

Living with New Eyes

St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

Study 10 | Ephesians 4:17-32

- 1. List the many traits that Paul uses to describe “the old self/man”. In what ways does this list characterize you before you became a Christian? In what ways does it characterize struggles you have now?**

“Walk” is a term used often by Paul to describe the total way of life, including thoughts, intentions, and actions. Here he says that the Gentiles (referring to non-Christian, non-Jewish people) walk “in the futility of their minds.” He goes on to explain a type of entropy or causal chain that takes place in the mind and life of an unbeliever. “They are [naturally] darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.” The idea here is that by nature all people have a hardness of heart to God and his truth and so their minds and so-called wisdom or religiosity is actually an ignorance, foolishness, and darkness. This being so, they become “callous” of heart and conscience and give themselves over to every kind of evil. All of this belongs to the “old man” and the Christian’s former way of life, which is corrupt due to its deceitful desires.

- 2. What is the problem with these traits and practices? What do they produce? Is this true in your experience?**

Here take some of these traits one by one and discuss the ways in which they are detrimental. Some are more widely accepted in our culture and our own lives than might seem true on first read. It might help to choose from the list that continues in verses 25-32, as well. For example, in addition to discussing, say, ‘sensuality’ in verse 19, you might discuss ‘lies’ in verse 25, ‘anger’ in verse 26, ‘theft’ in verse 28, ‘potty-mouth’ in verse 29, ‘clamor’ in verse 31.

- 3. What does Paul tell them to do with these evil inclinations? What positive Christian traits are they told to pursue? What fruit is promised? Is this true in your experience?**

Paul tells them chiefly to “put off” the old man and to “put on” the new self. What is inherent in this choice of imagery? He says that because their minds are darkened (but they have now been enlightened by the truth of the gospel) they need to continually be renewed in the spirit of their minds. He tells them to speak the truth to one another (25), to be angry without sin and to reconcile (26), to work in order to share with others (28), to speak in such a way as to be able to build others up in grace (29), to not grieve the Holy Spirit (30), to be kind to one another, tender hearted, and forgiving. Have you experienced the good fruit of these traits over and against the bad fruits of the traits of the old man? Describe.