

Title: Mount Worth  
Date: February 26, 2023  
Subject: The challenge is to live a life worthy of the calling we've received.  
Scripture: Ephesians 4:1 - 6

I have an NCIS hat. I was wearing it one day when Jean and I were shopping. A man approached and asked, "The show or real?" I mean, how could he think anything else but me being a special agent? Was kind of flattering... but laughable. I assured him it was the show.

The question for our lives as Christians: is it show or real? The challenge is to live up to what we know and believe. All followers of Christ face the same need of putting it into practice.

READ Ephesians 4:1 – 6.

The picture on the screen is a trail to Worth Mountain in Vermont. It's not very high -- 3234 feet in elevation which makes it the 79<sup>th</sup> or 112<sup>th</sup> highest (peakvisor.com or peakery.com) in Vermont and in the United States it comes in at 43,505. Apparently there's not much to see when you get to the top. So... why'd I pick it? It's all about the name. It was the closest I could get that had worthy in the name.

Paul again reminds readers he's a prisoner for the Lord (also 3:1). He isn't playing the victim card, wanting people to feel sorry for him. His willingness to lay his life on the line for Christ and the previous teaching serve as handholds and footholds for our climb upward.

I. Live a worthy life of the calling you have received.

What is the calling? It could be everything given in chapters 1 through 3. We could shorten it to being the body of Christ. One person states it this way: "It is God's purpose that the church should be the full expression of Jesus Christ...to know the grace of God in Christ, to be children of God, and to serve him as his "dedicated ones" and messengers of his gospel" (Tyndale Commentary, pp. 66, 108).

God created three institutions - government which isn't touched on in Ephesians, the family which is briefly taught about, and the church which is the focus of the book. This institution has a unique position and role. It's singled out by God to receive the name "the body of Christ." It was specifically created to fill God's primary purposes for people - that they would come to know his Son as Savior and grow spiritually.

The calling is to live a life appropriate with who we are. Live consistently with who we know we should be and what we should do as children of God, the body of Christ.

Since a major image of the church is a building, let's think in construction terms. It was almost 16 1/2 years ago the TV show Extreme Makeover, Home Edition led by the irrepressible Ty Pennington descended on Dundee to build a home for the Koepke family in one week. 1500 subcontractors and 1200 volunteers helped tear down the old house and erect a new one. The new house was revealed as the crowd yelled for the bus driver to "Move that bus!" Gradually the crowd and cameras drifted away. Just the family was left explore and adjust to their new surroundings, theirs to take care of and do the necessary upkeep.

God is the architect of the church, designing it, making the blueprint for the place where he'd live. He compiled a list of the needed materials. He dismantled the old existing structure doing the demolition himself. As general contractor and construction team, he assembled the building. The most important thing is he paid the price for the entire project. He footed the bill through Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

As individual components of the church, we are to adjust to the new surroundings, explore the place, settle in and begin the process of living in the new building and perform the necessary upkeep.

A young man wanted to know what it would take to follow Jesus Christ more closely. He sought advice from one of the best Christian schools. He was told he'd have to give up "colored clothes, for one thing. Get rid of everything in your wardrobe that isn't white. Stop sleeping on a soft pillow. Sell your musical instruments and don't eat any more white bread. You cannot, if you are sincere about obeying Christ, take warm baths or shave your beard. To shave is to lie against him who created us, to attempt to improve on his work" (Elizabeth Elliott, *The Liberty of Obedience*, pp. 32, 33).

Quite the list given by those who supposedly were in the know. Lots of rules and regulations. This advice was from the second century but things haven't changed that much. People still want a list of external rules. These often are compiled with good motives, but frequently go beyond what the Bible teaches.

Instead, Ephesians and the rest of Scripture present virtues. We're called upon to use them in our relationships in the body of Christ, in the home, on the job, in life.

After giving the overall charge, the floodgates open in v. 2 unleashing what's been contained. Six qualities are given in rapid succession. I can imagine Paul's recording secretary who wrote the book as Paul dictated it, "Catch your breath, Paul. Slow down. You're going too fast..."

These characteristics permeate the rest of the teaching.

