

Small Group Guide: Don't Wear Winter Clothes in Summer
Based on Ephesians 4:17-32

Key Takeaways

1. God has changed reality itself - Through Jesus, God has fundamentally shifted all of reality from "winter" to "summer." Living in old patterns is like wearing winter clothes in summer—uncomfortable and out of step with reality.
2. We can't walk in two directions at once - We must choose to walk worthy of our calling in Christ, which means we cannot simultaneously live like those who don't know God.
3. Sin is about disconnection from reality - Non-Christians aren't stupid; they're deceived. They're following an outdated map that no longer matches the landscape God has created.
4. The real problem is getting Christians to live like Christians - Paul's primary concern isn't criticizing unbelievers but helping believers stop living according to the old humanity.
5. Only encountering Jesus breaks the illusion - Personal encounter with Jesus, who IS the truth, shatters the spell and helps us see reality clearly.
6. Forgiveness is what makes the new humanity attractive - The distinguishing mark of God's people isn't perfection but forgiving one another as God has forgiven us.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Message

1. The "Winter Clothes in Summer" Metaphor
 - How does this metaphor help you understand what Paul is saying in Ephesians 4?
 - Can you think of specific examples in your own life where you've been "wearing winter clothes in summer"—living according to old patterns in God's new reality?
2. Futile Thinking vs. Truth
 - Paul says non-Christians live "in the futility of their thoughts" (v. 17). What does this mean? How is this different from calling someone stupid?
 - The pastor mentioned that without God, we must believe "six miracles" (something from nothing, order from chaos, etc.). Which of these challenges your thinking the most? Why?
3. The Old Self vs. The New Self
 - Paul uses "old humanity" and "new humanity" language rather than just talking about individuals. Why is this significant?
 - What does it mean that Christians are "a new kind of human"?

Personal Reflection

4. Taking Inventory
 - Looking at the list in verses 25-32 (lying, anger, stealing, rotten words, etc.), which of these "winter clothes" do you find yourself putting on most often?
 - Why do we keep returning to these old patterns even though we know they don't work?
5. Encountering Jesus

- The pastor said, "Only a personal encounter with Jesus is going to break the illusion." When have you experienced Jesus in a way that changed how you see reality?
- How does knowing that Jesus is "the truth" (not just that He teaches truth) change how you approach spiritual growth?

6. The Daily Choice

- The sermon emphasized that we must "wake up every morning and choose to put on the true you." What would this look like practically in your daily routine?
- What helps you remember who you really are in Christ? What makes you forget?

Application and Action

7. Humility and Gratitude

- The story about the father talking to his child about his own struggles was powerful. How can we cultivate that kind of humility in our relationships?
- When was the last time someone pointed out an area where you were living in the "old humanity"? How did you respond? How would you like to respond?

8. Speaking Truth in Love

- Have you ever avoided telling someone in the church something they needed to hear because you were afraid of their reaction? What held you back?
- How can we create a culture where we can lovingly speak truth to one another without defensiveness?

9. Forgiveness as the Magic Ticket

- Why is forgiveness the distinguishing mark of the new humanity rather than perfection?
- Is there someone in your life (in the church or elsewhere) you need to forgive for "smuggling their winter clothes on vacation"?

Practical Applications

Choose 1-2 of these to commit to this week:

1. Daily Reset: Each morning this week, before getting out of bed, pray: "Jesus, help me put on who you've made me to be today. Show me any winter clothes I'm trying to wear."
2. Identify One Winter Coat: Pick one specific behavior from verses 25-32 that you struggle with. Share it with one trusted person in the group and ask them to pray for you and check in with you.
3. Practice Humble Gratitude: If someone points out an area where you're living in the old humanity this week, respond with: "Thank you for telling me. I want to hear this."
4. Speak Truth in Love: Think of one person in your church family who might need to hear a loving truth. Pray about it, then have that conversation this week with gentleness and humility.
5. Forgiveness List: Write down anyone you're holding unforgiveness toward. Pray through the list, asking God to help you forgive them as He has forgiven you.
6. Reality Check: Set a daily reminder on your phone that says, "What season am I living in?" Use it as a prompt to check whether you're living according to God's new reality or the old patterns.

Closing Reflection

Read Ephesians 4:22-24

"Take off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires, to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth."

Reflection Question: What would your life look like if you fully lived as the "new self" God has created you to be?