How to get along with each other in

The Church Family

(Selected Scriptures in Ephesians)

4/23/06



Introduction: The Church is a Family (Ephesians 2:19; 3:15)

I. Make sure you are truly part of the family (Eph. 2:18-22)

II. Be walking close to your Heavenly Father (Eph. 3:14-19)

III. Listen carefully to the instructions God gives you through your Pastor-Teacher (Eph. 4:12-15)

IV. Stay connected to the other church members in fellowship and ministry (Eph. 4:16)

V. Allow the Holy Spirit to cultivate the attitudes necessary for harmony and peace

Necessary Attitudes in God's Family:

A. Humility (Eph. 4:2a)

B. Gentleness (Eph. 4:2b)

C. Patience (Eph. 4:2c)

D. Unity (Eph. 4:3-6)

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I. Kindness (Eph. 4:32a)

J. Compassion (Eph. 4:32b)

K. Forgiveness (Eph. 4:32c)

L. Love (Eph. 5:1-2)

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Introduction: The Church is a Family (Ephesians 2:19; 3:15)

God has established a setting to make genuine friends and to build good relationships. This setting is a Bible-centered church. It is through such a gathering that Christians commune together, pray together, sing together, learn together, and mature together.

Pictures of the Church in the New Testament

1. The "Body" of Christ

Scripture: Romans 12:4-18; I Cor. 12; Eph. 4:4-16.

The body is a picture of unity and diversity (many members in one body)

As the body grows to maturity, so must the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:12-16).

The Body of Christ has but one Head - Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:22).

2. The "pillar and ground of the truth"

Scripture: I Timothy 3:15

The "pillar" - that which holds the building up before the world, makes it attractive.

The "ground" - the foundation, that on which the building rests, that which keeps it firm and stable.

The point: The truth of God is kept firm and made attractive to the world by means of the ministry of the church. [a local church that is functioning Biblically (cp. context of I Tim. 3) will preserve the truth for ages to come and protect Christians from doctrinal error (I Tim. 4:1ff)]

3. The "temple of God"

Scripture: I Cor. 3:9-17; Eph. 2:21, 22; I Pet. 2:5.

1) The foundation - the Gospel of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 3:10-11).
2) The cornerstone - Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:20).
3) The building stones - believers (I Pet. 2:5).
4) The significance of the temple - holiness as the abode of the Spirit.

4. The "Bride of Christ"

Scripture: Jn. 3:29; Eph. 5:23-32; Rev. 19:709, 21:9, 22:17).

The term "Bride" refers to the church as a whole, the complete "wife" of Christ awaiting the Rapture and Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

5. The Family of God

Scripture: Ephesians 3:15

Believers have the same
- Father (Relationship with God)
- Birth (via adoption)
- Name (Christian)
- Food (God's Word)
- Spirit (the Holy Spirit)
- House (Heaven: John 14:1-3)

- Satan sows tares among the wheat (Mt. 13:38; II Cor.11:13)
- Satan seeks to disturb the unity of the church by creating discord and division (James 3:14-16)

How can we get along with each other in the Church Family?

I. Make sure you are truly part of the family (Eph. 2:18-22)
(v. 18)

"Him. . . Spirit . . . Father" - The Trinity in one verse!

Through Him - Jesus is the Provider of salvation

By one Spirit - The Spirit is the one who unites us to Christ (I Cor. 12:13)

Unto the Father - The Father is now approachable

"Access - entrance; a way of approach; a way of admission.

Fellow Citizens in the Family of Christ (v. 19)

"Now therefore" = because of this unity between Jew and Gentile (in Christ) and because of the direct access that Gentiles have through Christ by the Spirit to the Father (v. 18), we are no longer strangers and aliens.

"Strangers" - to be unaware of and unrelated to God and His program

"Foreigners" - lit. to live along side of. There was a time when we were not in the household of God but were outside ("next door"), shut out. The Bible often refers to unbelievers as those that are "without" (lit. on the outside). Just as Gentiles were outside of the commonwealth of Israel (2:12), we were once outside of the family of God.

