

06/04/23

**Stop Walking That Way**  
**Rev. Barbara Burrill**

**Ephesians 4:17-24 (NIV)**

Good morning. It is wonderful to be back with my Cape Cod family. For those who do not know me, I had the honor of serving here at Brewster Baptist Church for seven years as the Family Pastor. I thank you for this gracious invitation to bring the word of God to you today.

Let us pray:

Father, we come before you today ready to hear your word. Allow us peace in this time and the ability to put all distractions aside. Open our hearts to this word and may it be a blessing to all who hear it.  
Amen

At my church's most recent Maundy Thursday Service, we were told about Jesus humbling himself and His sacred act of washing the feet of the disciples. They shared pictures of what it might look like if Jesus were washing the feet of us today. Pictures of Jesus washing the feet of a person in need, a prisoner, a healthcare worker, and a pastor.

I am a visual person and seeing those images of Jesus humbling himself to care for each of us has been burned into my memory. It was a simple act, one that any of us can do. Jesus excelled in giving us concrete examples of ways that we could love one another. His entire life was a shining example of how we are to live our lives.

In our scripture today, Paul, in writing to the church located in Ephesus, was interested in the way that followers of Christ were living their daily lives since their daily walk revealed their attitudes, desires, and relationship with Christ. People were stumbling and not just reverting to old habits, but completely forgetting what Jesus had commanded. What Paul spoke about back then is still relevant to us today. How many of us forget how to truly love one another? We need to read and remember the words commanded in the Bible as the best way to love one another.

One of my favorite movies of my childhood is called "*Pollyanna*". How many of you here remember this movie? It starred a young Haley Mills as Pollyanna, the 12-year-old orphaned daughter of missionaries who goes to live with her aunt Polly Harrington, who does not necessarily want Pollyanna to live there with her. Pollyanna is a very cheerful, talkative, and radically optimistic youngster who focuses on the goodness of life and always finds something to be glad about, no matter what the situation. Even though she was surrounded by people who did not believe what Pollyanna did, by her loving on them, they were changed for the good. She was a missionary in that town and a shining example of Ephesians 4.

In the book of Ephesians, Paul tells us that there is a Christian etiquette that God has laid out in His Word that we are to walk within and a way that we are to stop walking. Let us look back at the scripture for today and see what it says.

In **Ephesians 4:17**, the Bible says, *“that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.”* We are all relational beings, we are products of our upbringing, the people we spend our time with, and the things we choose to do in our free time. We can see the world through a distorted lens, or listening to our human desires that may not be what God wants for us. Paul is telling the Church and us to stop behaving and living like those who do not believe. We need to stop trying to fit in with the crowd. How can we be in the world but not OF the world?

Wayne Barber commenting on this verse said that Paul saying *“I have just raised you up to the highest level of understanding that you could possibly get to. Now I am warning you. Do not go back and live like you used to live. When you do, sin will take you further than you ever wanted to stray, keep you longer than you ever wanted to stay and cost you more than you ever dreamed you would pay.”* When you become a devoted disciple of Christ, not one just in word, but in deed, you begin a walk on a new road in a new world leading to a new destination.”

In **Ephesians 4:18-19a** we read, *“They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity”.* The Greek word for futility is *mataiotes*, which describes the state of being without use or value, empty, and purposeless. We often choose what feels good in the moment and what gives us pleasure, but they can also leave us feeling empty too.

Sometimes we forget that these things are temporary and not eternal. The person who has not yet put his faith and trust in the Lord walks, pursues, and regulates his life and conduct according to the whims of their heart and mind. We can focus on empty things which do not matter in God’s eternal plan for our lives. God has a redemptive plan in action. Think on **John 3:16**, *“For God so loved the World, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”*

So how can we stop walking that way and living like we did before Christ came into our life? I believe a way to start is by reading the “One Another” commands in the Bible. How many times in the Bible are we told to do something to or for one another? We have heard about the many ways we can love one another but, in our humanness, we can forget. Can you name one right now?

While preparing for this Sermon, I found out a lot about the “One Another” verses. I read a great infographic by Jeffrey Kranz that gave me some insights that resonated with me, and I want to share them with you. Did you know that the “One Another” commands are used 100 times in 94 New Testament verses, 47 of those verses give instruction to followers of Jesus, and 60% of those “One Another” commands were written by Paul? I believe that you can see three main themes in the “One Another” Commands. Let us take out our Bibles and read them:

**The first theme is Unity.** We are commanded to deal with each other in the context of the church in a way that is different than a courtroom or classroom. There are a lot of verses on the topic of unity but here are just a few of them.

**Mark 9:50** – *“Be at peace with each other.”*

**Ephesians 4:32** – *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*

**1 Thessalonians 5:15** – *“Seek good for one another, and don’t repay evil for evil.”*

**The second theme is Love.** Did you know that one third of all commands in the Bible are instructing Christians to love one another? Here are a few examples:

**John 13:34-35** – *“A new command I give you: Love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

**Galatians 5:13** – *“You my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh, rather, serve one another humbly in love.”*

**Romans 12:9-13** – *“You must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”*

**The third theme is Humility.** About 15% of the “One Another” verses in the Bible stress an attitude of humility and putting others first, among believers.

**John 13:14** – *“Now that I your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.”*

**Romans 12:10** – *“Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”*

**Romans 12:16** – *“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but willing to associate with people of low positions. Do not be conceited.”*

I want to challenge us this week to write down the “One Another words” of **James 5:16**, and to *“Pray for one another.”* Or **Galatians 6:2**, *“Bear one another’s Burdens.”* I think this church does a great job of doing this, but there is always room for more. Look at our prayer list more than just today, and pray for them, check in on them and maybe send a note of encouragement. Praying is active, Praying is powerful, and Praying is being obedient.

Or how about the words of **1 Peter 4:9**, “*Be hospitable to one another.*” When we find out that someone is in the hospital, sick at home, or had a new baby, how can we help in tangible ways? Maybe start a meal train, bring a meal, or give a gift card for takeout.

I also believe these verses could be a tangible reminder for us in the next several weeks. Maybe your small group, friends or Bible study can share one a week and find a way to live it out. We could write it down and put it by our bed, or the fridge, or take it with you for your walk. If we are reminded each week with one of the “One Another” verses, then we can actively live out that command and think about how to interact with one another in a way that is pleasing to God.

How many people like to bike ride or have ever ridden a bicycle? Did you know it is a reminder of how to love one another?

Think of the wheel. A wheel is held together by numerous spokes. The whole inside area is the world around us. Each of us is one of the spokes. You, me, and everybody washed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

The center hub is God. Near the hub, the spokes are together and as you go away from the hub, there is space between the spokes. This tells me that as brothers and sisters in Christ, we are close to God. We are also close to other brothers and sisters in Christ.

Sometimes we pick and choose who we want to love, or we say, “*I can’t love that person because they think differently than I do.*” Or “*They dress differently than I do.*” No, God’s plan does not work that way. If you are close to God, you will automatically be close to the ones around us. If you are far from God, you will be far from one another. Only when all the spokes come together in unison in God can we reflect the love of God to the World around us. We love because love is a commandment of God.

As you go about your day today look for those bike wheels and remember that when we love one another we move one step closer to God.

### **Questions for Small Groups**

In Pastor Barbara’s Sermon she referenced **Ephesians 17:24**. Please read this together.

What were the differences in how a Gentile (non-believer) lived their life and how a disciple of Christ lived their life?

Do you think this is still true today? In what ways?

What were the three themes of the One Another Commands?

Which theme resonated with you and why?

Which theme do you need to work on and how might you do that?