SESSION 9
WALKING DIFFERENTLY

EPHESIANS 4:17-32

17 Therefore, I say this and testify in the Lord: You should no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their thoughts. They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts. They became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more. But that is not how you came to know Christ, assuming you heard about him and were taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, to take off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires, to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth. Therefore, putting away lying, speak the truth, each one to his neighbor, because we are members of one another. Be angry and do not sin. Don't let the sun go down on your anger, and don't give the devil an opportunity. Let the thief no longer steal. Instead, he is to do honest work with his own hands, so that he has something to share with anyone in need. No foul language should come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear. And don't grieve God's Holy Spirit. You were sealed by him for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A Paul used Gentile here to speak not of ethnicity, but of religion and morality. He was contrasting Christian against Gentile.

B “Far away from the life of God” (TLB)

C A refusal to repent and have faith (Ex. 8:32)

D When we come to Christ we’ve been born again and made new (John 3:1-13; 2 Cor. 5:17).

E Christians reflect God’s character: “a God-fashioned life, a life renewed from the inside and working itself into your conduct as God accurately reproduces his character in you” (The Message).

F “At sin—at immorality, at injustice, at ungodly behavior” (AMP)

G Quickly reconcile with others (Matt. 5:22-26).

H The “adversary” (1 Pet. 5:8), the “ancient serpent” (Rev. 20:2), and “the father of lies” (John 8:44)

I Generosity is a driving force behind our call to work. It’s part of loving our neighbors and living out our faith (Prov. 3:27; Matt. 10:42).

J “Let everything you say be good and helpful” (NLT).

K Israel had done this (Isa. 63:10). When we live contrary to Christ, we grieve the Holy Spirit, who resides in us (1 Thess. 5:19).

L “Proof that you belong to him” (NCV)

M “Should have no place in your lives” (TLB)

N A spirit of forgiveness is evidence of one who has truly been forgiven (Matt. 6:12-15).
1. THE OLD (Eph. 4:17-19)
   - Paul reminded his readers of their lives before believing in Christ, searching for fulfillment through sin but unable to be satisfied.
   - Sin breeds a desire for more sin.

2. THE CHANGE (Eph. 4:20-24)
   - Paul compared salvation to taking off an old, dirty garment and replacing it with a new, clean garment.

3. THE NEW (Eph. 4:25-32)
   - Paul identified characteristics of the new lives we’re called to live once we’re believers.
   - Paul wasn’t commanding believers to be angry, but he was calling them to control their anger (v. 26).

SUMMARY STATEMENTS
Believers are to live a life that’s different from those who reject Christ.
- We must not forget the futility of living in bondage to sin.
- Believers are given a fresh start through faith in Christ, so we can live without guilt.
- Believers are to live Christlike lives as a result of their salvation.
FOCUS ATTENTION

What might we be able to determine about people based on how they walk?

- The way we walk speaks volumes about us. Gait is a strong indicator of health, age, and personality.
- A person’s stride can reveal confidence, pain, insecurity, anger, extroversion, or introversion.
- Paul had already urged believers to walk worthy by walking forward together. Now he urged Christians to walk worthy by walking differently.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

EPHESIANS 4:17-19

Complete this sentence: “Believers need to walk differently than …”

- Calling on the Lord’s authority, Paul insisted believers avoid the typical lifestyle of unbelievers.
- Believers shouldn’t continue to live the way they did before they were saved by God’s grace.

Why did Paul start with unbelievers’ thoughts before describing their walk?

- How we think determines how we behave. Futile thinking results in faulty living.
- Ignorance of God leads people to seek fulfillment in things that only ensnare and never satisfy.

What marks the walk of an unbeliever?

- When people have no sensitivity to God, their lives are often marked by a me-first mentality, sexual promiscuity, lack of self-control, and no regard for consequences.
- Those without Christ seek satisfaction in self, stuff, and pleasure.
- A continual rejection of Jesus causes hearts to harden. Callused hearts can’t feel anything, so unbelievers descend into more and more sin, trying to gain an ever-elusive sense of satisfaction.

EPHESIANS 4:20-24

How did believers transition from futile thinking to a right way of thinking?

- Salvation produces new thinking. Jesus is the subject matter, teacher, and environment in which a believer’s learning takes place.
- When, by God’s grace, believers respond to God’s call to salvation, Jesus renews our minds. Our thinking is no longer futile, but fruitful. Our understanding isn’t darkened, it’s enlightened. We’re not ignorant—we know the truth and it sets us free.

What transformation occurs as believers are being renewed in the attitude of our minds?

- A renewed mind understands that only Jesus truly satisfies.
- Out of that new understanding comes a different way of walking that seeks Jesus, not self.
- We can’t make ourselves new. That’s God’s work through the Holy Spirit. Our task is to cooperate with God and consciously work toward change each day.
- Through faith in Christ, we put off our old nature, stripping off the filthy attitudes and actions of that old self and putting on attitudes and actions of the new self.