"Ye are" - not "you will be," but presently you are in God's family (Jn. 5:24 - "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.").

"We know that we have [already] passed from death unto life" (I Jn. 3:14).

"Fellow citizens" = to live in the same city with. Both Jew and Gentile believers share the same Lord, the same faith, the same baptism (4:5). We share one Spirit, one hope (4:4), and have the same Father (4:6).

We will inherit the same heaven, walk the same streets of gold, enter the same pearly gates, and inhabit the same New Jerusalem. We will reign together, sing together, glorify God together, enjoy eternity together. So why can't believers get along together now?

"To dwell above with saints we love, Oh that will be glory,

But to dwell below with saints we know, well, that's another story."

"Our citizenship is in heaven"

"Fellow citizens <u>with the saints</u>" - We are not fellow citizens of this world or with the world, but with the saints (saints meaning "sanctified, set apart, holy ones")

"Household" - family

Because we are of the "household" of God, we should especially do good to those of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10). "Family" comes first! among human relationships

EX: Song "I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God"

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (I Jn. 3:1)

--We are brothers and sisters. WE have the same Father. We received the same adoption. We inherit the same eternity. Calling each other "brother" is more than a title-- it's a reality.

II. Be walking close to your Heavenly Father (Eph. 3:14-19)

V. 15

"Of whom" - refers to ***"the Lord Jesus Christ"*** (v. 14)

"the whole family" - refers to the family of God, both those who are in Heaven (the dead in Christ) and on earth (the living believers).

The church is a family! A family reunion will occur one day -- I Thes. 4:13-18

"Is named" - God's family bears the <u>name</u> of His Son. Just as children bear the last name of their father, so we bear the name "Christian" - because we belong to Christ.

"Too often believers fail to realize all that God provided for them and consequently fail to grow and enjoy their Christian life to the fullest.

v.16
"In the inner man" - we need to be more concerned about our inner man (our innermost, spiritual being) than we are for the external.

God **encourages us to exercise ourselves unto Godliness.** ***"For bodily exercise profiteth little: but Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come"*** **(I Tim. 4:8)**

Paul said: ***"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man"*** **(Rom. 7:22).**

It is the hidden man of the heart that women are to adorn (I Pet. 3).

The Bible says that *"though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day"* (II Cor. 4:16).

THE <u>PRESENCE</u> OF CHRIST (V. 17A)

"Dwell" - (kat-oikeo = kat=down; oikeo=at home) Lit. to be "down at home", to settle down; to be at home.

The Ephesians had Christ in them, and they were "in Christ" (ch. 1 & 2), but now Paul prayed that they would come to experience His intimate presence on a daily basis

SEE John 14:18-23

Too often we treat Christ like a passing visitor or an occasional guest. . . when He wants to move into every room and closet of our lives. He should have access to every area. No place of our lives should be off limits to him (our leisure, eating, recreation, work, pleasure, etc.)

III. Listen carefully to the instructions God gives you through your Pastor-Teacher (Eph. 4:12-15)

1) The word "pastor" means: "shepherd"

2) The New Testament office of pastor is that of an <u>overseer</u> of God's flock (Acts 20:28), one charged with <u>feeding</u> (Jn. 21:17; I Pet. 5:1-3), <u>guarding</u> (Acts 20:28), and <u>strengthening</u> a specific congregation of believers.

3) The pastor must also be an effective teacher (I Tim. 3:2 - "apt to teach"); every member of the flock is dependent on the Word of God, and thus the pastor must be able to effectively minister the Word to the flock.

The Greek conjunction kai, which comes in between *"pastors <u>and</u> teachers*" shows that this office is one and the same. . . <u>"pastor-teacher"</u>

Every pastor is a teacher! (I Tim. 3:2), who must feed God's flock (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:2).

