

EPHESIANS 4:17-32

The Old Made New

Memory Verse

"Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another."

Ephesians 4:25

Real-life Problems

Do you ever feel like you keep making the same mistakes over and over again? If Jesus has freed us from sin and given us a Spirit of righteousness, why do we still find ourselves reverting back to our former ways? Why do we choose sin when we have tasted righteousness? While we have been freed from our slavery to sin, until we are fully redeemed, we will battle the temptations of the flesh. However, through the renewing of our minds in the truth of the gospel, we can live in light of our new identity as children of God.

The Good News

We don't have to become like Christ in order to have a new identity. Instead, we can put off our old sin and put on Christlikeness because, in Christ, Christlikeness is our most true identity!

I. Introduction

OPENING QUESTIONS

Idea #1: If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would you eat?

Idea #2: What is the earliest childhood memory you have?

Idea #3: What is the kindest compliment anyone has ever given you?

PRAY

Open your time together in prayer.

REHEARSING THE GOSPEL

What does gospel mean?

Good news

What's the good news?

Jesus died for my sins

Why did He die for your sins?

So that I can have abundant life in relationship with Him now and forever

What is grace?

God's love for undeserving sinners

REVIEW

1) What were the two reasons Paul wrote this letter?

1) To remind the church of the power of the gospel 2) To encourage believers to live in light of their new identity as the church

2) Who was the original audience of this letter?

The church, or followers of Jesus Christ, in Ephesus

3) Where was Paul when he wrote this letter?

Paul was in prison for his work in spreading the gospel.

What's going on?

REMIND

As the church, we are united through the one, true God by one faith. And God gives us gifts of grace to the church to equip the saints and build up the body of Christ in love. It is also through the church that we are to grow in the maturity in our faith.

TODAY WE'LL LEARN

- 1) We are given a new identity in Christ; the old is gone, the new has come.
- 2) Now we have the freedom to live in light of our new identity.

Read

Read **Ephesians 4:17-32** aloud in your group.

II. Questions for Discussion

A. WHAT?

1) Read verse 17 and then go back and read 4:1. What is the repeated language in these two verses and how do they connect?

Both verses discuss what it means "to walk." Verse 1 is Paul's call to the believers to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling" and verse 17 is showing the opposite. If the believers are to walk in a worthy manner, then they must no longer walk as the gentiles do, in the futility of their minds.

2) According to verse 18, from what have the gentiles been alienated due to their darkened understanding?

From the life of God

3) Comparing verses 22-25, how does Paul describe the old self and how does he describe the new self?

Old self: belonging to the former way of life and corrupt through deceitful desires

New self: created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness

4) What are the exhortations Paul gives to the believers in verses 25-32?

1) Put away falsehood.

2) Speak truth with your neighbor.

3) Be angry and do not sin.

4) Do not let the sun go down on your anger.

5) Give no opportunity to the devil.

6) Let the thief no longer steal, but work.

7) Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouth, but only what is good for building up.

8) Do not grieve the Holy Spirit.

9) Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice be put away.

10) Be kind to one another.

11) Be tenderhearted.

12) Forgive one another.

5) According to verse 30, for what did the Holy Spirit seal the believer?

For the day of redemption

6) How are we supposed to forgive one another according to verse 32?

As God in Christ forgave us

B. SO WHAT?

1) Why would it matter for us to not only take off the old self, but put on the new?

It would be easy for Paul to simply tell the Ephesians to take off the old self and all its ways. However, he could not stop there. If we only take off our old, dirty clothes, we may be cleaner, but we will also be naked, cold and unprotected. That is totally different than putting on new, beautiful clothes. If we base our renewal on our own efforts to simply stop what we were doing, then we have missed the point. Paul is not trying to offer the Ephesians a way for them to earn righteousness. Instead, Paul is reminding them that righteousness has been given to them by grace through Christ. They simply need to take off the old self, so they can put on the new self. Instead of leaving us empty, the new self will leave us overflowing.

Nothing to Wear

One day, after football practice, John comes home sweaty and covered in mud. He has to go to a birthday dinner for his grandfather that night and he knows he needs to get clean.

