

EPHESIANS 4:17–24, “NEW YOU”

¹⁷Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰But that is not the way you learned Christ!—²¹assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²²to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Discussion Questions (Choose a manageable number to discuss)

1. Since Paul was writing to a Gentile audience, what does he mean by telling them they should no longer live as Gentiles?
How would it strike you if our Scriptures read “you must no longer live like Americans”?
2. Most non-Christians we know seem decent enough, but what (v. 17) makes their way of thinking futile or pointless?
3. Our neighbors seem mostly as enlightened as us, so in what sense (v. 18) is their understanding darkened?
4. Pastor Garrett Nates said that the ignorance Paul writes about here isn’t an innocent lack of information but has a guilty quality about it. Why is that?
What prevents them from grasping ultimate truth?
5. Is the word “callous” (v. 19) a fair description of the loss of moral sensitivity and the sensuality of a pagan culture?
. . . Of a secular culture?
6. While claiming to follow Christ, to what extent have we slipped into imitating the empty lifestyle of our culture?
In what areas are we most compromised?
7. Pastor Nates referred to the faith in self-transformation voiced by Michael Jackson in his song, “Man in the Mirror.” How is the way we have learned Christ (v. 20) a radically different approach?
8. Why does a Christianity based on baptismal rites or adherence to creedal formulations, if not empowered from outside one’s self, lead to legalism and a guilt-ridden life?
9. Pastor Nates said that the expressions of putting off the old self and putting on the new (vv. 22–24) describe how Christ is progressively restoring us to our pre-Fall spiritual state. What light is shed on this process by the following verses: John 15:5? . . . Gal. 2:20?
10. What attitude changes may be required (v. 23) to fully learn “the truth that is in Jesus”?
11. Read Philippians 1:6. What is one good work that God has begun in you?
Thank God in prayer that he has undertaken to bring it to completion.