

**Big Idea:** Jesus calls us to leave our old lives behind.

**Primary Scripture:** Ephesians 4:17-32

**Supporting Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 2:13

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**CAPTURE (Why should students pay attention to and care about your message?)**

- Have you ever tried to reinvent yourself. Maybe it was at the start of a new school year, switching schools, or just deciding you needed a change?"
- Change is difficult, whether breaking a bad habit or reinventing yourself.
  - Lasting change often feels just out of reach.
- Diana Nyad's story:
  - She's a world-class swimmer who swam 28 miles around Manhattan.
  - She attempted to swim from Cuba to Key West when she was 28 but had to stop after 42 hours.
  - At 64, she decided to try it again.
    - She swam 110 miles in 53 hours from Cuba to Florida without a shark cage.
- Diana's physical transformation is a powerful picture of the spiritual transformation God offers.
- Just as Diana transformed physically, God calls us to transform spiritually from the inside out.
- In the "Level Up" series, Paul challenges believers to level up their faith.
  - God invites us to leave our old spiritual life behind and step into the new life He offers.
  - Regardless of where we are in life, God isn't asking us to transform ourselves but to let Him transform us.

**SCRIPTURE (What does God's Word say?)**

- Last week we talked about unity, but this week Paul challenges us to go further. God wants us to live as entirely new people.

***<sup>17</sup> With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused. (Ephesians 4:17 – NLT)***

- Gentiles are anyone who wasn't Jewish and didn't have God in their life.
- Paul describes those without God as spiritually lost and directionless.

*<sup>18</sup> Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him. <sup>19</sup> They have no sense of shame. (Ephesians 4:18-19 – NLT)*

- Pretty intense, isn't it? But here's where it gets personal.

*<sup>20</sup> But that isn't what you learned about Christ. <sup>21</sup> Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, <sup>22</sup> throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. (Ephesians 4:20-22 – NLT)*

- The confusion, darkness, and shameless living are all before knowing Jesus.
- Everyone starts in the same place—separated from God.
- God doesn't leave us there; transformation is possible through Jesus.

*<sup>23</sup> Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. <sup>24</sup> Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. (Ephesians 4:23-24 – NLT)*

- Following Jesus isn't just about trying harder to change bad habits.
- True transformation is about allowing God to make us entirely new.
- The Holy Spirit renews our thoughts and attitudes, helping us live in our new nature.

*<sup>25</sup> So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. <sup>26</sup> And “don't sin by letting anger control you.” Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup> for anger gives a foothold to the devil. <sup>28</sup> If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need. <sup>29</sup> Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. (Ephesians 4:25-29 – NLT)*

- If you're following Jesus, it should be obvious to others. It's about being different in how you talk, act, and treat others.
- Living differently shows the impact of Jesus in our lives.

<sup>30</sup> *And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30 – NLT)*

- God has an emotional response to how we live.
- We need the Spirit to guide us, as we often fall back into old habits.
- With the Spirit's help, we can live in a way that brings God joy.

<sup>31</sup> *Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. <sup>32</sup> Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:31-32 – NLT)*

- Following Jesus affects every part of our lives.
- Change doesn't come through our own power or by forcing it ourselves.
- Change happens as we allow God to reshape us through His Spirit.

### **INSIGHTS (What might this Scripture mean?)**

#### **1. We can't have it both ways.**

- Paul didn't suggest "try to do better" or "work on improving."
- You can't have it both ways—it's an all-in transformation.
- Paul's directness: In another letter, he emphasizes this even more clearly.

<sup>17</sup> *This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! (2 Corinthians 5:17 – NLT)*

- Following Jesus is not about balancing old ways with new life; it's about fully embracing transformation.

- Just like you wouldn't wear old clothes over a new outfit, we need to completely shed our old life and embrace the new identity God gives us.
- It's not about tweaking a few things. It's about a complete transformation through God's power.

## 2. Real change starts inside.

- Have you ever acted differently without feeling differently?
  - Example: Being nice when you're mad or pretending to be happy.
  - How long did it last? Not long.

*<sup>23</sup> Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. <sup>24</sup> Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. (Ephesians 4:23-24 – NLT)*

- God wants to change us from the inside out, helping us become the best versions of ourselves.

## 3. Changed lives change lives.

- Transformation spreads like ripples in a pond.

*<sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. <sup>32</sup> Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:31-32 – NLT)*

- Truthfulness, generosity, encouragement, and anger control all impact those around us.
- God's transformation in us isn't just for our benefit. It's meant to show others what God is like and spark curiosity about Him.

**ACTION (How could we live this out?)**

### 1. Step toward your new life.

- Following Jesus is about stepping out of comfort and trusting God to lead us into the new life He promises.

- God began this work in us and will continue to shape us into who we were meant to be.

***<sup>13</sup> For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. (Philippians 2:13 – NLT)***

- Transformation isn't about effort alone:
  - It's trusting that God is working in us, shaping us into who He created us to be.
- This week, focus on taking a step forward:
  - Ask God where He's calling you to grow, whether it's in frustration, speech, relationships, time management, or something else.
  - Instead of focusing on change itself, focus on Jesus and the new life He offers.
  - Ask God to show you one specific step of obedience to become more like Him.
- Change isn't about doing it alone but responding to God's lead with obedience by faith.

## **2. Replace old habits with new ones.**

- Instead of focusing on just what to stop, focus on what to do instead (e.g., speak truth instead of lying, be generous instead of stealing).
- It's not just about stopping bad behaviors but reflecting God's character.
- Replace negative habits:
  - If gossip is a struggle, aim for encouragement.
  - If anger is an issue, take a moment to breathe before reacting.
  - If phone use is excessive, commit to reading your Bible or helping others.
- Be patient with change. Don't give up if it doesn't happen overnight.
- Step more fully into your new life, replacing old habits with godly actions.

## **3. Find your support.**

- Diana Nyad spent zero hours alone during her 53-hour swim, supported by a team of 35 people.

- Approach spiritual transformation like Diana's journey.
  - Don't go it alone.
    - Find someone you trust to support you.
    - Share what God is working to change in your life.
    - Ask for regular check-ins.
    - Be honest when you struggle.
    - Celebrate small victories together.
- Just as we are one body, we support each other in our spiritual journeys.