(<u>Why</u> does God distribute gifts?)

The Pastor-teacher

1) Equips the <u>Saints</u>

2) To Minister to <u>others</u>

3) To Edify the <u>Body</u>

"For (pros) . . . for (eis) . . . for (eis . . ."

Those gifted offices were given for 1) specific purpose leading toward 2) results

"Perfecting the saints" is a significant phrase itself. It speaks of bringing believers to maturity -- not sinless perfection, but spiritual excellence (MacArthur)

"Perfecting" -

2 ideas in one word:

1) To repair (like a doctor)

   a) Used of repairing broken bones
   b) Used of mending broken fishing nets
   c) Used of restoring an erring brother (Gal. 66:1)

2) To equip (like a coach)

   To furnish (II Tim. 3:17) or outfit. To provide what is necessary for the task.

   "For the work of the ministry" - for the work of serving ("diakonia")

   The work of the evangelist and pastor-teacher is to get every believer involved in serving (whether in an official or unofficial capacity)

   The goal of preaching is not to simply educate God's people; it's to motivate them to serve!

   Preaching is to be not only doctrinal but practical.

   Every Christian is saved to serve (Eph. 2:10; I Cor. 15:58; I Pet. 2:5, 9; 4:10-11)

   NOTE: God's progressive plan for His church:

1)Equipping 2)serving 3)building

   "Edifying" - (i.e. edifice) building up; growth; both spiritual and numerical growth occur when everyone is using his/her gift in a ministry.

   "The Body" is built up externally through evangelism and internally through discipleship and training.

   Only the Word *"is able to build you up"!* (Acts 20:32)

   A Body that has parts not working is a sick one.

IV. Stay connected to the other church members in fellowship and ministry (Eph. 4:16)

"From whom" - the whole Body is connected to the Head and receives its directions from the Head.

--We are joined together (by the Holy Spirit - I Cor. 12:13)

--We are held together (compacted) by the joints (sinews or ligaments) which provide a supply of spiritual food to each part.

Just as in our human body each part does its share in aiding the growth of the rest of the Body, so it is in the Body of Christ.

Each believer via his connectedness to other believers imparts (passes on) spiritual nutrition to them.

"the edifying of itself" - the human body actually builds and mends itself. So will the church Body when each part does its ministry.

"Love" is the immunity system of the Body of Christ. Love fights off every spiritual virus Satan sends.

V. Allow the Holy Spirit to cultivate the attitudes necessary for harmony and peace

Necessary Attitudes in God's Family:

A. Humility (Eph. 4:2a)

Humbleness - a proper estimate of self

Pride reflects a wrong view of self and a wrong view of God. When we see Him as He is, we will then see ourselves as we really are.

"Humility takes off our rose-colored glasses and allows us to see ourselves as we really are. We are not adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves,' says Paul, 'but our adequacy is from God'." (II Cor. 3:5)

- Acts 20:19 - *"Serving the Lord with all humility of mind"*
- Phil. 2:3 - *"Do nothing by strife or vainglory but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others"*
- I Pet. 5:5 - *"Be clothed with humility"*

"The beginning of greatness is to be little; the increase of greatness is to less; the perfection of greatness is to be nothing."

B. Gentleness (Eph. 4:2b)

Meekness = to have strength under control; mild; tame

The word "meek" (gentle) does not mean "weak" but so strong that you are approachable by anyone. It is controlled strength that is not wild, unruly, or out of control. But mild-mannered, cool, calm, collectable. The Greek word "praotes" was used of tame animals (ex: horses and lions) and soothing wind (which had the potential of doing great damage.

One of the marks of true meekness is self-control. People who are angered at every nuisance or inconvenience to themselves know nothing of meekness or gentleness (MacArthur, p. 125).

Gentleness - patient submissiveness; a quality shown between friends, when you don't want to fracture relationship

God dealt gently with us in bringing us to Christ and salvation. WE should not forget such, but allow it to temper our behavior.

