



LEADER'S GUIDE 8

EPHESIANS 4:17-32

Living or Walking Worthy of our Calling in Christ, or How Shall We Live

As you start this study, ask the Holy spirit to help you understand what God has said through Paul.

NOTE: Unity and maturity are twin goals for the church. Purity is essential.

In Ephesians 4:17-6:9 Paul is now presenting the life and morals that follow from membership in Christ's body, the church.

DAY 1

Read Ephesians 4:17-32 three times.

1. What is the main idea in this passage?
That believers no longer live as the Gentiles but be made new in attitude. Paul directs believers to "put off your old self" (vs.22) and live a life reflecting the saving grace of God through Christ. The NIV title is, 'Livings as Children of Light'.
2. In verse 17 what does Paul "insist on" or "affirm together with the Lord" that the readers of Ephesians do?
No longer live as the Gentiles, i.e. non-believers.
Note that Paul begins this section writing not on his own authority but the Lord's. People should be able to see a difference between Christians and non-Christians because of the way each lives. Paul describes the typical Gentile lifestyle from which Christians must flee. Not every Gentile lived this way, just as not every non-believer lives this way or at least not to this degree. Still, Paul's description of how they as pagans once lived is similar to what Gentile authors of the time were saying. Aristidies, a second-century writer said "The Greeks practice foul things. . ."
3. Paul describes the thinking process of the Gentiles in verses 17-18. What 4 things are stated?
 - 1) Their thinking is futile, 2) Their understanding is darkened, 3) They are separated from the life of God, 4) Their hearts are hardened.

What connection does "living" or "walking" have with this thinking process?

Their living flows out of what they think. Gentiles live as they do because their thinking is amiss.

"Right thinking does matter if a person is to get on with right living." (from Study Guide for the Book of Ephesians by Coleman and Peace.) Life without God is intellectually frustrating, useless and meaningless (see Ecclesiastes 1:2 and Romans 1:2). The natural tendency of human beings is to think their way away from God leaving them hopeless and confused. This lends to intellectual pride, rationalization and excuses (from the NIV Study Bible).

TO DIG DEEPER: The term "hardening" or "hardness" of their heart hearts is used in verse 18. Read Mark 3:5; Romans 11:7-8 and 2 Corinthians 3:14-16. The Greek word used here is "poros" which means "marble or a callous". From these passages and Ephesians 4:17-18 write out a definition for this term.

"Hardening of the heart" is an expression describing a non-believer's inner being. The metaphor of the "heart" is used throughout the Old and New Testament. In Mark 3:5 the Pharisees, who viewed healing on the Sabbath as sin, angered Jesus because of their "stubborn hearts" In Romans 11:7-8 Paul refers to Elijah's tie when a remnant of Israel

did not bow to worship Baal, but those who did were said to have been “hardened” or in a spirit of stupor with eyes that not see and ears that not hear (because they refused the way of truth, God made them impervious to spiritual truth) – from the NIV Study Bible. In 2 Corinthians 3:14-16 Christ describes a understanding of the New Covenant as taking away the “veil”. This refers to Exodus 34 where Moses wore a veil to keep the Israelites from gazing at the radiance of the Lord reflected on Moses face thus preventing them from seeing the fading of that glory and thus the temporary character of the old covenant . Only those who receive the New Covenant in Christ have the power to see the greater glory of it. Hardening of the heart is similar to a veil which prevents a non-believer from seeing God’s glory.

A definition for “hardening of their hearts” could read: the condition of their inner being due to stubborn refusal of Christ, their minds are unable to understand spiritual truth, they are morally unresponsive to God. Or, the center of their being has become “stonelike” or “petrified” – from the meaning of poros.

Who is involved in this condition?	Gentiles – unbelievers, and Jews who reject Christ
From what does it result?	Rejection of Christ
What is the remedy?	Accept Christ

DAY 2

1. Verse 19 states that “having lost all sensitivity” or “having become callous” refers to the hardening of their hearts. What 3 things have those Gentiles done as a result?

1) Given themselves over to sensuality, 2) indulge in every kind of impurity, 3) continually lust for more.

Paul uses these three nouns to describe what the pagan lifestyle had evolved into.

Such forms of over-indulgence (lack of self-control) stand in contrast to the “sensitivity” which ought to characterize life. Gentiles have given themselves over to a sinful kind of life, God gives them over to their choice. (see Romans 1:24, 26, 28). – from the NIV Study Bible. One writer states that the Pagan spiral of darkness starts with hardness of heart (ignorance) which leads to distorted thinking which brings alienation from God out of which follows a consuming sensuality.

2. Verse 20 sets the contrast with “You, however” or “But you”. The readers of Ephesians are different – they know Christ. From verse 21 list two things involved in them knowing Christ.
They heard of Christ and were taught in Christ.
3. In verse 12 who is the source of truth? See also John 14:6 and John 1:14
Jesus is the source of truth.

