show that follows the everyday lives of people living in Port Protection, Alaska. It is a unique and quirky bunch of folks who live in a highly remote and challenging area. What we enjoyed was watching the creativity and ingenuity of those people featured on the show. There is something authentic and real to it. That is the point of reality TV. It shows us life in unscripted 30-45-minute bites. How many of us have watched reality TV? The Voice, American Idol, America's Got Talent, Survivor, Amazing Race, and Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous are all examples of reality TV.

Reality television has evolved over decades, capturing audiences' fascination with authentic human experiences. Its roots can be traced to *Candid Camera* in 1948, which showcased real people's reactions to pranks. In 1973, *An American Family* offered a raw portrayal of a family's life, marking an early shift toward unscripted, documentary-style TV. The 1990s saw a significant leap with MTV's *The Real World*, which placed young adults in a shared house, sparking unscripted drama. This format paved the way for shows like *Survivor* (2000) and *Big Brother*, where social dynamics and competition captivated audiences. At the same time, *American Idol* (2002) revolutionized talent competitions, giving viewers the power to vote and participate in the outcomes. The 2010s brought celebrity-driven content, most notably *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, and expanded subgenres like romance (*The Bachelor*), home improvement, and niche competitions. We are drawn to reality TV because of its promise of authenticity, even when some elements are staged. The genre taps into a desire to see real human behavior, drama, and transformation.

This is nothing new, though. Humanity has always craved authenticity. In fact, the word hypocrite comes from the Greek word meaning to be a pretender. So, as Paul wrote to the Ephesian believers, he encouraged them to live authentic lives of faith. Reminding them that they were changed from one thing and into something else. Authenticity was as important of a cultural value then as it is today. So, we must not forget that **the reality of salvation results in a Christlike posture**. And when that posture is authentically lived out, it demonstrates the power, grace, and goodness of Jesus. That is the very thing a world craving something truly authentic needs.

## 1. Walking with purpose.

- a. Paul once again asserts that the Christian life comes with a whole new set of values to be expressed in our lives. → **Saved from and Saved for.**
  - i. What you have been saved from. → We have been saved from sin and rebellion.
    1. 2:1 – You “were” dead in your trespasses. → Again, Paul is continually driving home the reality of what was and what now is. Transformation has occurred and is occurring.
    2. In this section, we hear that we were saved from division and hostility.
  - ii. **What you are saved for. → Righteousness and to bear Christlike fruit.**
    1. Everything so far has been building to what Paul is about to say in vv. 13-22. We are something entirely new and we belong to a new people in Christ.
    2. When I live as if I’ve been saved from something, I start to live with less of a sin avoidance mentality and more of a God-glorifying mentality.
    3. **One of the key questions in growing into maturity is asking, “How do I honor God in this situation?”**
- b. It is no mere teaching of the Christian ethic that the apostle seeks to give. He whose greatest concern in life has become to ‘present every man mature in Christ’ (Col. 1:28; cf. Acts 20:27, 31) makes earnest entreaty. The word *parakalō* can mean ‘exhort’, but obviously, in this context has its stronger meaning, *beg* (cf. 2 Cor. 5:20). The link with what precedes is given by the word *therefore* as in Romans 12:1, **indicating that Christian conduct follows from Christian doctrine, that the duty of Christians derives directly from the unspeakable debt of gratitude that they owe for all that they have received in Christ.**<sup>1</sup>
  - i. That call to know the grace of God in Christ, to be the children of God, and to serve him as his ‘dedicated ones’ and messengers of his gospel, should transform every part of life.<sup>2</sup>
- c. **Perfection or Faithful?**
  - i. One of the odd things that we can do in the pursuit of faith, is to go to extremes. One extreme says that we should be perfect. And the other says, that since we aren’t perfect, we shouldn’t even worry or try. The Bible however, calls us to a different perspective. The perspective of faithfulness.
  - ii. Faithfulness is about trusting God. → **Our obedience is a product of trust.**
    1. **If I know and trust God to be good, then I trust that his ways are good.**
    2. **If his ways are good, then I know when he asks or commends me to walk in those ways, it is for my good.**
    3. **I obey his commands because I trust him. And I trust him based on who he’s demonstrated himself to be.**
  - iii. **All of this can be seen in the letter of Ephesians so far.**
    1. Chapters 1–3 have celebrated God’s eternal plan: to gather all things in heaven and on earth together under Christ (chapter 1), through the death and resurrection of Christ, which reconciles us to God and to each other (chapter 2), to manifest the triumphant wisdom of his gospel mystery to the spiritual realms

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 10, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 115.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 10, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 115.

in his church (chapter 3). Now, in chapters 4–6, Paul is explaining how his readers must live as a church committed to gathering people under Christ.<sup>3</sup>

2. Because of what God has saved me from and who he is, I am now called to trust him and walk in the manner which he has called me to.
  - a. Faithfulness is rooted in trust and motivated by love.
  - b. Perfection is rooted in insecurity and motivated by fear.

