

Diligence Through Identity: Paul's leadership approach in Ephesians 4

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Abstract

This article seeks to understand the relationship between the classic Christian virtue of diligence and organizational leadership. It begins with some of the history of Christian thought as it relates to character, diligence, and leadership from a philosophical perspective. Next it analyzes Ephesians 4 using an inner texture analysis.

The structure of the passage is considered first, then the verbs are analyzed. Past tense verbs obviously refer to actions already past. Future verbs tell us the end result. Present linking verbs denote a “by definition” relationship, and present action verbs give a clue to where diligence is necessary. The analysis is then used to provide practical application for Christians in general and Christian leadership in particular. Four themes emerge from this close look at verb usage. The first theme gleaned from the passage is that all are free to use their gifts for the benefit of others. The second theme found within the passage is that there is no need to try to build esteem upon a comparison between leaders and followers; instead, all are free to draw their identity from Christ. The third theme given within the passage is that Christian leaders can believe that others truly can change because we remember the character that once defined us. The fourth theme for Christian leaders is that they don’t have to fear man; what can man do with bookended promises provided by Christ? The final theme for Christian leaders is the opportunity to be kind; we can love others as Christ loved us. Conclusions are then provided.

Ephesians 4 tells us that since we have a new identity in Christ, we need to live like it and the only way to properly engage in diligence is within community. We are to accept Christ’s finished work with the future it guarantees us and use that as the bedrock of our existence. Christians no longer need to live according to their former ways. The role of the leader is to maintain Christ’s centrality and to treat all fellow believers according to their new identity, encouraging them to be diligent in the new identity that is now theirs.

Introduction

The virtue of diligence seems pretty straightforward for a Christian. Diligence is evidenced by folks working at being faithful to their beliefs. Paul goes so far as to say, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil 2:12). Yet this simple concept is often misunderstood. As responsibilities increase, misunderstanding has multiplicative effects. Leaders are on center stage through their own actions and their expectations of others when it comes to diligence. To help shine some light onto the concept, this paper seeks to look into some of the history of Christian thought as it relates to character, diligence, and leadership.

After looking into the history, an inner texture analysis is performed on Ephesians 4 to understand how identity drives diligence. Actions performed in the past create current responsibilities and future promises. Yet all of these actions—past and present—derive from the identities of the players. Joas (2000) says this of identity: “We make sure of the location of our striving in moral space by telling our lives as a story ... ‘in order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going’” (p. 132). If identity drives behavior, then we must first look at the concept of character.

Character

According to Candice Millard, an author and historian, “the difficulty [in nonfiction writing] lies in understanding the people you are writing about – not their actions, or even their thoughts, but their deepest character. It is not the famous events, the dramatic moments of public triumph, that define them. It is when their lives are difficult, even desperate, that their true nature is revealed” (Millard, “The Writing Life,” 2011). This insightful comment begs the question: what is the source of this “deepest character?”

To try and answer this question, this paper looks to the meaning of character from a classical perspective to try to get a clearer perspective on the philosophical approach to virtue in Mediterranean culture. According to Hitt (1996), philosophy was defined by the early Greeks as “the love of wisdom” (p. 28). As biblical wisdom finds its source as God, philosophy should point

people to God. Likewise, Christian leadership should be “good” and wisely administered. Yet Ciulla (1998) says, “Normative theories of leadership, such as transforming leadership and servant leadership, are not well-developed in terms of their philosophic implications” (p. 18). As Augustine is one of the earliest authors whose works survive and chronicle his attempt to understand his faith through a philosophical lens, *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine* seemed a worthy source to help answer the question.

According to Kent (2001), “Augustine’s focus on what true happiness amounts to, and whether our everyday conduct brings us any closer to this goal, accordingly represents the rule, not the exception, for contemporary philosophical discourse” (p. 206). Attaining happiness, then, was the “ultimate end” and object of study for classical ethicists. In that day, there were “two broad points” where Augustine agreed with “standard philosophical teachings”: 1) “All human beings desire happiness” and 2) “Only ‘people who like to argue’ equate happiness with merely living as one wants. No serious philosopher would take such a view, for who could be more miserable than someone who lives as he wants but wants something inappropriate” (Ibid, p. 207). For example, a person who wants to eat only McDonald’s Big Macs wouldn’t ultimately find his or her life a glee-filled existence. If happiness is the end being sought, the focus of philosophers was to determine and then “emphasize just how much lies within the human being’s own control” (p. 208). If fate drives existence, happiness doesn’t depend upon actions. How much, then, can human beings control when it comes to happiness?

