

BRIARCLIFF CHURCH
Small Group Study Guide: Ephesians
Week of October 29 (Week 9)
Ephesians 4:17-32



REVIEW OF CHAPTER THREE

Chapter 3 concludes the first half of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In Chapters 1-3, Paul presents a doctrinal/theological exposition. In this section, Paul presents the role of the Triune God in salvation (1:3-14). The salvation of both Jews and Gentiles is by grace through faith that results in the creation of a new humanity in Christ (Chp. 2). The new humanity—the church, is a mystery that is now revealed and continues to display God's manifold wisdom through the unity the members maintain (Chp. 3). The doctrinal exposition in Ephesians has two main themes: the salvation of sinners and the unity of the saved sinners. Each doctrinal exposition is ended by a prayer. Paul's first prayer relates to salvation. He prays that believers may know the hope of their calling, the riches of their inheritance, and the greatness of God's power. Paul's second prayer in Chapter 3 is built on the unity he presents in Chapter 2, but he diverted to another topic – the mystery of the church (Eph. 3:1-13). Paul picks up his prayer in Eph. 3:14 and prays that the unity that was theirs spiritually might be realized experientially in their relationship with one another. With that in mind, Paul prays for four truths that John Stott likes to think as "a staircase by which he climbs higher and higher in his aspiration for his readers". The four elements of Paul's prayer are strength (v. 16), love (v. 17), knowledge (v. 18), and fullness (v. 19) (Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*. 134).

BIG IDEA

The believer's new life in Christ is characterized by leaving the practices of the old life and embracing the character and practices of Christ.

OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT

In the first part of this chapter, Eph. 4:1-16, Paul dwells on the importance of living in unity in the church with a focus on the believer's growth. In the second part of Chapter Four, Eph. 4:17-32, he stresses the importance of holy living outside the church in wider society (v. 17). In verses 17-32, Paul maintains that a life in Christ demands a radical change in one's behavior. His thought in verses 17-32 can be divided into two sections. In verses 17-26, Paul discusses the new life in relation to self and God. Whereas, in verses 27-32, he talks about the new life in relation to others.

OBSERVING THE TEXT

Starting with God

1. Read Ephesians 4:17-32 carefully and note the words Lord, God, Christ, Jesus, and Holy Spirit. Putting these into the context of this passage, what do we understand about the

Triune God? For example, in verse 17 when Paul says: “... I say, and affirm together with the Lord ...” he implies **Christ’s authoritative command** for our conduct.

Continuing the Conversation

2. How does Paul describe the life of the unregenerate, or the Gentiles, in verses 17-19? In other words, what are the characteristics of the unregenerate person?

3. In his description of the unregenerate, Paul talks about ‘the mind,’ ‘the understanding,’ and ‘the heart.’ What do these aspects of the human faculty have in common and why are they important?

4. According to verse 19, what does Paul say is the result of a futile mind, a darkened understanding, and the hardness of heart?

5. According to verse 20, what constitutes the process of Christian moral education?

6. Contrary to the unregenerate lifestyle mentioned in verses 17-19, how are believers supposed to live according to verses 20-24? Or what activity/activities should characterize a regenerate life?

7. In verses 25-32, Paul lists conducts with negative prohibition and positive command for believers. What are these conducts?

CONNECTING WITH OTHER TEXT

8. As you read Romans 1:21-32 with Ephesians 4:17, what common theme(s) do you find in these passages?

9. What does Paul say about the mind in Romans 12:1 and Ephesians 4:23?

10. Colossians 3:5-17 is another passage in which Paul uses the language of “putting off” and “putting on.” Compare it with Ephesians 4:22-24 and see what qualities and action Paul adds to the passage in Colossians.

APPLYING THE TEXT

1. In Ephesians 4:17, Paul cautions the believers that they “must no longer walk (live) as the Gentiles do,” in other words, do not live the unregenerate lifestyle. The tendency for spiritual lapses in believers is real, thus Paul’s warning is relevant to all the believers. How can you best respond to this caution or warnings of Ephesians 4:17-19?

2. Talking about the Christian conduct, Paul, in verses 22 and 24 used the language of putting off and putting on like a garment. What sins do you feel called to “put off” more and more?

3. As you reflect on the list of conducts Paul mentions in verses 25-32, which area(s) do you find yourself needing to work on?
 - Speech:
speaking the truth, foul language, slander, malice
 - Emotion:
anger, wrath, bitterness, clamor
 - Action
stealing, sharing
 - Attitude
kindness, tenderheartedness, forgiveness

PRAYER

PRAYER GUIDE

October 29, 2023

Read Ephesians 4:17-32

Followers of Christ are to be distinctive in the world because of what he has done for us. In this prayer guide, we will look each day at some of the distinctive marks of a believer. Let each one become your prayer. Next, put feet on your prayer and do it!

Monday: ^{4:22} *throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception.* ²³ *Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.* How do you need a renewing of your *thoughts and attitudes*? What action do you need to take? Write a prayer of commitment to Jesus. Ask for his strength and then do it!

Tuesday: ^{4:24} *Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.* We are not refurbished but totally made new. Christ is the author. The renewal is a lifelong process as we obey his Word. What is your next step of renewal? Let that be your prayer today.

Wednesday: ^{4:26} *And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry* ³⁰ *And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live.* Any attitude of anger? Any attitude that brings sorrow to the Spirit? Honestly confess in prayer any attitude that needs to change. Do it now and throughout the day.

Thursday: ^{4:29} *Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.* Any language that needs to be cleaned up? Any encouraging word you need to give? Words are powerful. Write down what language you need to clean up and what word of encouragement you need to give.

Friday: ^{4:31} *Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.* ³² *Instead, be kind to each other.* Read that verse again. Any of it speak personally to you? Write down any part that convicts you. Pray! Ask God to help you have the right attitude and behavior.

For more resources, visit www.briarcliff.church/ephesians