C. Patience (Eph. 4:2c)

Patience = large heat - one who can take the heat; to be able to wait a long time before you would lose your Spirit control and testimony. . . i.e. to be long-fused.

--A restraint of anger or agitation

--A persistence in waiting for God to work things out rather than your forcing them

--This person can bear injury and insult without retaliating (Ja. 1:19 - slow to anger)

"To dwell above with saints we love,
O that will be glory,
To dwell below with saints we know,
Well, that's another story!"

"True patience means waiting without worrying"
"Patience is accepting a difficult situation without giving God a deadline to remove it"

*Patience is needed <u>while</u> lifting up (enduring) one another <u>in love</u> (v. 2b)
"In love" = a giving without grudging, but with a sense of family affection

God was patient with us (and still is); His longsuffering gave us the time and occasion to be saved. Considering His "calling," shouldn't our lives match?

Patience - EX. of David Livingstone (MacArthur, p. 127)

D. Unity (Eph. 4:3-6)

Context = not external unity with other churches (organizations) but internal heart unity (relational)

1. Unity is maintained by effort

***"Endeavoring"* =** making every effort

Church unity is like marriage - you must zealously work at maintaining it.

"Did you know you can't create unity in the church? God already created it; all you can do is destroy it. The unity of the church is already done by the Holy Spirit;

all we can do is:

1) mess it up
2) maintain it (MacArthur)

"To keep" = to guard, preserve, hold on to

EX: Peter imprisoned by Herod and slept between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door <u>kept</u> the prison"

***"Unity"* =** comes from the word which means <u>one</u>

Paul is <u>not</u> talking about our being united <u>to</u> the Spirit, but our being united (in a common oneness) with other believers <u>by</u> the Spirit

Unity is:oneness, singleness, harmony, agreement, togetherness, comradery, blending, joining, cooperation, a pulling together, a standing shoulder-to-shoulder, and working side by side

ILLUS: Turn to Acts 2:41-46
Fellowship (v. 42); together (v. 44); had all things common (v. 44); one accord (v. 46); singleness of heart

Turn to Acts 4:32-37 - One heart and one soul (v. 32), had all things common (v. 32)

READ Psalm 133

2. Unity is held together by peace (v. 3b)

***"Bond"* =** idea of gluing, cementing, or tying together

Ja. 3:18 - "And the fruit if righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace"

A home without peace is a home without togetherness
A business without peace is a business without harmony
A church without peace is a church without unity

3. Unity is illustrated by Spiritual reality (v. 4-6)

a. ***"One body"*** - all believers, collectively, "Bride"

ILLUS: unity of Body in Heaven; earthly local churches are representative

b. ***"One Spirit"*** - Read Eph. 2:18
I Jn. 4:1 - "Try the spirits. . . " (there is one true Spirit)
A divided church is not right with God - the Spirit only leads one way

c. ***"One hope" -*** a single confidence.
We all share a common salvation. We have the same assurance. WE look forward to the same eternity.

d. ***"One Lord"*** (Master, owner) == Christ
He has right to rule over your life if He is your Lord.

e. ***"One faith"***
Only one means of truth - Bible
Only one means of salvation - Christ

f. ***"One baptism"*** (water = symbol; Spirit = reality)
Both are implied here.
Not a baptism in the name of Paul (I Cor. 1:13) or any other Apostle. But a baptism in the name of the Triune Godhead

Ex: Peter linked water baptism with Spirit baptism when he said, "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

g. ***"One God and Father"***
Similar statement to I Cor. 8:4b & 6

"Father of all" - all who have accepted His "calling" or invitation to salvation (v. 1, 4)

"Above all" - sovereignty (power); powerful

"Through all" - source (provision); provisional

"In all" - sustenance (personal relationship); personal

Rom. 11:36 - *"For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."*

E. Truth (Eph. 4:25)

"Putting away" - middle voice You must strip off of yourself falsehood.

