**Brought to Life; Brought Together**

**Walking Worthy: Working to Get and To Give**

**Ephesians 4:28**

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 We are continuing our series in Ephesians, Brought to Life; Brought Together. As I have said before, Ephesians can be divided into two, chapters one through three describe what *God has done in us* through Christ while chapters four through six call us to *live out what God has done in us*, what Paul calls walking worthy. The order is important. The commands given to walk worthy (4-6) are based on what God has already done in us (1-3). So, let’s see how Paul applies this to work in 4:28.

**Stealing To Get**

 Paul says, let the thief no longer steal. Stealing is taking what does not belong to you. We steal when we lie on our tax returns, when we return purchases illegitimately, when we don’t give an honest day’s work or when we deceive others in business deals. We also steal when we watch pirated movies and music or when we cheat in school by stealing another person’s ideas. Stealing is what characterizes the old self, life before Christ, which we no longer are (1 Cor 6:10-11). It is important to understand this. You are no longer that old self nor is that what characterizes you. He is telling us how to live by faith in light of the gospel taking root in us when you believed - God making us alive, created in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Yet the renewal process is not complete so we fight against our old self/flesh/indwelling sin. The old self/flesh/indwelling sin has been cut off at the tap root so it is no longer the ruling power in our lives nor holds the threat of eternal damnation over us. But the old self still throws its weight around. It’s like a rhino in the room which has no right to be there yet still threatens and pushes and bullies us to sin. Paul has told us the way we overcome sin is by renewing our minds through engaging his word so that new thinking patterns are created and new desires are created, grounded in truth.

**Working to Get**

 In contrast Paul says, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands. Instead of stealing to get, we are to do honest work to get. Work is getting paid a wage to provide goods and services for others. God created us in his image to work as part of his good creation. So good, honest work is a sacred task whether we are cleaning toilets or running a business. Though work is cursed, it is not a curse itself (Gen 3:17-19). Because of sin, we live in a fallen and broken world where work can be frustrating and hard but work itself is not a curse. Work is sacred and it is purposeful, we provide goods and service for others. But what about those who work but do not earn a wage? A wife who takes care of the household or a mother who cares for the family is valuable even though they do not earn a wage. God rewards all of us who work as ultimately serving Christ (Col 3:22-24). But notice Paul does not stop with working to get, he says we should work so that we have something to with those in need, in other words, work to give.

**Work to Give**

 Instead of stealing to get, we should do honest work to support ourselves *and* to give to help others in need. Woven into God’s design for work is a twofold purpose; earning a wage for yourself and to help those in need. We are called to work to support ourselves and support those in need. That means if our work is not supporting us then we need to look for other work if we can. This also means we should be on the lookout for those who are struggling and in need. Our church family is a very giving church which displays the evidence of God’s grace in your lives.

 But I am sure there are those who are watching or will listen to this later who struggle to give, don’t think they can afford to give, or just wouldn’t ever consider giving. I have never met anyone who could really not afford to give, even in third world countries. It always boils down to faith. Do you trust God to provide for you or do you trust money, the power of paper to provide for you? If it is the latter, your confidence is in your paycheck rather than God. The bible calls this idolatry, money has become your god. Lack of giving could also come from misplaced priorities so you are living beyond your means (Luke 12:15). The bible teaches that God owns everything and has he has given each of us a certain amount of money and possessions to manage. Everything you have is on loan from God, including your money and one day, he will ask for an accounting of how you used his resources. God calls us to do honest work not just to get but to give to those in need. Are you working to give?

**Life Group Questions:**

1. How does Paul explain the process of personal change?
2. If the new self is created in the likeness of God , how am I responsible for walking worthy?
3. How do the different commands to put off and put on relate to the body of Christ?
4. How are these commands root in the gospel?
5. How is your work both sacred and purposeful?
6. Why does Paul say we should work to give?
7. How is God speaking to me in this message?
8. How does this passage relate to my own discipleship?
9. How does this message help me in making disciples?