

## MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Deconstruction / Reconstruction of the Disciples' Life Part 4

Characteristics of the Reconstructed Life (1)

Ephesians 4:25-27

Tim Armstrong, Senior Pastor

Weekend 01.06-07.10

Good morning. Good to have you here. You know what I think we need to do is we need to thank people like Greg Rudrick, Greg Crawfis, Dave Huber. These are all guys who are part of the parking team and clean the walks for us so we can get here. They've been here many hours so, thank you. Good to have you here, safely. What a couple of days we've had behind us but we made it. We're here to celebrate what God has done in and through us as well as, to glorify Him for His name and to lift up the name of Jesus Christ. We're going to do that by understanding what He has for us in the Word today so take your bibles and let's open to Ephesians, chapter 4, verse 25 and following.

We are in a series. We've been learning what it means to walk in a manner worthy of our calling. We saw that in the very first day in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 1. We've come to an understanding about that - that we walk in a manner worthy of our salvation. That's where our strength lies. And then we've been making our way through the passage. In the first twenty-four verses or so Paul has been giving us basic instructions on what needs to be taken out of our life and what needs to be put in our life. Well, we've been talking about what needs to be deconstructed and what needs to be reconstructed and that's really the name of our series - Deconstruction / Reconstruction of the Disciples' Life. That's what that means. And we started with an understanding with what needs to be taken out of our life; what needs to be deconstructed. We saw that in verse 17. He says, we're no longer to walk as the Gentiles do. What does that mean? We're no longer to walk as those who do not know God. That means in our thinking, in our reasoning, in our feelings, in our actions. We're to put that away. We're literally to put that off and to put on the new life in Christ. That's what we saw in verse 22, 23 and 24 last week. It's like taking off an old coat and putting on a new. That's what Christ has done for us. Now our life ought to reflect that.

Now we come to verse 25 and Paul begins to be very specific and that's what we've been waiting for. Some of us have that personality. We just say tell me what I need to do and I'll do it. Well, this is for you. He gives us a list. It's not an exhaustive list by any means but he gives us a list of what are the characteristics that should govern this new life. And we're going to see that, almost out of the shoot in verse 25. Follow along. I'm going to read. He says, therefore. Now, remember we always have to ask what's the therefore there for? He's saying, now that you've taken off, put on the new this is what you do. Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor for we are members one of another. Be angry - do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give not opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal but rather let him labor doing honest work with his own hands so that he may have something to share to anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouth but only such is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom we were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all

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malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

What we see, essentially in this passage are characteristics for the reconstructed life. Characteristics for a life that has been changed by Christ and there are five categories that he touches on in these verses. First is that we are to put away lying – become truth tellers. We're to be people who no longer practice unrighteous anger. We're supposed to trade that for righteous anger. We're to stop stealing. We're to start sharing. There should be no unwholesome language from our mouth. Instead, our language should be edifying one to another. All the ungodly actions of verses 31 should be put away and verse 32, all the Godly actions should characterize us. And so, this is the characteristics of the reconstructed, redeemed life. This is what we're going to be working on today and next week. We're going to look at these five characteristics. Let's begin with the first one in verse 25.

He says, you put away falsehood. In other words, he's saying you need to stop lying and you need to speak the truth. That's the first thing that comes out of the text. You need to stop being a person who involves themselves in falsehood and you ought to be a person who speaks the truth. Whenever you come to a passage of scripture you need to put your observation glasses on. In other words, you need to just look through the text and you need to be asking the text questions and pulling out what you see very clearly and you need to be beginning by just saying well, why is this here? Why is the writer talking about this now? And that's definitely what we ought to be looking at when we come to this passage. You ought to be saying, Paul, you just told us to put off the old and put on the new. This is something that Christ has done in us, through us. Why are you talking about falsehood right out of the shoot? Why are you talking about this now? What is so important in Paul's mind that he starts with the idea of truthfulness? Was it something about the Ephesians church? Was it something about the culture of that day? Was it something about the commerce or the business aspect? Was lying part of the deal that was going on in the Ephesian culture? Remember, we learned a few weeks ago that Ephesus was a commerce area. It was a trade area of the Roman Empire. People would go to Ephesus to trade and then they go out throughout the Empire to do business and so there was a sense that this was a center of commerce. Was Paul saying there's so much lying that's going around that we need to face this head on? What was the situation here. Was that society plagued with lying beyond more than any other?