If Augustine agrees with this basic premise, he also is aware “that Christ gave us two commands: to love God above all, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Christ did not command us to seek happiness or to love ourselves” (p. 212). Happiness for a Christian has to be caught up in the happiness of others. For Augustine, “virtue requires that we love others as they deserve to be loved, according to their intrinsic worth, instead of in proportion to how well they happen to serve our own interests or satisfy our own desires” (p. 214). If people are loved by God, Christians must see them as God sees them: with love and compassion. Gini (1998) says, “Being a steward means recognizing that the ultimate purpose of one’s work is others and not self” (p. 36).

Kent (2001) says, “Pagan virtue is what makes a person *excellent* or *perfect*; by its very nature, only an elite few will ever attain it, and those who do will attain it only after the long years of study and self-development necessary to acquire practical wisdom” (p. 228). Augustine

rejected this idea as it didn't find God as its source; "once God has been recognized as the supreme good, immeasurably higher than any other good, human virtue can at best occupy second place" (Ibid, p. 215).

If virtue finds its source in God and manifests itself predominately in love, how does Augustine define character? Kent (2001) says, "Character depends on the will, by which one might break the bonds of habit and turn away from one's own past. Hence the importance of conversion, the 'turning around' that marks the decisive moment in a Christian's life" (p. 229). Therefore, while Kent (2001) can point to the will, he acknowledges the importance of the changed will that conversion brings about. We can ask what is the origin of a change to a person's character; answering this circles/takes us back to God.

To sum up, it appears that God must be the source of both love and virtue; only after God is discovered as this source can man find happiness in the loving and compassionate service of others. Virtue is shown through this love. The will apparently determines character. Yet the will depends upon the nature of a man. James says, "each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death" (James 1:14-15). This is the same death referred to in Romans 5:14, "Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam." Man's character is caught up in the character of the first man. It is the will of man to sin against God, a sin inherited through our father Adam. By nature, then, human beings are sinners.

Even as all human beings are sinners, this fact does not relegate mankind to a complete lack of virtue. Instead, it simply gives humans no ground to claim credit for their virtue apart from the source of virtue, even God himself. Faulhaber (2008) says, "God even renders reward for the *nature* rather than *merit* of one's works" (p. 80). Simply, God gets credit for all the good done within a man and/or woman's life because he created them. Those same individuals get all the credit for evil they pursue, *but for Christ*. Christ took the wrath for the evil and gave Christians the credit for *His good*. Even as Christians, all the credit for the good works performed still accrue to God. Piper (2011) in explaining Eph 2:30, says it this way, "God 'will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.' 'Circumcision' stands for any religious or ethnic trait that you might think would commend you to God. And 'uncircumcision' stands for any trait, or missing trait, that you think might keep you from God"

(p. 151). Simply, virtue neither provides a means to access God nor offers any advantage apart from God. Yet the identity and the nature change because Christians are found “in Christ”—a phrase used 13 times in Ephesians alone. It is God who changes the nature, which supports his position as primary with virtue as secondary because He is creator, redeemer, and all virtue points to God as the supreme good.

Diligence

Paul says that we were “by nature children of wrath” (Eph 2:3). The work of Christ completed on the cross gave us a new nature. That new nature allows us to produce fruit. Yet, if who we are determines how we behave, then how do we define Christian diligence? Won’t Christians simply act out of their nature? Won’t Christian will simply produce love, evidence virtue, and cherish God’s enthronement?

One interesting view from Classical philosophers is presented by Kent (2001): “despite serious disagreements on other issues, all leading ancient philosophers defend a position that most present-day readers find bizarre: that the moral virtues are inseparable. No one can truly have courage, justice, or temperance without practical wisdom, nor can one truly have practical wisdom without courage and the other moral virtues” (p. 226). If human beings act out of nature, then the concept of a single preeminent virtue through which all other virtues exist carries some merit. Faulhaber (2008) “shows each virtue and how each one lies within a deeper and interdependent virtue, which is ultimately formed by means of divine grace” (p. 81). These thoughts seem to fit well with the concept of a single fruit in Galatians 5:22. That fruit has many components, but the kind of fruit is determined by design. In this case the fruit is “of the Spirit.” Therefore, to live according to the Spirit requires the Spirit’s presence. The fruit itself provides evidence of that presence. In fact, the presence of the spirit requires holiness to already exist within the individual. DeSilva (2000) says, “God’s decision to impart what was holy and intimately attached to God’s own holiness (the Spirit) to these Gentiles required that they had already been made clean or pure in God’s sight.”

