

EPHESIANS

WHO I AM AND WHY IT MATTERS

Since Mother's Day, we've been journeying through the book of Ephesians together. Our passage over these next two weeks will encourage us to put off some things and put on some things. The title of our message today is "It's Time to Put Off Some Things." If you like to procrastinate, you might think this is a dream passage for you. If you're like most people, you prefer to put off hard conversations, doing your taxes, going to the doctor, etc. But this is NOT what our passage is saying today. It's more like – you've got to get rid of some things in your life.

Scripture: Ephesians 4:17-24

Discussion Questions:

1. Looking back at your sermon notes, what encouraged or challenged you the most?
2. In Ephesians 4:17-19, what does Paul mean when he says that we should no longer live as the Gentiles do? What characteristics does he point to in these verses to make this distinction? How do we see these characteristics on display in our world today?

Here in Ephesians 4:17, Paul is saying rather directly that we should no longer conduct our lives as those who do not know Christ – though we live among those who do not walk in rhythm with Christ, we should live according to our spiritual identity. Non-believers are darkened in their understanding, ignorant of the things of God, and they are driven by sensuality and impurity.

3. In Ephesians 4:19, Paul says the Gentiles live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice impurity. How does this compare to the lives we're called to live as followers of Christ?

As followers of Christ, our minds and lives are no longer darkened. Therefore, we no longer chase after every pleasure the world offers us nor buy into the false promises the world diligently puts before us. As followers of Jesus, we aim to live in rhythm with the way of Jesus – living holy lives set apart for Christ.

4. How can we resist the onslaught of temptations we face every day? How are tempted to normalize so many things that God's Word tells us to avoid?

We resist the temptations of this world by doing what Paul instructed us last week – make every effort to grow up in Christian maturity – never settle with a comfortable level of spirituality. Everything we do, say or think moves us toward the things of heaven or hell. The world tempts us to normalize sin.

5. In Ephesians 4:20-22, what does Paul mean when he says, “you learned Christ”? How does this compare to what we see happening in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7? How does “learning Christ” help us expose the lies of this world regarding sin and deception?

In his commentary on Ephesians, Tony Merida writes, “This is an unusual and awe-inspiring phrase. Christianity is about knowing a living person, Jesus Christ. When you become a Christian, you do not merely learn about the teaching of Jesus; you develop a relationship with Him. Paul says, ‘assuming you heard about Him’ (v. 21). It had been a long time since Paul was in Ephesus. He knew false teaching abounded. So here, in passing, he notes the necessity of hearing about the real Jesus. He wants to make sure they have heard of Christ and have come to know him.” When we reflect on the Sermon on the Mount, we can’t help but remember Jesus saying, “You’ve heard it said..., but I say...” When we learn the ways of Christ and seek to follow Him personally, we will walk away from the things the world calls us to pick up, buy into, and enjoy. The way of Christ is the way of freedom.

6. In Ephesians 4:23-24, Paul encourages us to discard our old selves and let the Spirit renew our thoughts and attitudes. What does it mean to “let the Spirit” renew your mind? How do we actively participate in this process of renewal, practically?

How do we discard our old selves? By renewing our minds. The moment you get saved, God gives you a new life, identity, and power in your mind. You don’t have to be dominated by old thoughts and old patterns. The vast majority of the journey of putting off the old self and putting on the new self takes place in the mind. We need less of the world in our lives and more of God’s Word to win this battle. Consider, for a moment, what’s the most dominant voice in your life right now. Is it the world or the Word? Everything that goes into your mind will help you either put off the old self and put on the new self or put off the new self and put on the old self. Spiritual maturity is recognizing the difference between legalism and wisdom. It’s not legalistic to be careful what shows, movies, or music you’re putting into your life. It’s wise to carefully consider everything that enters your mind (to take every thought captive, as Paul says). What adjustments need to be made in your life? Who needs to give your life to Christ for the very first time?

7. Considering what we’re called to do in today’s passage, how important are the relationships in our lives when it comes to helping us live as Christ calls us to live in a world bent in another direction? How have the friends in your life influenced you to move toward God?

As we said in question 6, it’s not legalistic to be cautious about what influences you’re allowing into your life, such as music, movies, television shows, etc. The same can be said about the relationships we allow in our lives. We need to be cautious about the friends, co-workers, or even family members we allow to influence us. Do those you associate with the most lead you toward God or away from Him? See Hebrews 10:24.

8. What’s one personal takeaway from today’s study you can focus on applying in your life this week?