**d. The evidence of “walking” – Three virtues.**

- i. Paul reminds the Ephesians about the outcomes that demonstrate the authenticity of their new nature. In other words, they know that they are walking in the manner worthy of their calling when these three virtues are present. (Humility, Gentleness, and Patience)
- ii. By contrast, our Lord Jesus was famously humble, gentle and patient with everyone he met, and has been incredibly humble, gentle and patient in dealing with us! Obeying Paul’s words here really means growing more like Jesus.<sup>4</sup>
- iii. **The fruit of faith is not abstract** – It results in realistic and identifiable virtues. These virtues are absolutely visible in Jesus.

**e. Where are we to see these virtues first and foremost? → The church.**

- i. Remember, Ephesians is all about the church, that is the redeemed people of God. This letter is considered a universal letter. This means that while it was written directly to the believers in and around Ephesus, it was also passed around more broadly to the churches in and around Asia Minor.
- ii. What Paul expresses in this section is that we are to “walk in a manner worthy of our calling” everywhere we go, but especially in the church. → Why?
  1. Because, we are unified in one faith, under one God, and established into one body.
  2. If we can’t exhibit these virtues in the church, where we share Jesus in common, then how could we expect to exhibit them in places where Jesus is not held in common?
- iii. Understanding is the first step towards application.
  1. Let’s unpack these virtues so that we can apply them.

## 2. Humility

**a. What it isn’t. – Thinking less of myself.**

- i. Too often we confuse humility and low self-esteem. This is also why we can have a difficult time distinguishing arrogance and confidence.
- ii. Someone who is humble doesn’t think less of themselves, they know who they are and often have a high level of introspection and confidence.
  1. The example of this in Ephesians is Paul. In 3:8, he says that he is the very least of the saints, not because he has no self-confidence or is lacking in self-worth, but because he is aware of the goodness of God and his salvation.

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Coekin, *Ephesians for You*, ed. Carl Laferton, God’s Word for You (The Good Book Company, 2015), 113.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Coekin, *Ephesians for You*, ed. Carl Laferton, God’s Word for You (The Good Book Company, 2015), 115.

2. Nor is this a false humility. Paul truly understands his position and is a position of deep gratitude to God for all that he has done.
- b. **What it is. – Thinking of myself less often.** <sup>5</sup>
  - i. **Dictionary** - the quality of having a modest view of one's value or importance
  - ii. This is a famous way of talking about humility that comes from C.S. Lewis in his book, *Mere Christianity*.
  - iii. How do I think of myself less often without thinking less of myself?
    1. This is the challenge of humility because we are so predisposed to think of ourselves first.
  - iv. Ultimately, humility is a profoundly loving act. → Why?
    1. It speaks of the value of another person that you or I wouldn't demand our way instead, listen and care for them.
      - a. **Caution** – Humility doesn't excuse or enable living in our disordered desires.
      - b. **Remember – The Bible gives us a better vision for life, time and time again. It does that two ways:**
        - i. Positive encouragement – Sections that positively teach this better vision for life.
        - ii. Characters that show us the consequences of not living in the framework God has provided for life.
  - c. **How is humility lived out?**
    - i. **A rightsized perspective of yourself.**
      1. Received or achieved identity? → This distinction will determine the size of your perspective on yourself.
        - a. If you operate with an achieved identity, you have to compare yourself to others. This means your worth and value is only in relationship to others around you. This posture of comparison routinely leads us away from joy and contentment.
        - b. If you operate with a received identity, your value and worth come from someone who esteems you greatly. In Christianity, that is God. This means your identity is both stable and rightsized through God's Word.
      2. It is really hard to think of yourself less often if you only ever think of yourself.
        - a. When we have a rightsized perspective we operate in confidence, security, and sensitivity for others.
    - ii. **Concern & sensitivity for others.**
      1. **Have you ever been in the grocery store, at a game, or in class and you were so focused on what it was that you were doing that you missed someone or something right in front of you? This is what happens when we focus on ourselves, we can't see others around us.**
      2. When we operate in humility, we grow in our concern and sensitivity for others.
    - iii. **Purposeful responsiveness.**
      1. The natural outflow of seeing the needs of others is to purposely respond to them.

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<sup>5</sup> In the words of an oft-quoted paraphrase of C. S. Lewis' observations in *Mere Christianity*: "Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less." via Richard Coekin, *Ephesians for You*, ed. Carl Laferton, God's Word for You (The Good Book Company, 2015), 114.

2. We can't forget, purposeful responsiveness is not about responding to every possible need, but it is about responding intentionally with our time, talents, and treasure for the good of others and the glory of God.