For the moment, we will leave the question of many virtues or one virtue to one side to instead consider the virtue of diligence. To understand diligence requires that we understand sloth. Sloth is the opposite of diligence and can be explained using two extremes. Lyman (1989)

calls them “sloth proper” and “acedic melancholy.” Cultural stereotypes from mid-1800 America will serve to make the point. “Sloth proper” is represented in the “cruel caricature of the lazy Black, who idles away the days in frivolous pleasure, worthless chatter, and forbidden sensuality” (p. 37). “Acedic melancholy” is represented by the “Chinese laborer, hated and envied because of his alleged melancholic indifference to his own welfare” (p. 37). While neither characterization can or should define a group within society, these represent the “poles of sloth: laziness and acedia” (p. 37). Laziness ignores the demands of society and acedia demands nothing of society. Laziness fails to participate while acedia takes no delight in the participation.

It seems, then, that diligence—as the antithesis of sloth—would require human beings to fulfill our required roles while “buying into” the community. Christians cannot remain separate. Instead, they must serve within society not because they don’t have a choice, but because they do.

While Christ offers opportunities to serve in this way, most Christians find themselves immersed within secular society and the myriad demands it constantly places upon them. Sometimes that includes being placed in a hierarchy under the authority of others (Christian or not), given authority over them, or both.

Ethics & Leadership

Returning to Augustine, Kent (2001) says, “However universal our present condition, it remains in Augustine’s view both *unnatural* and morally reprehensible. That we make ourselves and each other so unhappy should therefore come as no surprise. Power and glory ‘addicts’ are every bit as dangerous and self-destructive as drug addicts” (p. 219). Herein lies the importance of properly understood diligence within leadership. Ciulla (1998) says, “Leadership scholars do not need to have one definition of leadership in order to understand each other, they just need to be clear about the values and normative assumptions that lie behind the way that they go about researching leadership” (p. 14). In the case of this article, the assumption is that the Bible provides the clearest explanation of both leadership and character. Therefore, while scholarship is offered, the primary emphasis is on the biblical analysis. That is the story referenced by Joas (2000) upon which we must find ourselves.

A leader has considerable ability to affect those around him or her for good or for ill. While a leader's behavior does not dictate the actions of others, influence is still exerted. Gini (1998) says, "Behavior does not always beget like behavior in a one-to-one ratio, but it does establish the tone, set the stage, and offer options" (p. 43). A lazy leader ignores the demands of the position, ultimately underperforming in her role. An acedic leader multiplies the demands of the position, ultimately driving both himself and his followers into burnout by unhealthily ignoring the toll being exacted for the sake of the task. In both instances, the leader has poorly fulfilled his or her role. To properly walk the fine line between too much and too little requires a return to the concept of identity. Where individuals gain their identity determines the actions they pursue.

Faulhaber (2008) says, "Scripture does not teach that a person should vary his or her character according to one's role or situation. Instead, a Christian's character should be consistently Christlike in all situations and in all roles" (p. 26). However, this consistency expected of Christians does not create a static environment. Instead, "Just as the sacred is simultaneously both adored and feared, so the good and the right are contained in all moral actions in complex and varying proportions" (Joas, 2000, p. 166). The circumstances may vary, but character is refined and revealed by the responses of the leader within the inconsistencies of life. The New Testament authors recognized this need. They knew that "since the values of the new [Christian] community are, at many points, radically different from the values of the dominant culture (or Jewish ethnic subculture) in which the converts were first reared, the leaders of the group must be attentive to the persistence in the new community of those old definitions and models of what is honorable and how honor is attained, maintained and displayed" (deSilva, 2000, p. 50). Therefore, the leader's role is to pay attention of the values focus of the community.

