



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION FOR WEEK OF NOVEMBER 21-27

INTRODUCTION:

We are entering our 3rd week of our 'Be' series as we continue our Be Rich emphasis. Throughout November, you will be challenged to Give, Serve, and Love our community. Many of us would not say we are rich but when you realize how God has blessed you and how rich you really are then you should have every desire to give, serve, and love those around you. Pastor Mark's message for this week is entitled, "Be New" as he reminds us that as Christians, we have a new identity in Christ.

Before Your Small Group Meeting:

- Watch Pastor Mark's Message
- Read Ephesians 4:17-24

DISCUSSION

1. What jumped out at you the most from Pastor Mark's message this weekend?
2. Pastor Mark mentions that we must renounce our old practices. What are some practical ways you have done this? Has it been easy or difficult to renounce these old practices? Explain.

3. Jesus refers to the devil as 'the father of lies' (John 8:44) and he uses lies to cause you to question your identity in Christ. What are some practical steps you can take to retrain your brain to replace the lies the devil feeds you with the truth of God's word?
4. Read Ephesians 4:24. What does it look like for you to put on 'the new self' everyday? Explain.

RESPOND IN PRAYER

Spend time reading and praying over Galatians 2:20 and then praise God for providing you a new identity in Christ!

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Ephesians 4:17-24

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.¹

¹ Anders, M. (1999). *Galatians-Colossians* (Vol. 8, pp. 153–155). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.