No one can make you a persons of truth. The decision is yours.

God is calling for a once-and-for-all decision to discard all deceitful, dishonest remnants of our past life.

"When a person becomes a believer, he steps out of the domain of falsehood into the domain of truth (having received the one who is Truth - Jn. 14:6), and every form of lying therefore is utterly inconsistent with his new self" (MacArthur, p. 183)

"Lying has become a way of life for millions. Children lie to their parents without conscience. Men in business tell bare-faced lies to avoid their creditors, to acquire something they want, or to make a sale. People make promises they have no intention of fulfilling" (John Phillips)

"A lie is a statement that is contrary to fact, spoken with the intention to deceive" (Wiersbe)

What is lying?
--White lies, black lies, gray lies
--Intentional cover-ups of truth - "A half truth is a whole lie"
--Deceitfulness of any kind
--Hypocrisy
--Exaggerations (Ex: the Christian man who embellished the story of his testimony so much that he no longer knew what was true and what was not)
--Twisting of Scripture
--Dishonesty (cheating at school; flattery)

People are never more like the devil than when they lie (Jn. 8:44 - *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar,a nd the father of it."*)

Lying is so serious that the Lake of Fire will be filled with people whose chronic lying will prove their guilt of unbelief (this rejecting the one who was the truth) at the Great White Throne Judgement (Rev. 21:8)

"Bishop Warren A. Chandler was preaching about the lies of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) and asked the congregation, "If God still struck people dead for lying, where would I be?" The congregation snickered a bit, but the smiles disappeared when the bishop shouted, "I'd be right here - preaching to an empty church!" (Wiersbe, Colossians, p. 107)

"Every man" - No one is justified to lie no matter who they are or what their problem, but everyone is to speak the truth.

"Speak" - to continually speak the truth (our loins are to be girt about with the *"truth"* - 6:14. Truth is to characterize the child of God.

Because our Father (in Heaven) is truth, we must be like Him.

We are to speak *"the truth in love"* (Eph. 4:15)

"With his neighbor" = the one who is close by; the one who is right next to you [not merely your "next door neighbor," but anyone you converse with, especially those who are immediately related (Ex: spouse) or associated (church members)]

The reason for truth (especially among believers) is because of our relationship to each other.

"*For [because] we are members one of another"*
--In marriage - you are one with your spouse (Eph. 5:28-29)
--In Christ - we are part of the same Body (Eph. 5:30)

When we lie to each other (Ex: spouse or fellow Christian), we are actually hurting ourselves, because of our oneness.

ILLUS: Our physical body parts depend on truthful signals from our brain *("Our physical bodies cannot function properly or safely if each member does not correctly communicate to the others. If our brain were suddenly to start giving false signals to our feet, we would stumble or walk in front of a moving truck, instead of stopping on the curb. If it falsely reported hot and cold, we could freeze to death because we felt too warm or be scalded in a hot shower while feeling chilly. If our eyes decided to send false signals to the brain, a dangerous curve int he highway might appear straight and safe, and we would crash. IF the nerves in our hands and feet failed to tell our brain that injury was occurring, our foot could be mangled or our fingers burned without our knowing it. That is precisely the great danger of leprosy--injuries, disease, and other afflictions devastate the body because nerves fail to send danger signals of pain."*

F. Generosity (Eph. 4:28)

The purpose of working is to not merely have our needs met, but to give to others in need! Wealth is not to be selfishly horded, but wisely invested into the lives of others and into the ministry of our Lord - I Tim. 6:17-18 - *"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate."*

G. Edifying Speech (Eph. 4:29)

"Corrupt" - rank, foul, putrid, stinking, rotten, worthless

***"Communication"* -**word

No rotten word is to ever come out of our mouths!