Ephesians 4

Paul spends the first three chapters in the book of Ephesians telling the church in Ephesus where they need to find their identity: in Christ and his work on the cross. Chapter 4 then gets into practical application. For the purpose of this paper, I have conducted an inner texture analysis of Ephesians 4 using Robbins (1996) approach of socio-rhetorical criticism, which

“concerns features like the repetition of particular words, the creation of beginnings and endings, alternation of speech and storytelling, particular ways in which the words present arguments, and the particular ‘feel’ or aesthetic of the text.” Let us consider the overall passage and how it is constructed before considering the specifics of verb usage within the text.

The Breakdown

Ephesians 4 contains 32 verses. The first seven encompass the introduction. The beginning is contained in verses 8-16, the middle runs from verses 17-24, the ending is verses 25-29, and verses 30-32 provide the conclusion.

The introduction introduces the concept of diligence. In Eph 4:3, the word “eager” or “endeavoring” can be translated “being diligent.” Morris (2005) tells us, “the same Greek word is also translated ‘study’ and ‘labor’ and ‘endeavor’” (p. 175). This section is an exhortation focused upon the “ideal” of Christian living.

The beginning of the chapter gives us the source and driver for the effort associated with this ideal life: Christ. It tells what he did, why, what he gave, and what Christians are no longer trapped within. Yet it doesn’t leave it with the individual, but links it to the body (the church). Referring to the “perfect [full grown] man” in verse 13, Gray (1999) says that “this ‘man’ does not mean any individual man, but the ‘Man’ referred to in chapter 2:15, the ‘Man’ composed of the Personal Christ as the Head, and the members of the church as His body” (p. 694).

The middle section tells what Christians no longer are because of Christ’s work. Embedded within this section, Christ is described as the way (v. 20), the truth (v. 21), and the life (v. 18). This description is contrasted with the life and way of unbelievers because they do not believe truth.

The ending section introduces a new concept. Since the new identity has been established with its source as Christ, the onus is put on the individual regarding what actions they will allow to occur. The word “let” is used 5 times in this section with an example convert who ceases his thieving ways and now “may give grace” to others.

The conclusion is basically the chapter in miniature. Christ saved and sealed Christians for “the day of redemption” (v. 30). Therefore, they need to act according to that identity. They must treat others as Christ treated them.

Throughout the entire passage, there is a prominent theme of “oneness.” It starts with “one another” (v. 2), “one body ... one Spirit ... one hope” (v. 4), “one Lord, one faith, one

baptism” (v. 5), “one God” (v. 6). Gifts are given to “each one” (v. 7). Christ is “the one” (v. 10). “Each one ... should speak the truth ... for we are members one of another” (v. 25). We share with “anyone in need” (v. 28). We are kind to “one another” and forgive “one another” (v. 32). This emphasis on “oneness” helps provide the context for the actions associated with diligence. Those actions come from a God who is one with Christ. Christ is “the one” who creates a group with gifts given to “each one” that are “members one of another” who are kind and forgive “one another” and share with “anyone in need.”

The Verbs

While the breakdown of the sections of this chapter is important, let us consider how the verbs focus the text on what diligence entails. Past tense verbs obviously refer to actions already past. Future verbs tell us the end result. Present linking verbs denote a “by definition” relationship, and finally, present action verbs give a clue to where diligence is necessary.

The Past Tense Verbs. Verse 1 starts with the fact that Christians “have been called.” This past perfect continuous verb combination shows something that started in the past and continued until it was completed in the past. The calling is complete. Christians have accepted the call and must now act like it. This past perspective is reiterated in verse 3 (were called) and verse 7 (grace was given). These passive verbs are also joined by active past tense verbs in verses 8-11 where Christ “ascended” and “descended,” then “gave gifts” (v. 8, 11).

In verse 19, the past tense refers to unbelievers who “have become callous” and “have given themselves up.” These unbelievers are contrasted with those who “were taught in [Christ]” (v 21).

Verse 24 describes the creation of the “new self,” which is also a past event: “created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” Paul also says that Christians have “put away falsehood” in accepting Christ (v. 25). Finally, Paul ends the use of past tense verbs in the promise of the future: Christians “were sealed for the day of redemption.” All of these occur in the past. The future is secured given Christ’s past actions, which means Christ’s historic work to create the bookends of identity. Christ died, which is a finished work, and promises a future that is sure. The present is simply a response to these realities.

The Future Verbs. The use of future verbs in this passage is sparse. In verse 13, hope is attached to the future verb “attain” and is focused on the entire group of believers. In verse 28, a future opportunity is created through present work. The thief exchanges his thieving ways for

honest work so that he “may have something to share” in the future. Finally, the future tense is used to describe grace. Talk that is “good for building up ... may give grace.” The future in this passage is always a shared reality. Actions give opportunities to serve others “until we all attain ... to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (v. 13).