### 3. Gentleness

- a. **What it isn't. – Timidity or enablement.**
  - i. Too often we think of gentle people as timid, mild, weak, or those who enable others. In some cases, we can look at these things as virtuous or even good. Often in the case of difficult things, they're not, especially patterns of enablement.
- b. **What it is. – Self-control to remain composed in a difficult or stressful situation.**
  - i. **Dictionary** - moderate in action, effect, or degree; not harsh or severe moderate in action, effect, or degree; not harsh or severe
  - ii. Gentleness is 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.<sup>6</sup>
  - iii. The very fact that gentleness requires self-control means that it requires great strength to be gentle.
    1. **Who is someone in your life who possessed great power, authority, or physical strength, but was known as a gentle person? They are gentle because they choose to respond that way.**
    2. Consider Jesus, he is the sovereign king of the universe and he describes himself as gentle and lowly (humble). (Matt. 11:29)
- c. **How is gentleness lived out?**
  - i. **A commitment to self-control.**
    1. Gentle people do not lose control. This is not some magical gift or supernatural power.
    2. Self-control can be cultivated and developed.
      - a. One of the best steps in developing self-control is to rehearse your response ahead of time with the intention of staying in control.
    3. **The truth is that all of these virtues can be developed and cultivated. Especially, since we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit who helps and empowers us to live in a God honoring way.**
  - ii. **Giving the benefit of the doubt.**
    1. Too often we ramp ourselves up when going into difficult situations by creating a backstory where we assume the worst intent of the other person.
    2. People who remain self-controlled begin by not ramping themselves up through assuming the best of those they are in conflict with.
    3. Giving the benefit of the doubt does not mean that we excuse poor behavior or wrong doings. It does mean that we work to understand the other person.
  - iii. **Understanding the significance of your response.**
    1. Not every situation demands the same response. Gentle and self-controlled people think through the level and type of response that is warranted in every situation. They do this because they understand that their response is significant,

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<sup>6</sup> Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 10, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 116.

not just in proportion to the situation that they are responding to, but ultimately to the outcome they are hoping to achieve.

## 4. Patience

### a. What it isn't. – Generally being unbothered.

- i. We can have a wrong perception about patient people. We can think that they are somehow mystically unbothered by anything and everything. As if they just float along in life with nothing that irritates, annoys, or gets under their skin. However, that does not describe a patient person, it describes someone who is aloof or apathetic.

### b. What it is. – Seeing the big picture even when something bothers you.

- i. **Dictionary** - the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset
- ii. *Patience (makrothymia)*, a word sometimes used of steadfast endurance of suffering or misfortune (as in Jas 5:10) 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 (Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 1 Tim. 1:16; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 3:15), and the corresponding and consequent quality that the Christian should show towards others (1 Cor. 13:4; Gal. 5:22; Col. 3:12; 2 Tim. 4:2).<sup>7</sup>
- iii. To be "patient" means to be longsuffering of the faults of others and slow in seeking to rebuke them, recognizing that spiritual growth takes time and that we are all work in progress<sup>8</sup>

### c. How is patience lived out?

#### i. A commitment to the big picture and the long view of things.

1. Patient people tend to be those who can see the bigger picture or how something plays out over the long run. This allows them to choose their reaction to the immediate situation that will help get to the preferred vision in the future.
2. When we operate with short-sighted vision we can overreact and lose control quickly.

#### ii. Operating out of a healthy sense of identity.

1. Being able to see the big picture requires a healthy self-awareness and awareness of the greatest good of others in the situation.
2. There is a leadership maxim that states, "You cannot lead someone to a place that you have not been before." This is a helpful reminder even for our own self-identity. When we bump up against difficult situations and people, we are going to have a difficult time seeing the big picture for the situation, if we haven't seen the big picture in our own lives. This doesn't mean that we have to be experts, but we have to be aware. And there is no greater threat to awareness than insecurity.

- a. Insecurity causes us to be tunnel-visioned.

#### iii. Working to establish understanding and shared purpose.

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<sup>7</sup> Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 10, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 116.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Coekin, *Ephesians for You*, ed. Carl Laferton, God's Word for You (The Good Book Company, 2015), 115.

1. One of the things patient people do when they see the big picture is that they work to establish mutual purpose with those they are in conflict with. Often, everyone in the situation wants a very similar outcome. Patient people are self-controlled people and they are able to articulate the mutual purpose.
2. One of the crucial steps in establishing understanding and mutual purpose is not writing a negative backstory for another person. This comes back to the virtue of gentleness where we gave the benefit of the doubt.
  - a. We all write stories in situations that we face. And too often, even when we're in the wrong, the story we tell is that we are in the right.
  - b. If we are going to be patient people who work for the good of others, we have to get in the habit of telling accurate stories where we represent each person in the situation (including ourselves) honestly.
    - i. We'll only be able to do this through maturity and having a secure identity.
- d. We cannot forget that while these virtues are difficult to embody in our lives, it is not impossible.
  - i. We can grow and be developed into our ability to live out these virtues.
  - ii. We grow by inviting other more mature people to speak into our lives.
  - iii. We grow by being willing to the Holy Spirit's correction and encouragement.
  - iv. We grow by leaning into the power of the Holy Spirit to live Godly lives and bear fruit that looks like Jesus.
    1. Don't forget, God's strength makes the Christian life possible.
    2. And, our salvation is to result in a Christlike posture.