As believers, our ongoing instruction in Christ is the source of truth, it is the work of God’s Holy Spirit, who is described as the Spirit of Truth in John 16:12-15. When we become new people in Christ we do not automatically think all good thoughts and express all right attitudes. Living the Christian life is a process. (from the New Living Translation). A Christian comes to learn the right way of thinking in knowing Christ, hearing Christ and being taught I Him. The tree phrases in these verses contrast to the three describing wrong thinking of the pagan. To “know Christ” is literally “to learn the Messiah” and focuses on the fact that Christ is the subject matter of their education. “You heard of him” is literally “you heard him” and emphasizes that Jesus himself is the teacher. “You were taught in him” makes the pint that Jesus is the very environment within which their learning takes place. The path to right thinking (and hence to right-living) is via the school of the Messiah. (from Coleman and Peace)

DAY 3

1. In verse 22 what were they taught regarding their former life? Why?
They were taught to put off their old self because it is being corrupted by its deceitful desires.
2. Instead, what 2 things were they taught to do according to verses 23 and 24?
Be made new in the attitude of their minds and put on the new self.
3. According to verse 24, what are three characteristics of the new self?
It is created to be like God, created in true righteousness, created to be holy.

TO DIG DEEPER: Do a study of the “old self”. Look up Romans 6:6, Galatians 5:16-26 and Colossians 3:3-8. Describe the “old self”.

The “old self” is controlled by sinful nature, desires what is contrary to the Holy Spirit and in conflict with the Holy Spirit. Its actions are described in Galatians 5:19-21. It was crucified with Christ so is no longer a slave to sin. *The old self is what we were before we were saved. Put away the old self like filthy worn out clothes. (from the Oxford Study Bible)*

Now do a study of the “new self”. Look up Romans 6:4, 7:6, 12:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Colossians 3:10. Describe the “new self”.

The new self is a new life that serves in a new way having been transformed by a renewed mind into a new creation in the image of the creator. It is controlled by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9). Whatever belongs to it has been put to death.(Colossians 3:3-8).

Our new self is a new creature having given up the desire for self rule. It is the new man – the regenerate man- having become a partaker of the divine nature and life. He is Christ formed in the believer, not just an improved old man. (from Scofield_ It refers to the kind of person Christ produces in the new believer. (from the NIV Study Bible). This is a daily commitment. (from the NLT). It is the need for ongoing, continual renewal.

One method of inductive Bible study is to do a word study. This is the first part of the word study, to look up other verses using this word using cross references.

DAY 4

1. The terms “put off” or “lay aside” and “put on” are a clothing metaphor. When a person accepts Christ they “put off” the old garment of the old lifestyle and “put on” the new garment of the new lifestyle which is Christ, Himself. These 2 verbs are past tense indicating a completed past action – tis happened when the person accepted Christ – put their faith and trust in Him.
2. Verse 23 uses the verb “to be made new” or “be renewed”. It is a present infinitive verb indicating the need for ongoing action. What is to be made new? Read also Romans 12:2 and 2 Corinthians 10:5.

Our attitude, our minds area to be made new.

Why do you think it is so important to be continually having our minds renewed?

Because how we act stems from what we think.

So far this part of Ephesians associates what we think with how we act or live.

Verse 23 emphasizes the renewal “in attitude of (our) minds”. A biblical principal relating to our hearts is found in Proverbs 23:7 which in the King James is translated, “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he”. Paul, therefore, focuses on the renewal of our minds as key to being a new creature in Christ. What we think in our minds as the key to being a new creature in Christ. What we think in our minds determines how we act. There is a continuity between our actions with our thoughts and attitudes. In each of us, the process of renewal of our minds is an ongoing project of God’s Holy Spirit.

3. Read verses 25-29. List each thing we are to “put off” and beside it state what we area to do instead.
Falsehood (in the Greek literally “the lie”) – speak truthfully
Do not sin in anger – resolve anger before go to bed
Do not steal – work with your hands, do something useful
No unwholesome talk come out of your mouth – speak that which helps and builds others up

Without guidelines we would be lost in a wilderness of conflicting moral values. These guidelines give us the ability to chart our course. "These are the living instructions of a good God as to how we might maximize our potential in life." Lies destroy fellowship. Unity must be built on trust and trust comes via truth. Some anger is sin – uncontrolled, unresolved anger is referred to here. The word translated "unwholesome" means rotten like spoiled fruit. Rancid words wound others. Instead the Christian's words should be appropriate to the needs of those to whom he/she is talking and bring benefit to them. Note the word "Therefore" starts verse 25 – having just described what is so for Christians he now describes specifically what their lifestyle ought to be as righteous and holy people. He begins with the negative deed and contrasts with the positive virtue.

