

Fact Sheet for **“What Are Your Top Five?”**  
**Ephesians 4:25-32**

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The Apostle Paul knew the church in Ephesus well. He spent a short time in Ephesus on his way back to Antioch from his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey (Acts 18:19-22). But on his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey he spent three years with the church (Acts 20:31). He knew those believers well, including their sinful shortcomings. A short time later, writing from a Roman prison, he addressed five of those shortcomings in Ephesians 4:25-32.

Each of his five exhortations about a believer's conduct had three parts: (1) a negative command, (2) a positive command, and (3) the reason for the positive command. Paul chose these five because these were problems that some of the Ephesian believers had. Paul addressed those problems at this point in his letter because he had just reminded them that as they learned Christ they had learned that they were to put off the old self and put on the new (4:17-24).

If Paul was alive today and writing to you personally what five sinful problems of yours might he address? What are your top five? Let's look now at the five Ephesian problems Paul addressed.

**Falsehood**

<sup>25</sup> ¶ **Therefore, (1) having put away falsehood, (2) let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, (3) for we are members one of another.**

The opposite of what is false is what is true. A falsehood may take the form of an out and out lie. It may take the form of a hurtful comment...“you always” or “you never”. It may take the form of deliberate and selfish deception. Instead of falsehood Paul instructed them speak what to one another what was true, because they were members of one another.

Do you have a problem with falsehood? Yes? Identify this as one of your top five. No? Identify something else you do have a problem with.

**Anger**

<sup>26</sup> **(2) Be angry (1) and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup> (3) and give no opportunity to the devil.**

Anger can be appropriate at times. Even Jesus felt anger (Mark 3:1-5). The problem comes when we nurse that anger along and hold it for a long time. This is where the word “grudge” comes in (Leviticus 19:18). When we choose to keep on being angry we are in essence choosing to give Satan an opportunity to wreak havoc in our lives. Do you have an “anger management” problem? The answer is not in learning how to manage your sin. The answer is learning how to be appropriately angry at times, but without sin.

Do you have a problem with anger? Yes? Identify this as one of your top five. No? Identify something else you do have a problem with.

**Stealing**

<sup>28</sup> **(1) Let the thief no longer steal, (2) but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, (3) so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.**

If you were somewhere and found something important that someone lost would you turn it in? If a clerk makes a mistake and gives you back too much change, and you find out about it when you get home, do you make plans to return the extra? There are always ample opportunities around us for stealing. Christians should choose a different path. Instead we should seek to be diligent at work, so that we may have something to share with another in need.

Do you have a problem with stealing? Yes? Identify this as one of your top five. No? Identify something else you do have a problem with.

### Corrupting Talk

<sup>29</sup> (1) **Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, (2) but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, (3) that it may give grace to those who hear.**

The word “corrupting” means decayed or rotten, and is literally used of decaying fish or fruit no longer useful for food. The things we say should not stink of dead fish. Instead of tearing others down we should seek to build them up. Our goal should be to give grace (something favorable) to others in our speech.

<sup>30</sup> **And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.**

If we don't do this we grieve the Holy Spirit who sealed us in Christ.

Do you have a problem with corrupting talk? Yes? Identify this as one of your top five. No? Identify something you do have a problem with.

### Bitterness

<sup>31</sup> (1) **Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.** <sup>32</sup> (2) **Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, (3) as God in Christ forgave you.**

Cultivating the habit of forgiving others unilaterally can be really tough, but not impossible. Consider the words “as God in Christ forgave you” and remember one parable that Christ gave (Matthew 18:23-35).

Do you have a problem with bitterness? Yes? Identify this as one of your top five. No? Identify something you do have a problem with.

## What are your top five?

Here's the point. You are *never* locked in to a sin problem. Look again what Paul said to the Ephesian believers in 4:17-24. He followed these words with a list of five sin problems he knew existed among the Ephesian believers. God made it possible through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit for them to overcome sin.

What are your top five? Do you remember them? You are not locked into these five for life! Put off the old self and put on the new. God makes it possible through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit for you to overcome your sin. And remember that wanting to overcome a sin problem, and choosing to take the steps necessary to overcome a sin problem, are two entirely different things.

Perhaps you could only identify one or two things you struggle with. That's fine. But remember... God has given you the resources to overcome any sin, to put off the old self and put on the new, through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. The real issue is, “Will you choose to take the steps necessary to overcome that sin?”