***"Corrupt"* -**the Greek word (sapros) referred to rotten vegetables or fruit

"Rotten speech" is not only vulgarity, but any words that will not build someone up!

EX:--foolish jesting--gossip
--harsh language--lies
--derogatory speech

There is a connection between the mouth and the heart, for *"out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh"* (Mt. 12:34)

See James 3 - for the influence of the tongue

David, knowing the potential evil of his tongue, prayed: *"Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips"* (Ps. 141:3)

"Good" speech is:
1. kind (gracious)
2. Constructive (it helps, builds up)
3. Instructive (it teaches)
4. Calm (under the Spirit's control)
5. Honest (true and sincere)

***"Edifying"* -**(cp. "edifice") to build up; to construct

A simple motto: "If it won't build up - shut up!"

***"Minister"* -**to give

***"Grace"* -**benefit

Our words have tremendous power, either to tear down or to build up; to rip apart, or to put together; to weaken or to strengthen.

Ask yourself: "What is the value of the words I spoke today?"

H. A Right Spirit (Eph. 4:30-31)

V. 30

"Grieve" - to cause sorrow to

The fact that the Holy Spirit can be grieved demonstrates:

1. That He is a person, not a mere "force"
2. That He has emotion
3. That He cares about those He indwells
4. That corrupt speech (v. 29) or bad attitudes (v. 31) are a big deal to the Holy Spirit
   Note: Since this admonition to not grieve the Holy Spirit is sandwiched between these verses, it indicates that our words and attitudes effect our fellowship with the Holy Spirit. We cannot be filled with the Spirit if we are grieving or quenching the Spirit (I Thes. 5:19)

This is why the most miserable person is not the unsaved man (devoid of the Spirit) who speaks evil and harbors wrong attitudes, but is the Christian, who is grieving the Spirit. He therefore is miserable, most miserable!

The Holy Spirit's sealing is a mark of:
1) Ownership
2) Protection
3) Security

(See: Eph. 1:13-14)

Why would we grieve the One who is the guarantee of our eternal salvation?

Note: The Holy Spirit may be grieved at our sin, but He does not leave because of our sin! He remains in a believer until *"the day of redemption"*!

V. 31

"All" **-**None of the following are to be tolerated in our lives at all!

3 forms of anger:

1) Bitterness (to hold grudges, resentfulness in the heart) a bad taste comes to your mouth when you think of that person. A man who is bitter is often: Sharp; cynical; cold; harsh; unpleasant.

2) Wrath (bad temper, hot explosive outbursts; when we blow up)

3) Anger (deep-seated anger; when we bottle up)

Three manifestations (outworkings) of anger:

1) Clamor - outcries; shouting; it is the cry of strife

2) Evil speaking - blasphemy; slander

3) Malice - any form of badness

"Put away" -to pick up and carry away; to make a clean sweep

I. Kindness (Eph. 4:32a)

J. Compassion (Eph. 4:32b)

Tenderhearted (compassionate; lit. to have "good insides" toward someone)

K. Forgiveness (Eph. 4:32c)

"One another" - This action is to be: reciprocal & impartial

How has God forgiven you?

1) Unconditionally - *"While we were yet sinners"* (Rom. 5:8)

2) Totally & completely - *"forgiven"* (Aorist tense points to completed action)

3) Vicariously - *"For Christ's sake"*. Because Jesus paid the price. He took the full brunt of our sin.

In like manner, often the one who forgives will have to take the brunt of the sin of the one whom they forgive.

God's forgiveness is only possible because of Jesus' payment. Therefore, forgiveness is only *"in Christ."*

4) Graciously - the word *"forgiven"* means to shower with grace. It describes the positive aspect of forgiveness. This type of forgiveness not merely withholds the punishment due the person, but it positively, graciously gives of itself for the well-being of the recipient.

5) Personally - *"You"* Because God has forgiven you and has given you what you do not deserve, you should do the same for *"one another."*

L. Love (Eph. 5:1-2)

"Walk" -Our conduct or manner of living.