The Present Linking Verbs. As linking verbs connect one thing to another, it is in looking at these verbs that give us the clearest view of how Paul defines identity within this passage.

The first half of the chapter focuses on God’s identity. The first “by definition” relationship is described in verse 4: “There is one body and one Spirit.” Next, God is described as being “over all, through all, and in all” (v. 6). Christ is the one who “descended” and “ascended” (v. 10).

Christ’s actions are linked to what Christians are now enabled to be. Christians are no longer “tossed” and “carried about” (v. 14). The context is for the group as the pronoun is “we” in verses 13, 14, and 15. Christians, as a group are “to grow up” into Christ, “the head” (v. 15). Next, the group is defined as the body—the church. It “is equipped” by joints, and when each part “is working,” it takes action and “builds itself up in love” (v. 16).

Alternately, the Gentiles “are darkened, alienated” because “ignorance is in them” (v. 18). Yet Christians don’t have this ignorance because “that is not the way you learned Christ” (v. 20). Christ is then described as “truth” (v 21) while the former way of life is described as “corrupt” (v 22).

The passage then returns to the community, where “we are members one of another” (v. 25). Finally, the last present linking verb describes the acts that should be performed within this community: only what “is good.”

Most interesting in this look at identity is the absence of “self.” All identity is found in Christ’s identity and what he has done, which then creates a group. This new group is described as a body that works together—again, by definition—and builds itself up by only doing for itself that which “is good.” In essence, the passage can be broken down into: 1) this is who God is; 2) this is who Christ is and what he has done; and 3) this is who you are and how your new group differs from your old one.

Present Action Verbs. Now that we know how identity is formed within the passage, it is time to consider what Christians are called to **DO**. It is in the “doing” that a conceptualization of diligence can be found.

The first present action verb in the passage occurs in verse 12. Those who have been given gifts are to “equip the saints.”

Individually, Christians are told to “put off your old self” (v. 22). They are told to “put on the new self” (v. 24). Notice the difference between verses 22 and 24. The old self is “yours.” No one can claim any ownership in the way of life chosen apart from you. It is “your” old self; this concept seems to agree with Augustine’s concept of will. In verse 24, the new self has no “your.” You receive it because it was created for you in Christ. It will always be much more “his” than “yours.” You can lay claim to the new self only as Christ lays claim to you. Christians are also told to “put away falsehood” (v. 25). They are told not to give “opportunity to the devil” (v. 27). Finally, they are told not to “grieve the Holy Spirit.”

Next, the verb “let” now comes into usage. If a Christian has the ability to “put off, put on, and put away,” then any actions that allow the old self to hold sway are the result of the Christian “letting” it do so. Instead, Christians are to “let each one speak the truth with his neighbor” (v. 25), “not let the sun go down on your anger” (v. 26), “let the thief no longer steal ... let him labor” (v. 28) and “let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths” (v. 29).

There are also two interesting combinations that reinforce the source of our diligence. In verse 23, “Be renewed in the spirit of your minds” has a source outside of self, for the Holy Spirit renews. This verse is then followed by “be angry, and do not sin” (v. 26). While the Spirit changes us, we can expect to still have emotions. Those emotions, however, need not hold sway. Christians can respond with emotion without sinning given the renewal of their minds.

The second combination is found in verses 31-32. Paul says to “let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you” (v. 31) which also has a source apart from self. The phrase “be put away” carries the connotation of someone removing or bearing what was once yours. Therefore, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and slander have been removed from the Christian and are borne by another, even Christ himself. As a result, we are to “be kind to one another” (v. 32).

Here, then, are actions of diligence for a Christian:

- Each one is gifted, equip the saints

- Put off your old self
- Put on the new self
- Put away falsehood
- Give no opportunity to the devil
- Do not grieve the Holy Spirit
- Be kind to one another

Here are the actions done on our behalf if we let them:

- all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you
- renewed in the spirit of your minds

Here are the actions we can engage in:

- speaking the truth with our neighbor – no fear of man
- not let the sun go down on your anger –no held grudges
- let the thief no longer steal, ... let him labor – trust in change wrought in others
- let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths – no need to tear others down

Application for Leadership

As the Ephesians analysis shows, the transition from the individual to the group is not a complex one. The most direct link is in the first present tense action verb in the passage. If Christ has given a gift, the recipient's role is to use that gift to equip the saints. Diligence demands the use of gifts for the benefit of "the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (v. 12). It seems that we are not to quibble over the little points and to instead focus on "oneness."