When you think about it, our society, to be very truthful tends to be built upon a number of falsehoods. We actually expect it. We expect it sometimes in our dealings with one another in business. We expect it sometimes when we hear our government or our political institutions kind of exaggerate beyond what we know is the truth. We see that on television and advertising. In fact, one writer puts it this way: our society today is so dependent on lying that if suddenly turned to tell us the truth our way of life would

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collapse. He says, if world leaders began speaking only the truth World War III would certainly ensue. So many lies are piled on other lies so many other organizations, businesses, economies, social orders, governments, treaties are all built on these lies that the world system would basically disintegrate if lying should suddenly cease. He goes on by saying, resentment, animosity would know no bounds and the confusion would be unimaginable.

Is that true? Is that true? Does the world run on that level of dishonesty? Interestingly I came across an article in Psychology Today from a doctor out of the University of Virginia, Dr. DePaulo. He writes about this. He actually conducted a study on lying and he writes, most people can succeed at truthfulness for no more than three to four weeks. That we, as a civilization can not last more than three or four weeks without telling some kind of falsehood. He goes on to say, every day lies are a real part of the fabric of the social life of today. A study of one-hundred and forty-seven people were asked to keep a lying journal. On average most people lied two times per day. Lying was most common in phone conversations rather than face to face. A tenth of the lies were exaggerations while sixty percent were outright deceptions. Most of the rest were subtle lies. But this is what I thought interesting – more than, he writes, seventy percent of liars revealed that they would tell their lies again if they had the opportunity.

Does lying just invade the fabric of who we are? Do you ever think about this? You never have to teach a child to lie. Do you notice that? You have to teach them to tell the truth. A funny circumstance happened. This was years ago. Michelle and I were living in Dallas at the time. I was going through schooling and she was actually working in an inner-city school; putting me through school. For one reason or another I went to pick her up. I don't know if we were in a one car situation at the time but I went and I pulled up beside of the school and waited for her to come out. I noticed the double doors that went into the cafeteria and the kitchen area of the school was open. Now, this was somewhere around 3:30 – 4:00. Most of the students were gone but there was a group of students congregating around these open doors. I didn't really pay much attention to it. I was just minding my own business. Michelle came out. She got in the car. She immediately picked up on what was going on. These students, probably about a dozen or so of them, were taking milk from the cafeteria and they were drinking it and they were having a good time. And, essentially, they were stealing it and they suddenly realized there was a teacher present and so they all made their way around to the other side of the building which was where the play area was. And Michelle says, just around the side. She says, watch this. So I drove around the side and parked the car. She got out of the car and she walked toward them. If I remember right there was a fence or something that separated the road from the play area. And she just came right up to the fence and she was very coy in the way she said this. She said, I want you to know I know what you have done. I know your names and I'm going to talking about this to the Principal tomorrow morning. Suddenly everybody stopped. Their eyes got as big as saucers. Nobody said anything

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until finally, one little girl jumped off the swing and said, I don't even like milk. Gave herself away.