EPHESIANS 4:25-32

Identify the old that believers should put off, the new we should put on, and reasons why we should do both.

- Notice the contrast from verse 31 and verse 32. Christians should be noticeably different in how we treat others.
- Christians should be honest, reliable people because we’re to live in unity; relationships are founded on trust.
- Believers must positively deal with anger, not nurse it. Unresolved anger leaves an open door for Satan to enter and wreak havoc.
- Believers put off greed and put on generosity because sharing is the new norm in God’s community.
- A different walk demands a different talk. Followers of Jesus must put off words that harm others. Every word we say should be enlightening, encouraging, appropriate, or beneficial.

What grieves and pleases the Holy Spirit?

- Disunity and impurity grieve the Spirit, so we must make sure our words and actions work for unity and purity.
- The Spirit is pleased when we handle frustrating relationships differently than the world. Rather than holding on to bitterness, flaring up in anger, asserting ourselves with shouting, talking bad about people or even wishing harm on them, we treat them with the grace and mercy Christ has shown to us.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

How can Christians walk differently in a world that expects us to be like them?

- When we remember the futility of living in bondage to sin, we’ll be intent on living a radically different way.
- Seek satisfaction in Jesus alone.
- Strip away self and put on Jesus.
- Walking and talking differently is a daily lifestyle commitment to unity and purity.

Personal Challenge: Pay attention to how you walk physically and spiritually. Make it your goal and prayer that people will notice you’re different.
A WEDDING INVITATION

Display a wedding invitation. Ask: What kind of information does the invitation provide? Aside from basic information about who’s getting married, where, and when, invitations often provide information on dress code. Ask: Why is it helpful for invitations to provide this detail? Sometimes we don’t know how to dress for a specific situation, and most of us dislike showing up at an event dressed inappropriately.

Believers have received an invitation to “the marriage feast of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:9), where we’re not just guests, we’re the bride. In Ephesians 4:17-32, Paul gave us specific instructions on how to dress for this wedding. Ask: If you’d been outside working in the yard, what’s the first thing you would do to get ready for a wedding? Paul tells believers to strip off our former, unredeemed way of life just as we would strip off a filthy T-shirt. Then, as we would take a shower before putting on clean clothes, we repent of anything we’ve said or done that’s ungodly. Finally, we put on our new clean clothes that conform to the invitation’s dress code stipulating Christlikeness.

Ask adults to decipher wedding dress codes like Black Tie, Country Chic, Dressy Casual, Garden Party, or Semi-Formal. Sometimes we need clarification on wedding dress codes and may ask for more specifics. Ask: What specifics did Paul provide about what our Christlike attire should look like? When we’re truthful and generous, dealing with anger and difficult relationships with kindness, compassion, and forgiveness, we’re dressed appropriately for every occasion.

DIG DEEPER

GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

One of most terrifying passages in the Bible is Jesus’ warning against blaspheming the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-29; Luke 12:10). Many people who read that passage, might wonder if they’ve committed such a sin, and if so, will God accept them, even if they’ve come to Christ. We can be assured, “People could only knowingly give Satan the credit for the working of the Holy Spirit if their hearts were so hardened that they had already irrevocably rejected God’s offer of salvation in Jesus Christ. A genuine believer in Christ could never commit this sin.”1 This should bring believers much comfort.

At the same time, here in Ephesians 4:30, Paul strongly cautioned us against another type of offense involving the Holy Spirit—grieving him. To grieve the Holy Spirit brings unhealthiness into our relationship with God. The Holy Spirit dwells within the believer, and when we sin, we sin against God. These sins include “foul language” toward another person (v. 29), “bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander ... along with all malice” (v. 31).

Each of these are sins we commit against others who are created in God’s image, and they oppose the attitudes believers are called to exhibit (v. 32): kindness, compassion, and forgiveness. Failure to live in a God-honoring way toward others saddens the Holy Spirit.

One of the reasons the Spirit is grieved is because, as Charles Spurgeon notes: “He sorrows in his soul because he knows what sorrow these things must bring to our souls.”2 That is, the Holy Spirit is grieved because He knows these sinful thoughts, actions, and words do great harm to our souls and our Christian walk. Our born-again hearts desire holiness, and sin goes against our new identity in Christ. Paul knew well the torturous feeling this can bring about (Rom. 7:14-25).

Yet there is hope when we grieve the Spirit. The way to do this is through repentance. As Jesus said: “I tell you, in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who don’t need repentance” (Luke 15:7). Joy comes when we repent of our sin.

The indwelling Holy Spirit is a great blessing from God. Having Him is a promise of our eternal salvation and a guide so that we can live in the truth of the gospel (John 16:13). His grieving should serve as a helpful corrective, so we might repent of sin and live as Christ has called us to live.


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