

## Studying the Letter to the Ephesians

Ephesians is about learning to let who we are in Christ, shape how we perform in life.

# Ephesians Study 8 (⊕ 45 min.)



## Warm Up (⊕ 4 min.)

### 1. Greeting / Welcome

**2. Prayer Requests** (try to balance the amount of time between prayer and / or testimony by limiting the amount of prayer requests and/or time for testimony sharing.)

**3. Testimony Sharing** (*Optional* - prior to the group study time, ask one person to share for 3-5 minutes on how the recent truths being studied have impacted their life. Remember: *authenticity is the key* - What have you (or a group member you've asked to testify) shared lately that gives insight into your journey? Try to share things pertaining to the recent themes of the study.)



## Overview of Today's Study (⊕ 1 min.)

**Text:** Turn to Eph. 4:17-32

**Lesson Title:** *Off with the Old and On with the New*

**Lesson Theme:** Christians are to choose to behave on the outside in a way that mirrors what has happened to them on the inside.

**By the End of the Study** today, we want to be able to answer:

### Today's Key Question



How do Christians overcome the desire to satisfy their own appetites and learn to rely on God instead?

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## 1. **Connecting the Studies** (⊕ 7 min.)

**In the first three chapters of Ephesians**, the Apostle Paul established who we are in Christ and the enormous potential that exists due to the permanent presence of the Holy Spirit.

**In the first part of chapter 4**, Paul challenges the behavior of Christians to be worthy of our calling as children of God who is holy.

**In the second part of chapter 4**, Paul names some activities we are to avoid and the types of behavior we should follow.

**Adjusting our behavior is a process.** The process of achieving a worthy walk is a made up of choices. Choosing **to** do and choosing **not** to do certain things. Having the choices last and turn into long-term patterns requires what Paul called ***being renewed in the spirit of your mind.***

**Today**, we will study how we can participate in transforming our worldly habit patterns into godly behavior designed to attract people to Christ.

### **Listen to Rom. 6:11-12 / Read Verse**

Paul gives a starting place for believers on **how** not to be controlled by sinful habits.

**We have to adopt a mindset based on the truth of God's Word.** We must see ourselves as dead to the wrong ways of satisfying our appetites. Before our salvation, we were only alive to the wrong methods of meeting our needs. After salvation, there is a new, right, and holy method by which to get all of our needs met that comes with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

*But how do we learn to choose God's ways when feelings can be so strong to do things our own way?*

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## 2. Bible Passage Study (⌚ 15 min.)

Read Eph. 4:1-16



### Study Topic 1 – The Behavior to “Take Off”

**Paul’s Challenge to the Ephesians’ Behavior – Take Off What Matches the World’s Sinful Style. Eph. 4:17-22**

#### A. What do these verses tell us? 4:17-22

1. Paul wants the Ephesians to behave in a way that does not match the sinful characteristics of the unsaved of the world.
2. Paul describes the thought processes that determine the behavior of the unsaved.
3. Paul’s challenge to the Christian’s behavior is based on their identity in Christ and the truth of His teaching.

#### B. What do these verses mean? 4:17-22



1. The Christian’s behavior should not be driven by the same **thought processes** as the world’s behavior.
2. Paul describes the thought processes of the unsaved:
  - a. *their understanding is darkened* – they are unable to understand spiritual things
  - b. *so they are alienated from the life of God* – unable to have any kind of relationship with God

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- c. *because of the ignorance in them* – because they have no knowledge of the things of God
- d. *because of the blindness (hardening) of their heart* – caused by their desensitized conscience
- e. *who being past feeling* – who are now beyond sensitivity to guilt
- f. *have given themselves over* – have allowed or permitted their actions to go with the flow of their emotions
- g. *to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness* – unlimited self-indulgence to greedily act morally bankrupt



3. In contrast, Christians have a different life in Christ. Christians must **learn** to make choices based on the **truth** of Christ's teachings.

4. *Christians are to put off concerning their former conversation* – Christians are to “take off” (as in a piece of clothing) their former conduct, behavior or lifestyle.

5. *which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts* – which destroys by the deception of wrongfully satisfying appetites.

### **C. How should these verses impact my life? 4:17-22**

- 1. I should be taking off my worldly behavior as if it were a dirty, smelly set of clothes.
- 2. My behavior should not be driven by emotions and should appear different than the world's behavior.
- 3. Are my words and actions being driven by the truth of Christ's teaching? If not, what is driving my words and actions?
- 4. Knowing God's intense love for me, do I really want to be identified with the world's way of living life?

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## **Study Topic 2 – How to “Put On” the New Paul’s Challenge to the Ephesians’ Behavior – Put On God’s Righteous and Holy Practices. Eph. 4:23-32**

### **A. What do these verses tell us? 4:23-32**

There is a way to actually think differently and have our words and actions be changed to match God’s holy way of living.

### **B. What do these verses mean? 4:23-32**

1. *be renewed in the spirit of your mind* – if we are to act differently we must think differently. We must overhaul our thought processes if we want to see transformation in our behavior.

a. Paul says it this way in **Rom. 12:2**,

*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*



b. Many times our decisions are based on emotion instead of truth. The devil works to get us to make godless decisions based on **feeling** (i.e. anger, fear, want for material things, lust etc.) rather than on **truth**.

2. The Holy Spirit’s presence in us offers additional help with overhauling our thought processes. We are cautioned not to make the Holy Spirit sorrowful.

### **C. How should these verses impact my life? 4:17-32**

I am responsible for the degree of godliness my behavior shows. One of the first places it will show is the way I talk to and about other believers.

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### 3. Group Discussion (⊕ 15 min.)

(Try to facilitate the group's discussion and not do most of the talking during this time.)

- 1. Describe a situation in your life when you tried to quit a bad habit.** *Example: Many can relate a time when trying to quit smoking they gained weight. Stopping a habit creates a vacuum. This newly found unfulfilled habit requires replacement.*
- 2. Are the appetites for food, pleasure, justice, love, acceptance, sex etc. we have wrong?** *No.*
- 3. Where do our appetites come from?** *God created us with them and desires to satisfy them for us in His way.*
- 4. How do patterns for satisfying our appetites without God get on our brain?** *From the moment we are born, we lack the awareness of God and begin attempting to meet our own needs or to manipulate others to meet our needs and wants.*
- 5. Can a born again Christian continue a habit of meeting his or her own needs without God?** *Absolutely. Some Christians have never learned to stop relying on themselves and learn to trust God's methods. They relied on Him for salvation but are living out church life on their own by their own "proven" techniques.*

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- 6. How do we displace fleshly or worldly habits with godly ones?**
  - avoid the *time and place*** where the sin pattern happens or is typically able to happen (don't give the devil the opportunity)
  - respond to the tempting thought with *truth*** (example: if you are being tempted to get even with someone have a verse card with a verse like Rom. 12:19 - Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.)
  - develop an *accountability relationship*** – ever try to exercise or diet alone? *It's easier when you have a partner.*

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**4. ↔ Review / Preview** (⊕ 3 min.) (What is the group learning to do that they can repeat when they are away from the group or this study is completed?)

### 🔑 If You Forget Everything Else, Remember...

How do Christians overcome the desire to satisfy their own appetites and learn to rely on God instead?



As Christians **choose** God's methods over the world's methods for meeting needs, the resulting satisfaction **starves** the old emotional responses.

### Getting Ready for Next Week

1. **How's your alone time with God?** Prayer & Bible Reading
2. **For further study,** read Rom. 6-8.
3. **Next week:** "Driving Under the Influence"

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