That's a part of the human nature, isn't it? That we're protective and we would lie to protect ourselves if that is what is required. You see, what Paul is saying is that's no longer our lifestyle. We're no longer to act that way. We are, if you look at the text, we are to put away falsehood. Put away, (ἀποθέμενοι) – *opo -teeth-a-me* is the Greek word. It literally means to take off. So, it's the same imagery that we have in verse 22, 23 and 24 – this idea of taking something off and putting something on. He's saying, take that falsehood off. That's not a part of who you are in Christ any longer. Lay it aside. Literally, it's the idea of stop. Stop doing that. Stop any type of falsehood. Now, what does that encompass? He's not just talking about being truthful. He's talking about all aspects of the truth. Does that mean there's no longer exaggeration? There's no longer any cheating? No longer any excuses, false bogus excuses that we often make? No unrealistic promise that should be made? No flattery? Have you ever done that? Someone comes and says well, what do you think of this? And you're stuck. So, what do you do? You give them a false sense. You give them a flattery. That's a form of falsehood. That's a form of lying. It would be better to say nothing than to lie and that's Paul's point. You are no longer who people who speak falsehoods. You are people of the truth. And, that's the point because God is of the truth. That's the nature you now have inherited in Christ.

Go back to the original question – why did Paul make this such an issue? It's an issue because truthfulness is a part of the character of God. And it's important for us to understand how serious God takes the truth. Come with me just to the very last book of the New Testament – the book of Revelation – almost the last chapter, chapter 21. And here we see a characteristic of the unredeemed life at, what is called the Great White Throne Judgment. Now, this is the last judgment for humanity. They are standing before God's throne. By the way, you will not be a part of this. The church will have been raptured. Your time of meeting the Lord will have been over. There is no condemnation for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. This is about those who have not received Christ while on Earth. This is those who are unredeemed in nature. They are standing before God and look at the characteristics. Look at the list. But as the cowardly, verse 8, they faithless, the detestable, as for the murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters - you would expect them to be in that line; you would expect them to be on that list. Then he says, and all liars. Their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur which is the second death. God is very serious about falsehood.

So much so, now let's go to the middle of our bibles. About Psalms, Proverbs, should be the middle. I want to take you to Proverbs, chapter 6. If you're not real good at navigating the scriptures that's ok. That's why we do this week in and week out so that you can learn but if you take your bibles and you just kind of open them to the middle you'll get somewhere to Psalms or Proverbs and I want to take you to Proverbs, chapter 6. Now,

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Proverbs 6:16, one of those passages that when you read it immediately gets your attention because you want to know what's to come. And that's essentially what is going on in verse 16. There is this drawing in. Ok, well, what's the rest of the equation? He says in verse 16 there are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to Him. Now, doesn't that make you want to know? Alright, what are those six? What are those seven things that are an abomination to the Lord?

Verse 17, he says, these are it. Haughty eyes, lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, one who sows discord among his brothers. Look at that list. Now, I could make a fairly convincing argument that two out of the seven has to do with truthfulness and falsehood. That's clear. But I think I could actually make a third. I think three out of seven times we need to be people of the truth. He says you should be people with a lying tongue. You shouldn't have a heart that devises wicked plans. Wicked plans are often based on lies. Number three, verse 19, you shouldn't be people of false witness who breathes out lies. Three out of the seven times God is consumed with truthfulness. He says, if you are people who are lying you need to know I hate them. That alone should cause us to be concerned with the truth. I think this is Paul's point. I think this is why Paul starts this. He says, this is the very fabric of who we are. We are truth tellers because God is a truth teller.

Now, go back to Ephesians. I want you to see this in context. He says in verse 25, therefore, having put away, he says if it's already been done so act that way, having putting away falsehood let each one of you speak the truth. That's an interesting word, (λήθειαν)– *a-lay-the-a*. It literally means reality. That's what that means. It means reality.