What Paul shows through this passage is that leadership is not motivation driven, it is identity driven. All the promises of a Christian are bookended by Christ's historical action and the defined future it produces. This passage helps solidify that Christ offers a character reversal, but that Christians maintain the need for diligence. They must actively live from the life they have been given. Freedom is afforded for Christians to no longer succumb to their historical habits. They can, instead, turn from that way. DeSilva (2000) says, "Only where the character and person of Jesus becomes visible in the individual (which Paul found most where his human

strengths ran out) does one find cause for self-respect, and the group needs to reinforce this as the central criterion for bestowing honor” (p. 76).

For leaders within organizations, this passage offers several parallel themes. People have needs. The responsibility of Christians is to be able to meet those needs. This responsibility is divided into several categories. Diligence tells the Christian leader that he or she doesn't have to overwork or require others to; instead, all are free to use their gifts for the benefit of others. Not overworking is not a license for laziness or sloth, but instead a freedom to work in multiple arenas. Every person is given responsibility in more than one area of life, yet each decides what area is the most preferable one into which to “throw one's weight.” Diligence says this effort must be spread into all areas of responsibility. For the Christian leader, diligence insists upon a work/life balance.

The second theme given within the passage is that Christian leaders don't have to build themselves up at the expense of others; instead, they are free to draw their identity from Christ. This theme centers on the “why” behind how others get treated. Character has been previously defined by Christ. Hence, there is no need to build esteem by elevating leaders above followers. Otherwise, there exists a clear inclination toward pride. Diligence combats pride by definition if Christians derive that definition from scripture. Ephesians 4 grants an effective picture.

The third theme given within the passage is that Christian leaders can believe in change in others. We remember what character once defined us before Christ. If Christian leaders believe the gospel at all, then they believe in the possibility of legitimate change within individuals. A Christian knows how much he or she has been given and knows the ways in which he or she once walked. Therefore, when assessing followers, a one-time assessment is never enough. Followers are on a journey as well, so constant attention must be paid to deal with followers as they are, not as they once were.

The fourth theme for Christian leaders is that they don't have to fear man; what can man do with bookended promises provided by Christ? While fulfilling one's responsibilities within the role into which one is called can be termed diligence, there is no necessity to fear man even as the Christian leader feels the burden of that responsibility. Christ finished his work, which defines Christians. What can man do to a Christian? This isn't license to ignore those around us, but an opportunity to look for needs and meet them even if it is outside of the realm of your work

or may step on someone else's toes because it is in their realm. Forget boundaries. Needs are needs and if they aren't being met, it is the Christian who must stand up and meet them.

The final theme for Christian leaders is the opportunity to be kind; we can love others as Christ loved us. As the Christian engages in work, regardless of the role, love must motivate behavior. Diligence requires acting out of love, which again reinforces a need for faithfulness in all areas of responsibility, not just for paid work.

Conclusions

Since virtue can never be an end unto itself, every Christian must determine his or her relationship to the concept. From this analysis of Ephesians, whether virtue is claimed or not, it must exist within every believer's life because of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The spirit would not inhabit a person whom God did not already identify as holy. Of course, this requires our definition of virtue to be rooted in God, by whom we define the word Holy. Therefore, all Christian action should flow from this new identity. However, we also know from this analysis that the individual Christian is not the sole actor in this drama of diligently living according to the new identity afforded by Christ. Christ's previous actions, promised future actions, and the present identity supported by the Holy Spirit all have roles as well. Conceptually, Ephesians 4 tells us that since we have a new identity in Christ, we need to live like it and the only way to properly engage in diligence is within community. We are to accept Christ's finished work with the future it guarantees and use that as the "fact" of our existence. Christians no longer need to live according to their former ways.

For leaders, this passage tells us that each one receives gifts and must use them for the building up of the body. Individual identity is tied up in the identity of the group. The group does not define the identity; Christ does. The role of the leader is to maintain Christ's centrality and to treat all fellow believers according to their new identity, encouraging them to be diligent in the new identity that is now theirs.

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