Humble. Did you know February, like every month, has all sorts of unofficial holidays like Sticky Bun Day, Sword Swallowers Day and Dog Biscuit Appreciation Day? Wednesday was Be Humble Day. Nobody knows who invented it which sources conclude is ironic - the person was too humble to have a day associated with his name.

People of the ancient world didn't have a glowing evaluation about humility. Greeks conceived of it as only fitting for slaves who cringed in fear before their masters. Boasting was the way to go as people sought to elevate their importance. Views toward humility and boasting changed when Christ was crucified. Historians say his praiseworthy act forced people to reconsider the meaning of humility. They say that by the end of the first century, even secular writers portrayed humility in a positive light.

However, there are many people who view humility as weakness, too passive, inferiority, or insecurity. They're obsessed with self and narcissistic. They seek attention and take delight in bragging and boasting. That seems to be the point of much of social media, doesn't it?

The church is to operate by different standards. We push back against the ways of the world. We're to be humble like our Master who humbled himself. We exercise humility toward God because we accept our

position of created beings who are far beneath the Creator. We express humility toward people based on the knowledge all have been created by God. There's no room for arrogance as all are on equal footing. We don't seek to boast about ourselves. We admit we're imperfect and are working on being transformed into what Christ wants us to be.

We're to be completely humble. It's not a partial attribute. It's not a parttime job. Completely humble. It's what's needed to dominate the pride factor.

C. S. Lewis: "True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less." Another: "A person completely wrapped up in himself makes a small package" (Harry Emerson Fosdick).

Gentle. It's also known as meekness which is unfortunately confused with weakness. The original word was used to describe a wild animal that had been tamed. Imagine what it'd be like to have an adult elephant do what you want? Maybe use it as a comfort animal?

Someone discovered the key to training was to chain a young elephant to a stake. The calf tugged and tugged but couldn't get away. After a while, it gave up fighting. As it grew, it continued to associate the chain with being trapped. Though the elephant had more strength than needed to pull up the chain and several parked cars, it submitted to the chain. Its strength was under control.

Gentleness is strength under control of another, of the Lord.

Another word used for gentle pointed to the capacity to soothe. It was like an ointment that could remove the sting from insect bite. We are to act in soothing manner.

The opposite of gentleness is rough and harsh. Chuck Swindoll recalled going to the doctor when he was a boy. The doc poked, prodded and was quite rough in his examination. Afterwards, little Chuck felt worse physically and emotionally.

The adverb "completely" is also associated with this characteristic - be completely gentle.

Patient. I spent eight weeks in Colombia, South America after graduating from college. I worked with missionaries and nationals – evangelistic church meetings, pouring cement floor in a church, reproducing Christian education materials, counselor at a camp for missionary kids. I stayed with the Aller family who employed a housekeeper so they could devote more time to ministry. Ophelia took care of the four kids, cleaned the house and made meals. When she got frustrated, she'd exclaim, "paciencia!" Patience.

An adage describes the elusive nature of patience. "Patience is a virtue. Possess it if you can. Seldom seen in woman and never in a man." Patience comes from combining two words to "long anger." That might sound good, that we could be angry for a long time, hold on to it, let it get to a good boil and then let it rip.

Not so much. It's talking about the length of time it takes to get angry. Be long-tempered, not short-tempered. Anger and patience are opposites. Patience is "slowness in avenging wrongs or retaliating when hurt by another" (Tyndale Commentary, P. 109). It's self-restraint.

Leonardo da Vinci was an artist who produced two of the world's masterpieces -- Mona Lisa and The Last Supper. He also was an architect, inventor, scientist and much more. He said this of patience: "Patience

serves as a protector against wrongs as clothes do against cold. For if you put on more clothes as the cold increases, it will have no power to hurt you. So in like manner you must grow in patience when you meet with great wrongs, and they will be powerless to vex your mind.”

Bearing with. It's defined as “the practical outworking of patience” (Tyndale Commentary, P. 109). It's closely related to endurance and the practice of forgiveness (Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13). Further description: “It involves bearing with one another's weaknesses, not ceasing to love one’s neighbors or friends because of those faults in them which perhaps offend or displease us” (Abbott).