The phrase ***"in love"*** shows that love ought to characterize our lifestyle

"Walk in love" - note the frequent references to our "walk" -

4:1 - *"walk worthy"*
4:17 - *"walk not as other Gentiles"*
5:8 - *"walk as children of light"*
5:15 - *"walk circumspectly"*

"As Christ" **-** Just as; in the same way as. Again, pointing to a pattern we are to copy or imitate.

Christ's love was sacrificial. (true love sacrifices - cp. Eph. 5:25-26).

His loving sacrifice was:

1. Voluntary - *"gave Himself"* (no one forced Him to do it)

2. Substitutionary - *"for"* = on behalf of; in the place of (His motive was purely selfless)

3. Satisfactory - *"sweet-smelling savour (fragrance)"*. Christ's sacrifice satisfied the just demands of His holiness.

"He shall see the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied" (Is. 53:11)

In like manner as Christ's sacrifice, any sacrifice we make ought to be:
--of our own volition
--for the sake of others
--acceptable unto God (Rom. 12:1)

Since being born again, we have become *"partakers of the divine nature"* (II Pet. 1:4), and since *"God is love"* it is logical that God's children will walk in love (Wiersbe, p. 122).

M. Purity (Eph. 5:3-8)

"Be ye holy (set apart) for I am holy" (Lev. 20:7; I Pet. 1:15, 16)

"fornication" - sexual impurity

"All uncleanness" - anything that would defile or stain our heart (spirit) or body

"Coveteousness" - an illicit lust to have that which is not yours; a greed (the 10th commandment)

"Let it not be once named among you" -

"Named" - to have a reputation for any of the above is a disgrace. Our testimony is vital to uphold.

Once" - impurity is never OK. It is always wrong.

"As becometh saints" - As is suitable for holy, sanctified ones. Impurity does not suit a saint. It is unbecoming. It is a mismatch. It is unfitting for an imitator of God, a dear child of God.

Is sin in the life of a believer different from sin in the life of an unsaved person? Yes -- it's worse! (Wiersbe, p. 126) "A Christian is not sinless, but he does sin less - and less - and less." (Wiersbe, p. 126)

"Filthiness" - Obscenity. Filthy talk or dirty "four letter words"; any form of gutter language.

Our speech should be clean!

"Foolish talking" - the speech of those who are void of wisdom. Foolish speech would be vain talk, empty conversation, silly talk.

Our speech should have meaning!

"Jesting" - coarse joking.

Humor has its place, so long as it is clean. Bar room jokes, innuendos, or dirty stories have no place in the Christian's vocabulary.

Our speech should be serious!

*Cp. 4:29 and 30

"Let no corrupt (rotten, putrid, foul, rank) communication proceed out of your mouth"

"Which are not convenient" - Which are not fitting.

Such speech does not at all suit a child of God.

How does God speak? His speech is truthful, meaningful, clean, and serious. Take after your Father!

"Giving of thanks" - Our speech ought to reflect gratitude for what God has done for us.

N. Prayer (Eph. 6:18)

The most vital ingredient

Conclusion:

" YOUR GARDEN THIS YEAR"

Plant three rows of squash:
1. Squash gossip
2. Squash criticism
3. Squash indifference

Plant seven rows of peas:
1. Prayer
2. Promptness
3. Perseverance
4. Politeness
5. Preparedness
6. Purity
7. Patience

Plant seven heads of lettuce:
1. Let us be unselfish and loyal
2. Let us be faithful to duty
3. Let us search the scriptures
4. Let us not be weary in well doing
5. Let us be obedient in all things
6. Let us be truthful
7. Let us love one another

No garden is complete without turnips:
1. Turn up for church
2. Turn up for meetings, in prayer, and Bible study
3. Turn up with a smile, even when things are difficult
4. Turn up with determination to do your best in God's service.