

LifeGroup Questions

July 7, 2019

Based on Ephesians 4:17-24

Overview. In various places in this letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul reminds these young believers in Christ what their lives were like before they chose to trust in Jesus. The description he gives of their past lives is pretty bleak. One thing he says in 2:2 is, "You followed the ways of this (sinful) world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air (Satan)." But now since they have trusted in Christ he reminds them that their lives should be very different, increasingly like Christ. In 4:17 he states, "So I tell you this, and **insist** on it in the Lord, that you **must** no longer live as the Gentiles do." Your life is now to be different from your past and from unbelievers. So what is this salvation thing, is it just exchanging one set of rules and laws for another? Is it simply a matter of trying to act different or better than before? Yes but no! It goes much deeper than that. Jesus said to the Jewish leader Nicodemus, "You must be born again." That is more than just trying to follow a new set of religious rules like Nicodemus had done so well. We can easily get caught in this religious system where now if we profess faith in Christ we need to conform to external expectations of the church, Christian parents or others who profess to follow Jesus.

Miles McPherson had great dreams to make it big in the NFL. He landed a place with the San Diego Chargers (1982-1985). He was not a Jesus follower. He says, "The pressure to get along, to fit in, was overwhelming. So when the guys pulled out cocaine and passed it around, I knew I had a decision to make: Take part or be left out." He knew it was wrong but rationalized participating. He got hooked and it dragged his life down to despair. Several Christian teammates confronted him with the need to turn to Christ who has the power to deliver. But he persisted in going his own way and following the way of sinners. Yet he tried desperately on his own to stop and to change. Finally in desperation he got on his knees. "I called out to Jesus to save. Who else was going to do it? I had already done the pep-talking, the pleading, the cajoling. I had tried to convince myself that I could handle it on my own. But I had essentially given up. . . It was God or nothing. When I got up off my knees, everything was different. I felt as if I had been delivered—that all the desire to use had fallen away. By God's grace, from that point forward, I would never do drugs again." He was a changed person on the inside and it began to show on the outside. He now began to live the Jesus way with an inner compulsion. He has testified to thousands about the shackled man who was set free. Why the change? Because he was truly BORN AGAIN, born from above, born of God's Spirit. He was a new man. This is a BIG and ESSENTIAL step, no exceptions.

The Apostle Paul sets forth many things that should now characterize our lives if we have invited Christ into our lives. By faith we are to put off the old life and put on the new life implanted by God's Spirit. Paul says in 4:24, "put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness". Read the lesson text over several times and ask God to reveal the things that need to change in your life. Don't be content to just have Jesus as your Savior. Invite him to be your Lord and Master, and empower you to be conformed to Christ, not to this sinful world and its sinful ways.

Many years ago the late A.W.Tozer wrote: "Modern Christians hope to save the world by being like it. But it will never work. The church's power over the world springs out of her unlikeness to it. Never from her integration into it."

Bible Study: Ephesians 4:17-24

1. Read Eph.2:1-3 and 4:17-19 and jot down things that characterized their lives before Christ.
 - a. Their condition

 - b. Their conduct

Enlarge a bit on what each of these things mentioned in verses 17-19 may look like in practical everyday living of unsaved people you know or even in yourself before Christ came in.

2. Pastor James gave some things in his sermon that he considered to be "futile thinking" (v.17) of pagans that leads to all kinds of problems and perversions. What are some things you would consider futile thinking that should not be true of us who know Christ and his word?

3. Read Eph.4:20-24. America is fast becoming increasingly pagan. What are some things today that we as followers of Jesus need to be careful not to make part of our behavior, speech and beliefs?

4. Why do people who profess to know Jesus and have him in their life, have to be told again and again to not live like unbelievers, like the pagan people we live and work among?

(Rom.12:1 "be not conformed to this world." 2 Cor.6:15, "Come out from among them and be separate." 1 Pet.1:14, "As obedient children do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do." 1 Jn.2:15f, "Do not love the world." etc.)

5. Read verses 20-23 and note some basic changes that should come in our lives if we have truly personally invited Christ into our lives. What are some things you can identify in your life that indicate to yourself that you have put on the new self and are now putting off your old sinful self?

PRAYER TIME: Conclude your now, or alone later, by committing your lives anew to Christ, inviting him to rule in your heart and mind, and empower you to become more like God (v.24).

To read a synopsis of Miles McPherson's life journey go to:

<https://www.sdrock.com/pastormiles/>