

Readings

Scripture

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

²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

- Ephesians 4:17-32 (*English Standard Version*)

Reflection

What model of the church, then, should we keep in our minds? The traditional model is that of the pyramid, with the pastor perched precariously on its pinnacle, like a little pope in his own church, while the laity are arrayed beneath him in serried ranks of inferiority. It is a totally unbiblical image, because the New Testament envisages not a single pastor with a docile flock but both a plural oversight and an every-member ministry. Not much better is the model of the bus, in which the pastor does all the driving while the congregation are the passengers slumbering in peaceful security behind him. Quite different from either the pyramid or the bus is the biblical model of the body. The church is the body of Christ, every member of which has a distinctive function. Although the body metaphor can certainly accommodate the concept of a distinct pastorate (in terms of one ministry – and a very important one – among many), there is simply no room in it either for a hierarchy or for that kind of bossy clericalism which concentrates all ministry in the hands of one man and denies the people of God their own rightful ministries...So Christ's immediate purpose in the giving of pastors and teachers to his church is through their ministry of the word to equip all his people for their varied ministries. And the ultimate purpose of this is to build up his body, for all its members to use their God-given gifts. These gifts are so beneficial both to those who exercise their ministry faithfully and to those who receive it that the church becomes steadily more healthy and mature.

- John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (p. 167-168)

It is because we have already put off our old nature, in that decisive act of repentance called conversion, that we can logically be commanded to put away all the practices which belong to that old and rejected life.

- John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (p. 180)

Sermon Outline

How Did You Learn Christ?

Ephesians 4:17-32

The Theology of Tears

Brad Anderson

Our life in Christ must reflect the practice of love... (Ephesians 4:20)

How did you learn Christ?

Against the backdrop of an old way of living... (Ephesians 4:17-19)

Within the teaching of a new way of life... (Ephesians 4:20-24)

What do these two ways look like when placed side by side? (Ephesians 4:25-32)

- Truth instead of Lie
 - Righteous Anger instead of Unrighteous Anger
 - Giving instead of Stealing
 - Good Speech instead of Evil Speech
 - Love instead of Bitterness
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Reflection Questions

 (*taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups*)

- At what age did Mom let you start choosing your own clothes to wear, or does she still know what looks best on you? Which of your clothes in your current wardrobe have you held on to the longest? Why?
- According to Ephesians 4:17-19 how do the mind, heart, and conscience influence the actions of non-believers? How are Christians to deal with these realities? How does putting on the "new self" lead to inner change?
- According to Paul, is it possible to change conduct without a transformation of the heart? Likewise, can the heart be changed without a resulting change of conduct? Why?
- According to Paul, what specific behaviors distinguish the Christian lifestyle from the pagan lifestyle (Ephesians 4:25-5:4)?
- What type of speech and actions should characterize Christians? How does this relate to Ephesians 4:24, 32?
- In Ephesians 4:1, Paul calls us to model our lives in accordance with our high calling as God's people. In Ephesians 5:1, what is the model he holds up for us? How about in Ephesians 5:8?
- Read Ephesians 4:17-24. How did you learn Christ? Look at the second reflection quote below and use the statement to help shape your answer.
- What is one way you have seen the contrast of the "old" and the "new" in your life? What piece of "old life" clothing seems to be skin tight and hard to remove now? How might replacing the "old garment" with a new one (Ephesians 4:25-32) help you?
- Of the different pictures of what it means to live and a Christian – putting off, putting on, imitating God, and being light instead of darkness – which means the most to you? Why?