TO DIG DEEPER: In verse 26 Paul combines 2 quotes from the Old Testament. Read Psalm 4:4 – "In your anger do not sin; search your hearts when you lie down" and Deuteronomy 24:15 – settle accounts before sundown, don't cause another to be angry. Also read John 2:14-16, Matthew 5:22 and James 1 19-20. Summarize what you learn about anger.

These verses from the Old and New Testament relate to anger. There are certain situations in which anger is the only honest response. Christians should not deny their anger but admit it and deal with it. Psalm 4:4 reminds us to not sin when we are angry, but to search our hearts, to be silent, and listen to God's Holy Spirit. What is the source of the anger? Is it wounded pride or real wrong? Is it spite or injustice? Deal with it quickly. Do not nurse it and let it grow. Do not let it develop into resentment. Deuteronomy reminds us to be sensitive to needy people who work for us and to pay them promptly, so we don't provoke their anger. John describes Christ's righteous anger on seeing the house of God defiled by commercialism and profit taking, when the purpose was to worship God. Matthew cautions us not to become bitter about persons who may have wronged us, since we are held responsible for our thought life. And James give sage advice to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

Now read 2 Corinthians 2:10-11 and explain how holding on to anger gives the devil "foothold" or "opportunity" in our lives.

Satan can use our sins – especially those against other – to bring about greater evil. (from the NIV Study Bible). Holding onto anger gives Satan an opportunity to outwit us. Do not let Satan exploit your anger, turning it into hostility or using it to disrupt fellowship, to divide us. (from Coleman and Peace and the NLT Study Bible). Corinthians reminds the church that forgiveness is important after and individual has repented. We are to forgive and restore members of the church who sin, since each of us has been forgiven and restored by the grace of God.

DAY 5

1. In verse 30 "And" what else are we not to do? We are not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

Read Isaiah 63:10, Acts 7:51 and 1 Thessalonians 5:19. How do we grieve the Holy Spirit?

We grieve the Holy Spirit by rebelling, resisting and putting out His fire. In other words, we close ourselves to hearing His teaching and warnings and not accepting the truth He teaches and obeying .

This verse demonstrates the Holy Spirit is a person, not just an influence, for only a person can be grieved. (from the NIV Study Bible). We can bring sorrow to the Holy Spirit by the way we live. Are we bringing sorrow or pleasing God with our attitudes and actions? Isaiah describes the Lord's forgiveness and mercy, but when those individuals, who had been shown mercy rebelled, God "turned and became their enemy". Acts is Stephen's speech to the Sanhedrin, during his trial, in which he quotes from many sources in the Old Testament – Moses telling the Israelites they are stiff-necked, always resisting the Holy Spirit. In Thessalonians Paul admonishes them to be tolerant of the

manifestations of gifts from the Holy Spirit, demonstrating the love of Christ and recognizing the diversity of gifts and thus not putting out the Spirit's fire – work on earth through the church.

2. From verse 31, list 6 things we are to get rid of. Look each word up in a dictionary and write the meaning beside the word.
 - Bitterness – spiteful, longstanding resentment
 - Rage (wrath) – more immediate flare-up of anger
 - Anger – more long-term hostility
 - Brawling – clamor, boisterous, loud self-assertion, screaming arguments
 - Slander - an utterance designed to hurt or defame the person, insulting one another behind his/her back.
 - Malice – an evil desire to do harm to or act wickedly toward someone, includes wishing or actual plotting evil against another
3. Now from verse 32, list 3 things we are to do. Note the relationships involved.
 - Be kind to one another
 - Be compassionate to one another
 - Forgive each other.

TO DIG DEEPER: We are to forgive others because God has forgiven us and just as He has forgiven us. Read Matthew 6:14-15, 18:35, Mark 11:25, Luke 11:4, 2 Corinthians 2:10 and Colossians 3:12-13. What does this forgiveness look like?

It is forgiveness of each other from our hearts the way God forgives us. The Lord's Prayer (in Matthew) says we ask God's forgiveness as we forgive others – a daily forgiveness is necessary to restore communion with God. This is for believers who have already been forgiven in salvation. The parable of the unmerciful servant illustrates this in Matthew 18:21-35. These attitudes bring to others what we have received from God. (from the NIV Study Bible) AS we come to understand Christ's mercy, we will want to be like Him. Having received forgiveness, we will pass it on to others. (from the NLT Study Bible).

DAY 6

In Ephesians 4:17-32 we have seen that we are to have our thinking continually being renewed. ;This will result in changed behavior. We are active participants – we are to “put off, lay aside or get rid of” certain behaviors and to actively do other behaviors. Make a list of all these behaviors from verses 25-32. Prayerfully examine your own life. Which behavior(s) do you have the most difficulty with right now? What can you do to get rid of or to comply with that behavior? Are you willing to change that behavior? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you be willing to change and to help you change, then do it.