When I was in college and later in seminary learning the Greek language you could always pick out the Greek students. The New Testament, those of you who might not know was written in Greek so if you want to understand the original you have to go back and learn the original language. And you could always tell the Greek students because they were walking around and they had index cards on a big ring and they were just flipping these cards learning these words, putting them to memory. And I remember this particular word because it not only spoke of truthfulness, it spoke of reality. That's the literal meaning of this word. We are to speak reality whenever we open our mouths. We shouldn't shade it with anything that goes on. We shouldn't try to earn it or manipulate it. We ought to speak what is very clear as reality; clear that is around us. Paul is driving home a point that we are to speak truth reality, with whom? With our neighbor. Who's our neighbor? Well, you remember what Jesus said in Matthew 22, the great Commandment? Love your Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might; this is the first and greatest Commandment. The second is like unto it – love

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your neighbor as yourself. Your neighbor is anyone you come across. So not only are you to love them but you're to tell the truth to them.

Then he narrows it and he says not only that, but you are to love your neighbors, members of one another. You are to realize that you are part of a body together and I think Paul is talking specifically of the church here. He says whatever you do, do not lie to those who are a part of the Kingdom of God. Why Paul? Why is that? Because it's polar opposite he's saying. It's the polar opposite of the new life that has been given to you in Christ – to be equal in all aspects, on every level to speak reality. This is where we launch. You need to ask yourself do I value the truth? Do I value the truth on all aspects of my life that I maintain honesty, reality, truthfulness; in the way I conduct myself in my speech, in my business, in my actions. Does that represent who I am? It needs to because that is who you are in Christ.

Now, in verse 26 he changes it and he goes from lying to anger. He says, be angry and do not sin. You probably didn't realize that you could be angry and not sin. Obviously it's possible. Obviously you can be angry and sin but it's obviously possible to be angry and not to sin and so number two, he says, trade your unrighteous anger for righteous anger. Stop lying, speak the truth. Verse 25. Verse 26 – trade unrighteous anger for righteous anger.

Now, to understand this you have to understand the construction, the grammatical construction of this particular verse. We've talked a little bit about Greek. I don't want to overwhelm you but there is one word in the English language for anger; three words in the Greek language for anger. The first of these is the word thumos which means a turbulent, boiling, agitation type of anger. It borders on wrath, although wrath is an individual word in the Greek but this borders on that concept. It borders on the idea that this is an uncontrollable thuma, uncontrollable anger. That's one word in the Greek. Paul uses it, by the way in verse 31. He prohibits that as a use. He says, let all bitterness, wrath and anger, thumos be put away from you. The second word is parorgismos. It's the word for the anger of exasperation. This is the idea of explosive anger. Do you know anybody like that – very short fuse. Something goes wrong and then bam. They are angry, right in the moment. They explode and seems they need to get calmed down after the moment. That's parorgismos. And then the third is orge and that's the meaning of a settled, deep seeded anger. It's often called the principle based anger; anger because a principle of yours was violated.

Now, what does Paul mean in this text? Well, he uses not one but two of these Greek words to describe his meaning. He says, look at this example. He says be angry, orge and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your parorgismos. He uses two different Greek words to get across his meaning. Now, in the Greek culture you would have understood this right away. You say, ok I get this. In the English culture we kind of have to work at

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the text to understand it. What he's saying is you can be angry, orge, this settled, deep seeded anger and not sin because that's a kind of righteous indignation and we've all experienced that. We've all be angered when we see somebody who can not defend themselves, can not care for themselves be taken advantage of by somebody else or some government or some situation. You get angry, don't you? Well, do you remember what Jesus did in the temple when He walked in and He saw people fleecing God's people before they went to give a sacrifice? What did He do? He created a whip, turned tables over. He was clearly angry but He wasn't sinning because He had a righteous indignation. That's that idea.

We also see this in scriptures when Jesus confronted the Pharisees. He had just healed a man's withered hand on the Sabbath and they derided Him for that. He gets angry at them. He gets this orge anger. He gets this righteous indignation. You can have that type of anger but Paul says don't let it go further. Don't let the sun go down on your anger or it will turn to a parorgismos – a self serving anger. This is the anger of sin he's saying. This is the anger that we have not legitimate reason to have. This is the dangerous kind of anger. Now, he say, whatever you do be careful. Don't let the sun go down because if it does it can turn to personal vengeance. Have you ever had that happen to you? Something goes on. You have this sense of anger and the more you hold on to that, the more you think about it, the more that tends to boil inside you it starts to turn into a sin. It starts to cling to who you are. It starts to define who you are. You've just slipped from orge into parorgismos type of anger.