So he takes off his dirty shirt and throws it in the laundry basket and he takes a shower. However, when he finishes and goes to put on clean clothes, he doesn't have any in his closet.

John knows he can't go to the restaurant without a shirt—he knows the rule: "no shoes, no shirt, no service." But John is running late and needs to leave to make it in time. So he does the only thing he can do, he grabs the dirty shirt out of the basket and puts it back on.

This is often how we treat the Christian life. We know we have been made clean by Christ and we take off the ways of our former self. Yet, just like John, if we don't put on something new we will just put back on our old ways. We cannot take something off without putting something new on.

This is what John is referring to in Ephesians 4:17-32. We have to do more than take off our former ways. We have to also put on the new identity that have been freely given to us in Christ.

2) In what ways does this passage challenge how we are to relate to others?

This passage not only builds on the idea of loving one another—as Paul mentioned in 4:1-16— but it gives us practical examples of what love looks like with our Christian brothers and sisters. It is important to not forget the spiritual and communal ways that Paul talks about our relationships. Paul reminds us that while speaking truth might lead to anger or frustration, the difference for the Christian is that our anger doesn't lead to sin. Instead, we intentionally seek reconciliation, not only for each other, but as a form of battle against the devil. Also, when Paul addressing how we talk, not only should we seek to build up one another, but we do it for the sake of everyone.

3) How does the example of the thief in verse 28 give us a picture of the new self versus the old self? What does this verse tell us about why we are called to live transformed lives?

Paul uses the thief as a practical example of what a transformed and renewed life looks like. "Let the thief no longer steal" would be the thief taking off his former way, or his old self. Then, "let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands" is the indication of the new self that he has put on in replace of the old. What is significant to note is the "why" in this passage. Paul show us that the thief is not given a transformed life is for his own sake, but for the sake of fellowship with others, "so that he may have something to share with anyone in need."

4) What does verse 32 teach us about forgiveness? What might this type of forgiveness look like in our lives?

If we are to forgive one another as God in Christ forgave us, what does God's forgiveness of us look like? This would be an opportunity to have your students name off all the ways they would describe Christ's forgiveness. Examples might be—final, complete, undeserved, given while we were still enemies, not based on our works, loving, forever, gracious, etc.

Now have them think of how these things could be true in their own lives. What would it mean to completely forgive your sibling? What does it look like to forgive someone who has not asked for it?

C. NOW WHAT?**1) What are some of the places in your life where you are most tempted to think and act like the world? What can you do in those places to consciously put on the new self?**

Answers will vary, but some examples might be social media, school, sports teams, etc. This would be a good place for students to help one another think through what it might look like to walk in faith in these places. Let them consider why they are tempted to think/act like the world and then help encourage one another.

2) What might it look like for you to seek opportunities to encourage one another with your words?**3) Why is it sometimes hard to forgive? Have you ever felt it hard to receive forgiveness? How can you remind yourself of the truth of the gospel in those moments?***Main takeaway*

We have been given a new identity in Christ—the old is gone, the new has come. Now, being created in the likeness of God, we are to live our lives in light of our new identity.

III. Closing

REMEMBERING THE GOOD NEWS

In Jesus, we have been given a new identity. We no longer have to live as ones who do not know God, but, through the Holy Spirit in us, we can put off our old sin and put on Christlikeness.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Father, we thank You that You have made us new. We ask that You would help us to live as new people, putting off anything that is not of You, and walking in Your ways. Lord, help us to forgive others as You have forgiven us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Supporting resources

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1) Do any of the identifiers Paul uses for the "old self" resonate for you? What do you think it might look like in your life for these areas of old self to be taken off and for the new identity you've been given in Christ to be put on?
- 2) Are there any areas in your life where you have not forgiven someone? Ask God to help you.

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

- 1) What did Paul mean in verse 21 when he said put off your "old self"? What is the "old self"?
- 2) How did this passage challenge you in your relationships with other believers?
- 3) Why do you think it is so important for Christians to forgive others?