

EPHESIANS IN CHRIST

Group Discussion Guide // Week 4

WARM-UP

1. What's a quote that you really like or find interesting? Why do you like it?
 2. Describe the most physically or mentally demanding thing you've ever done.
 3. What's one character trait that's changed in your life between your younger years and now.
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TRUTH

Read Ephesians 4:26-5:21

Many of Paul's letters follow the same pattern. They begin with a recounting of the gospel story, then he spends the latter part drawing out the practical ways it should impact our lives. Paul says that disciples should be imitators of God (5:1). This, however, isn't a vague concept. In these chapters we see very specific ways in which those who are in Christ must reflect the character of Christ.

Inner Life

Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. (Ephesians 4:26-27)

Paul doesn't just tell us what actions not to do; he drives down to the motivators, the stuff going on inside of us that results in those actions. Slander, greed, covetousness – these things are contrary to the character of Christ, and a disciple needs to deal with the inner motivators that cause them. If we don't, the devil gets a foothold in our lives. In other words, when we don't get God's help in dealing with the stuff going on inside, the devil can get inside and start causing mayhem inside and out.

- ▶ Give an example of something (either personal or hypothetical) that can cause mayhem if not dealt with.
- ▶ In that same situation, how would you go about dealing with it in a healthy way?

Our Words

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Ephesians 4:29)

Our words have power. When we use our words to tear others down (corrupting talk) or bring an inappropriate sexual edge into our humor (crude joking), it causes harm to ourselves and others. Worse yet, it grieves God. On the flip side, our words can build others up and be worshipful. It's not that God is simply calling us to have an optimistic personality; he's calling us to speak like those who have the Spirit of Christ dwelling inside. Christ didn't have to tear others down to feel better about himself or tell rude jokes to get a laugh. Neither must we. Christ used his words to build others up and worship God. So must we.

- ▶ How does your culture tend to misuse words?

Our Bodies

But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. (Ephesians 5:3)

God has given us good gifts to enjoy, like alcohol or sex. He's also given us limitations for those gifts. When we covet, however, it means we've turned those gifts into our ultimate source of fulfillment, peace, or comfort. When that happens, we tend to abuse things like sex or alcohol. It's hypocritical for a Christian to abuse God's gifts because it's as if their words say "God is my everything," but their actions say, "I need to find my satisfaction somewhere else."

GRACE

...giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Ephesians 5:20-21)

For Paul, Jesus is the solution to every aspect of our flawed character. We can forgive because God forgave us in Christ. We can walk in love because Christ loved us so much he died for us. We have the power in Christ to emulate his character because he has given it to us freely. Christ is the only one powerful enough to forgive us for our failures and fill us enough to change us.

CHANGE

- ▶ Are there any areas of un-Christlike character that you need to repent of?
- ▶ In which area – inner life, words, body – are you trusting God to help you grow in the character of Christ?
- ▶ Why is Jesus such a powerful source for transformation?

Pray for anybody who's repenting of sin. Pray for the power of Christ to shape our character in a way that is pleasing to God.