

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE WEEK OF MARCH 10-16

Message Title: PUT ON JESUS

Message Text: EPHESIANS 4:17-5:1

Before Your Small Group Meeting:

- Watch Pastor Brandon's Message
- Read Ephesians 4:17-5:1

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When it comes to traveling, do you find greater enjoyment in the journey or the destination? Explain?
2. Read Ephesians 4:20-24. Paul challenges the early believers to "put your old self" and "put on the new self." What habits of the "old self" have you struggled with since you started following Jesus?
2. Read Ephesians 4:25-29. Paul mentions four specific areas the Christians in Ephesus should be attentive to in their behavior (lying, anger, stealing, and corrupt talk). Why was Paul specific with these behaviors? Have any of these challenged you in your life? Share how you "put off" those behaviors.
4. What healthy spiritual habits can you put in place that will help you daily put on the "new self" that is found in Jesus?
5. In Ephesians 4:30, Paul challenges the early Christians to not grieve the Holy Spirit. Whatever violates the will of God and the holiness of the heart will grieve the third person of the Trinity. How will this spirituality reality change the way you make decisions this week?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Ephesians 4:17-5:1

4:17. The Gentiles in Ephesus were particularly sinful. Ephesus was a leading city of commerce and culture in the Roman Empire, the home of the pagan temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Worship of Diana involved the worst immorality of degraded pagan religion. That influence made Ephesus a wretched hive of scum and villainy, a wicked place indeed. Temple prostitution, graft, crime, immorality, idolatry, and every conceivable form of sin abounded. Many of the Christians in Ephesus came out of that kind of background. In contrast with that evil background, Paul made his appeal, "Don't live like that any longer!"

First, he says, it is futile to live like that. It leads to nothing.

4:18. Second, he says, it reflects darkened understanding, a result of having turned their backs on God. Their hearts are hard, and as a result, their mind is dark. Lives separated from God's holiness are ignorant lives. This is hard for the sophisticated, educated people of Ephesus to accept. How dare someone call them ignorant. Paul did not contend they had no knowledge. He contended the knowledge did no good in leading them to a lifestyle that pleased God. Without such a lifestyle, their minds did not function properly.

4:19. Their hard heart, which yielded a darkened mind, led to an unholy life. Paul says they have **given themselves over to sensuality**, a life without concern for the consequences of their actions. Their desire for sensual pleasure overrode every other regard. No matter what they did, such desire was never satisfied. They always wanted more. Lust not love dominated their lives. Such Gentiles certainly did not serve as models for the church. They were not mature. They did not bring unity.

4:20-21. In contrast to this former way of life, the Ephesian Christians were to live righteous lives. Paul says, "This is not how you learned from Jesus to live!" "Your hearts are no longer darkened. You have learned the truth, which is to be found in Jesus."

4:22. Living a proper Christian life involved two concepts. They must **put off their old self**. This old self was the self that was corrupted by the deceits of lust. When we were born, we were born with a sinful bent. We were separated from God. David wrote in Psalm 51:5, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (see Eph. 2:1-3 and commentary there).

This old self is separated from God. While it is capable of doing good in the eyes of other people, it is incapable of doing anything but evil in the eyes of God. We are born that way, and we remain that way if we do not allow God to intervene. It is who we are by nature. We are children of Adam. We possess a fallen nature as Adam did, and we are separated from God as a result. That is the old self.

To put off the old self can mean merely to accept Christ as in Colossians 3:9, where it is treated as an accomplished fact. It can mean that, once you have become a Christian, you are to leave behind the attitudes, habits, values, and actions that you had before being born again—similar to taking off an old work coat and putting on a new coat to go out for the evening. This is more in keeping with the context, since Paul goes on in verses 25-32 to describe the specifics of a changing lifestyle.

The earthly desires, or lusts, which we have are **deceitful**. They promise one thing but deliver another. Therefore, we are to be smarter than our earthly desires, recognize their deceitfulness, and as a result, turn from them.

4:23. In contrast, we are **to be made new in the attitude of our minds**. How? You are what you think. You move in the direction of what you put into your mind and what you allow your mind to dwell on. So if you are not what you want to be, then you must begin to think differently. If you are to think differently, you must put into your mind that which you want to become. If you do, the Holy Spirit will use it to change you to become what you want to be. If you don't, you will never be what you want to be. It all depends on what you put into your mind. This is what it means to be made new in the attitude of your mind.

4:24. Finally, we are **to put on the new self**. This means, we are to allow the new self to govern our activities. We are to begin living the lifestyle that corresponds to who we have become in Christ. This new holy self shows we are maturing, growing in unity with the body, and doing our part of the body's work.

4:25. First we are to stop lying. To be taught the truth in Jesus (v. 21) means to make truth telling a habit of life. We cannot attempt to fool or deceive one another as pagans do. We must create unity in the body with one truth because we are members of one another.

4:26-27. Sometimes a Christian may legitimately become angry. Jesus became angry at times. In those times we must be extra careful how we act, for anger gives no excuse to sin. Sinning in anger would include things such as saying unkind things or acting in harmful ways toward others. We may not always be able to keep from getting angry, but we can keep from sinning when we do. When we do get angry, we should deal with it before the day is through.

When we allow our anger to become sin or when we allow ourselves to keep our anger for more than a day, it gives the devil an opportunity to gain control over our attitudes, our actions, and our relationships. It gives him a **foothold** to lead us into greater anger and more sin.

4:28. Christians are not to steal. Stealing, in its most obvious form is, either by deception or force, taking the possession of someone else. In all civilizations, stealing is considered wrong. It is a timeless and universal value. Inherently, no one wants his possessions taken from him. We have no difficulty understanding or agreeing with this command at its most obvious level.

Rather than steal, we are to work. Work has benefits. (1) It is good. It allows a person to meet his own needs and the needs of his family. It allows him to do something meaningful with his time and to make a contribution to society. (2) Work allows a person to be able to give something to others who have needs. Rather than steal from others, work allows a person to give something to others. (3) Work allows a person to support financially the advancement of the kingdom of God. Working is thus a sign of Christian faithfulness, maturity, and unity.

4:29. This is the Bible's version of, "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all." We are to speak only words that build up and encourage others. This one passage, if consistently obeyed, would eliminate the overwhelming majority of life's conflicts. Words of a mature Christian seek to help the listener, not harm him. Thus the ministerial gifts of Christ's grace achieve their purposes, and the unity of the body of Christ is preserved and enhanced.

4:30. Not to limit speech to wholesome, helpful words makes the Holy Spirit feel grief because of our behavior. We are not saying that you can never say anything negative. Sometimes we are forced to talk about unpleasant things, particularly in solving problems in which people are involved. Teachers, ministers, employers, coaches, lawyers, police, and so on, all find it necessary to tell the truth about someone even if it is unpleasant. Whether you are solving a problem or not, you avoid speaking unwholesome words. Your intent is to build up, not tear down, to unify, not divide.

4:31-32. Christians are to “put away” five sins: bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and slander. In their place, they are to “put on” three virtues: kindness, tender-heartedness, and forgiveness. Because God acts this way toward us, we should act this way toward others. Then the church will be built up, the people will be holy, and Christ’s body will be unified.

5:1. Just as it is natural for an earthly child to imitate his earthly father, so should the spiritual child imitate his Heavenly Father. The word *imitate* comes from the word *mimeomai*, from which we get our word *mimic*. It means “to act like.”¹

¹ Anders, M. (1999). [*Galatians-Colossians*](#) (Vol. 8, p. 170). Broadman & Holman Publishers.