

WHO AM I?

Ephesians



NEW YOU

INTRODUCTION

Ephesians 4:17-24

Numerous polls over the years have shown that anywhere from one-third to almost one-half of Americans claim to be born again Christians. But before we celebrate, we should also note that the same polls indicate that there is no appreciable difference between the way that professing born again Christians live and how the rest of the culture lives.

Christians, including Christian leaders, have an atrocious rate of sexual immorality, whether viewing pornography on the Internet or actually engaging in sexual sin. ... We watch the same amount and the same content of filthy TV shows and movies as the population at large.

In light of these alarming conditions, Paul's words scream at us (4:17, my translation): "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk...." This refers to what he is about to say. Therefore goes back to his exhortation (4:1) to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." From 4:4-16, he developed how the worthy walk pertains to church unity and maturity.

Now, he turns to how the worthy walk affects personal holiness. Affirm means to testify as in court, when you summon a witness. It shows that Paul isn't giving some helpful hints that you may want to try if you feel like it. He is giving the Lord's commandments for how His people must live. Together with the Lord should be translated, in the Lord. It points to Paul's source of authority—the Lord Himself—and to the sphere in which both he and his readers now live. By God's mercy, they have been rescued from this present evil age and now live as new creatures in Christ.

Paul paints this graphic portrait of how unbelievers live, which is how the Ephesians had lived before they met Christ. It is a shorter version of a similar picture in Romans 1:18-32. Paul is showing that when you become a Christian, there must be a distinct break from the past. People should be able to see clearly the difference in your life, so that they wonder, "What happened?" His message is quite simple:

Believers must not live as unbelievers live.¹

OPEN IT

1. What is one "life hack" that has totally changed some aspect of your life?

¹ Sermon by Steve Cole. Found at: <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-30-how-not-live-ephesians-417-19>

READ IT

Ephesians 4:17-24

EXPLORE IT

2. **What does Paul say that alludes to the seriousness of what he has to say here?**
3. **What is the problem that plagues these “Gentiles” that Paul is talking about?**
4. **What are we to do as a result of having “learned Christ”?**
5. **Where does this renewal take place?**
6. **What does this new self reflect?**

APPLY IT

Transformed Thinking

As Paul continues to contrast life before Christ and life in Christ, the two continue to be marked by vast and clear differences. There is clearly an old way of thinking in which we once lived that led to a hard heart, separation from God, sensuality, greed, and impurity (to list a few things) and a new way of thinking that leads to righteousness and holiness. And the great dividing wall between them is Jesus!

A person’s worldview influences their beliefs, values, and ultimately their actions. It’s the lens in which they view and understand the world around them. It’s no wonder then that Paul speaks to the renewing of our minds!

7. **Why is the battle for the mind so important? Where have you seen Christians do well in the battle for the mind and where might we have room to improve?**

8. Paul's encouragement to put off the old and put on the new isn't a one and done deal, it's a present, ongoing thing that we are to do as believers. How are you experiencing the ongoing battle over your mind?

Learning and Living

Paul draws a clear emphasis to the mind of the believer and what they have learned in their faith. He talks of us "learning Christ" and of our "hearing about him and being taught in him." There are many Christians today eager to learn! We sign up for classes and Bible studies, we read books, we listen to podcasts and so much more. We're like sponges, absorbing as much as we can about our faith.

9. What is something that you have been learning recently in your faith?

10. What is something that you would love to learn more about?

On the other hand, some might say that knowledge means nothing without application. So rather than get caught up in all the academia, some Christians today are driven more by the practical expression of living out their faith. After all, didn't Paul say something to effect that knowledge and understanding apart from love are nothing (1 Cor. 13)? For some, the question simply becomes, "What does this passage mean for me? Just tell me what I'm supposed to do."

11. How have you seen the practical expression of your faith in your day to day develop over the past month? 6 months? Year?

12. What has been one of the most challenging aspects of your faith to put into practice? Where might you find help and support in doing that?

Some Christians would join every study or class available; some would rather serve and volunteer every chance they get. Yet Paul finds the sweet spot in the marriage of the two - learning and living woven together in beautiful, biblical harmony. As a matter of fact, it would seem that to Paul you can't properly have one without the other. It would seem that apart from biblical learning in Christ, a person might find themselves incapable of living out their faith properly (vv. 17-19). On the other hand, learning Christ and being taught in Him ought to produce a proper living out of that learning, producing true righteousness and holiness (vv. 20-24ff).

Spiritual maturity involves both our learning and our living!

13. What dangers might exist if a church focused too much on just one or the other - learning or living? What may happen if a church becomes too learning heavy and not living? What might happen if a church becomes so living focused that it doesn't focus on deep, biblical teaching?

14. How does the mission statement of our church drive us to fulfill both of these well? In what ways do you see our church addressing both sides - learning and living?

15. Do you tend to be stronger in “learning” or “living”? How could you strive to strengthen the marriage of the two in your own walk with the Lord?

Christ and Culture

To live out the implications of this text requires self-analysis and defiance. Christians must always distinguish between life with and without God. Again the focus is on our minds. What belongs to life as God created it and gave for our enjoyment? What belongs to the world as an attempt to find life in one’s self and without God? On first glance the two may look the same—all humans have the same needs and drives—but the two approaches are miles apart. We must distinguish the world that God created from the world that human beings subvert to their own purposes. The former leads to worship of God; the latter leads to the wrath of God. Once we have distinguished God’s order from the old order, we are obligated to defiance, a defiance rooted in the confession “Jesus is Lord.” If Jesus is Lord, sin and the old world order cannot be our geography, and Christians must say a constant “No” to their attempts to define us.²

16. Based on this series in Ephesians and what you know of other biblical teaching, what are some defining characteristics of the “life God created” and the “life man corrupts” that will help us determine where biblical “defiance” may be needed in our lives?

² Snodgrass, Klyne. Ephesians: The NIV Application Commentary

17. What's one area of your life right now that is subscribing more to a cultural-centric mindset rather than a Christ-centric mindset? (ie. - where might you be "justifying yourself" in your mindset or behavior?)
What is one practical step you can take this week to bring it into subjection to Christ?