



## Grain

“A fundamental concern for others in our individual and community lives would go a long way in making the world the better place we so passionately dreamt of.” – Nelson Mandela

### Field – Ephesians 4:25-5:2

<sup>25</sup>So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. <sup>26</sup>Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup>and do not make room for the devil. <sup>28</sup>Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. <sup>29</sup>Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. <sup>30</sup>And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup>Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, <sup>32</sup>and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. <sup>1</sup>Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, <sup>2</sup>and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

### Thoughts by Kyle Minden

While many of Paul’s epistles are directed to individual churches, the book of Ephesians is thought to have been written to a broader community of Christ-followers. Paul says that because Jesus died for us, we are called to live in Christ as one community. Thankfully, today’s text provides us with a couple of rules and instructions on how to live as Christians in community with others.

There is a lot to like about these instructions on how to live as one community in Christ. Justice, generosity, kindness, and truth seem to characterize these rules. However, verse 28 stuck out to me the most. Here Paul admonishes thieves and directs them to labor honestly instead of looking to steal. However, the author then says that the fruits of our labor are meant to be used to help others. Hard work and labor, therefore, are fundamentally altruistic things; we do not work just for ourselves, but also for the needs of others. Living in God’s community, then, is about working for the good of all and helping those who are in need. It is insufficient to simply not take; we must also give generously.

In pondering how we apply this message to our own world, I think it is important to remember that government is crucial in shaping the roles and practices of our own communities. Because Paul’s message is directed to communities trying to organize and live together, I believe that his directive in verse 28 can describe the role of government for our world today. Governments should set and enforce collective rules for our society and give individuals the resources and opportunities to work and provide for themselves. Crucially, though, governments must also equitably distribute resources to members of our community. And, as children of God living in community with others, we have a responsibility to ensure that all of our systems, including our government, are prioritizing and walking with those who are oppressed or experiencing poverty. Paul says a community in Christ must labor in order to provide for each other; our values lead us to advocate for a government that does the same.

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May God bless you this week,

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