A longer description and illustration come from the author of “O Little Town of Bethlehem” (Phillips Brooks). “You who are letting miserable understandings run on from year to year, meaning to clear them up someday; you who are keeping wretched quarrels alive because you cannot quite make up your mind that now is the day to sacrifice your pride and kill them; you who are passing men sullenly upon the street, not speaking to them out of some silly spite, and yet knowing that it would fill you with shame and remorse if you heard that one of these men were dead tomorrow morning; if you only could know and see and feel, all of a sudden, that “the time is short,” how it would break the spell! How you would go instantly and do the thing which you might never have another chance to do. Forgive. Forget. Bear with the faults of others as you would have them bear with yours. Be patient and understanding. Life is too short to be vengeful or malicious. Life is too short to be petty or unkind.”

Love. This is the crown jewel of all virtues -- the greatest is love (1 Corinthians 13:13). All other qualities find their basis in love. Love includes the other qualities. We saw in the prayer in 3:17 that we'd be rooted and established in love. Now we're told to practice love, seek the highest good of others.

One more characteristic - unity. The dominant words in vv. 4 - 6 are “one and all.” Sounds like the rallying cry for The Three Musketeers: “All for one and one for all.” Vine's Dictionary, regarded as the best resource for defining New Testament words, gives the root word for “unity.” It says the word in Ephesians is a neuter form and it means... Ready to write it down? “One.” That's all it says. One.

Inquiring minds want to know more. Another source terms it as “the close bonding of people to one another” (Serendipity on Ephesians, p. 43). God established an organism in which people are brought together as a unified whole into one body the church.

God is interested in unity. That's putting it too lightly. God is invested in unity as He ordained unity. He created unity. We don't have to. We're to keep, guard, preserve and maintain the unity. Jesus prayed for unity among his followers (John 17). We are the answer to his prayer.

In a Peanuts comic strip, Linus is sitting on a beanbag watching TV. Sister Lucy walks into the room and demands he turn to the program she wants. Linus, “What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?”

Lucy, “These five fingers. Individually they're nothing, but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold.”

Linus gets up. Lucy sits down and changes the channel. As Linus walks away, he looks at his fingers and says, "Why can't you guys get organized like that?"

Unity provides power. Able to work together to further God's will.

The appeal to unity can be considered the first application of living the life worthy of the calling we've received. The previous virtues contribute toward shoring up and maintaining unity whether in the body of Christ, the family or a sports team.

Unity is further kept "through the bond of peace." Peace is harmonious relationships. Christ has made this possible when he reconciled people to God and then to each other. We're no longer at war with God or people. Jesus destroyed the wall of hostility between ethnic groups and brought people together. All have the same access to God provided through and by Christ.

We need to keep working on maintaining harmonious relationships. Peace is the glue that holds the body together. It's a combination of peacemaking and peacekeeping. Peacekeeping is preventing conflict, enforcing peace. Peacemaking is trying to achieve reconciliation.

Another emphatic is used – "make every effort." Not just a little or some, but every effort. It's not giving it the good old college try. It's to be a constant endeavor. Eager is working zealously, intensely and fervently.

Albert Barnes, "The best way to produce peace between alienated minds is to bring them to the same Savior. The love of Christ is so absorbing, and the dependence on his blood so entire, they will lay aside these alienations and cease their contentions. The work of atonement is thus designed not only to produce peace with God, but peace between alienated and belligerent minds" (Daily Walk on Ephesians, May 11).

Charles Spurgeon: "Divisions in churches never begin with those full of love for the Savior. Cold hearts, unholy lives, inconsistent actions - these are the seeds which sow schisms in the body. But he who lives near to Jesus, wears his likeness and copies his example, will be, wherever he goes, a holy link to bind the church more closely than ever together" (Daily Walk on Ephesians, May 13).

Disharmony occurs when Christians take their eyes off the goal of oneness and focus on their own desires and ideas.

The story is told about an elderly man who retired after many years in the British Army. One day a man who knew about his long and distinguished military career decided to play a prank on him. As the old soldier walked down the street with his arms full of packages, the joker sneaked up behind him and shouted, "Attention!" Without hesitation, the man dropped his arms to his side. Package tumbling to the sidewalk. Without a conscious thought, the veteran was doing what comes naturally for a soldier.

As believers in Christ we're called upon to live a life worthy of the calling we've received. We are in the process of attuning our lives to Christ, disciplining ourselves to be the kind of person God wants us to be, ingraining it in our lives.