And you know how I see it? I see it in my relationship with my wife. You probably see it in your relationship too. Somebody does something to me she can become very angry at them, defensively angry. I'm the same way with her. If somebody does something to her, you know I'm not going to let them get away with that. And I have this sense of righteous indignation but if we hold onto that and we keep stewing that and that vengeance starts to boil inside of us pretty soon we want to take matters into our own hands. Pretty soon we want to reek vengeance on somebody – that's when that kind of anger, righteous anger turns to sinful anger and Paul says don't. Whatever you do don't let that happen. Give it over to God. Let God take care of it. You want to see something? God says, I'll take of it.

Just hold the place in Ephesians. Come over to Romans, chapter 12. Romans, chapter 12 are one of those passages that as soon as you read it you go oh, because we've all been there. This just speaks just right to us. It's kind of like an arrow that pierces right in because we've all lived this. We carry this sense of anger and suddenly we read verse 17 of Romans 12 – repay no one evil for evil. Don't get back at them is what that says. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, as far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, now he's getting very pastoral, very loving, very caring, he's saying, beloved, never avenge yourself but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the

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Lord. To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on their head. It's a euphemism. It's a way of saying you're going to get back at them because they just stand that you are being so nice to them. Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good. Is it difficult to do? Absolutely. Well, what do we do? Put that off. Take that off. Don't let that govern your lifestyle. Put on the righteousness of Christ. Move forward, saying God, this is yours. I don't understand how you're going to do it but I'm just mad. I can't stand how mad I am but I'm not going to let this seep into my soul and change the way I act; the way I talk; the way I treat people. Lord, you are righteous; you are the God who will take care of me. I turn it over to you. Let it go.

I think that is what Paul says. Don't let the sun go down on your anger. Don't go long. Don't go long holding that righteous indignation. Take it to God in prayer. Let it go. Why? Because look what the text says? Be angry. Do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. Verse 27, and give no opportunity to the devil. When you hold to that anger you give, literally the text gives a picturesque idea of a foothold to Satan. Satan has a foothold in your life. Don't do that. Paul says, just let it go. It's like what he said in 2 Corinthians 2:11, don't be outwitted by Satan. Don't get in a place where you're just outwitted by what Satan's conniving, evil schemes are doing. He says, don't walk into that trap. You need to be smarter than that and know what he's up to. He's trying to get you to that point of boiling anger. Don't go there. Let it go. We'd love to be able to walk that way on a regular basis. But it's difficult. Do you struggle with lying? Do you struggle with anger? Is this a part of who you are? Paul is saying, that is not who you are anymore. That's the old you. Stop responding to the impulses of the old you. Take it off. Put on the new you in Christ. You have the power. Before you did not have the power to stop your lying or to stop your anger. You now have that power. That's what Paul is driving at.

I know that some of you here this morning, you've experienced the ravages of both lying and anger. Either you've been a victim and you've had someone lie to you or about you or you've been a victim where someone's poured out their anger on you. What is your admonishment? Your admonishment is clear. Don't take vengeance upon yourself. Give that over to God. Walk away from that. Wait for God to hold you up with His righteous right hand. Or you're an offender. We're all in that camp. We've all lied. We've all had outbursts of anger. We've all taken vengeance on the responsibility of ourselves. I'm going to take vengeance in this situation. I'm going to let them have it. What does God say? Confess of that. Repent of that. Walk away. That will not bring you the joy of my spirit. That will not bring you the peace that you so desperately are looking for. That will only bring you more trouble, more heartache, more pain, more sadness. Do the opposite of what you're old nature thinks, calls you to do – walk in righteousness. This is the new you in Christ. Let's pray to that end.