

## Lesson 2

# New Family Values

### *Subtitle*

## Introduction

Going through the adoption process marks a deeply personal and significant shift in an individual's life. When a person is adopted, it signifies a profound transition from one family to another. This change goes beyond legalities and paperwork; it's about leaving behind old family values, traditions, and identities to embrace new ones fully. As an adopted child becomes part of their new family, they adopt its values, beliefs, and ways of life, which fundamentally shape their understanding of the world and their place within it. This significant change represents a new beginning, filled with love, belonging, and a newfound identity.

Similarly, the New Testament speaks of a spiritual adoption that parallels physical adoption but dives even deeper into the soul. Through faith, believers are adopted into God's family, becoming His children with all the benefits and responsibilities that come with it. This spiritual adoption signifies a deep shift in our identity, values, and allegiances. Just as an adopted child in a new family leaves their old life to fully embrace their new family's values and identity, Christians, reborn in spirit, leave behind their former selves to fully embrace the values, beliefs, and mission of God's kingdom, 2 Corinthians 5.17.

When we come to Christ, God pulls us out of the shadows and brings us into His divine family. We walk away from old ways of thinking, old fears, and doubts. In their place, we embrace a new set of values—love, forgiveness, and hope. Adoption reshapes our identity from the inside out. Our relationship with God, rooted in this newfound identity, becomes the core of our existence. We see God as a loving Father, guiding, protecting, and nurturing us toward a purposeful life. When God brings us into His family, He will transform us, shaping us into someone who seeks to spread love and kindness in every encounter.

Your story as a Christian is a testament to the powerful concept of being chosen and loved. It's about finding where you truly belong and discovering the incredible life that unfolds when you fully embrace your new identity. Being spiritually adopted by God is incredibly personal and impacts how Christians view themselves, their purpose in life, and their relationships with God and those around them. It serves as a powerful lens through which we can understand our new identity in Christ, our inheritance as God's children, and our calling to live according to the values of God's Kingdom. As we further explore this concept, we'll delve into the deep spiritual, emotional, and ethical dimensions of what it truly means to be chosen and adopted by God and how this new life He offers us reshapes everything.

A great passage in our Bibles reflects the profound change that presents itself to the one who has been adopted into Christ. Ephesians 4.17-32 presents us with an efficient picture of mature Christian living. It could be argued that Paul's line of thought here continues from where he left off in 4.3 as he describes the daily walk with Christ.

What does it mean to live a worthy life? What is the new standard of conduct called for here?

## Ephesians 4.17-21: Don't Live Like You Used To

We must remove ourselves from our former lifestyle when we come to Christ. *You should no longer walk as the Gentiles do*, 4.17. To unity and maturity, purity must be applied. As you read here, remember that the thought is carried forth into verses 22-24. Paul is developing his argument of a complete separation between the old and new lives through Christ. There can be no mixing of the two, Matthew 6.24; Luke 9.62. We must be fully committed to moving forward toward maturity.

### *This Begins with Our Thinking*

As you read 4.17b, notice where Paul begins. In the *futility of their thoughts*. Notice how he doesn't start with action. He begins with the mind. Here, he describes the emptiness of those who do not know God. The word implies "vanity, foolishness, and frustration." Faulty thinking had led the Gentiles to have their moral distinctions blurred. As we reflect on Paul's writing earlier in Ephesians, notice how he speaks about their hearts being enlightened by the Spirit.

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, Ephesians 1.17.

Those in the world had not been enlightened. They did not know God or His ways.

Ultimately, this thinking led to their separation from God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart, 4.18. *Ignorance* here should be as "the refusal to know." It is not an excuse; it is a willful sin. You might compare it to Romans 1.18 and 25, where Paul said the Gentiles suppressed the truth by their wickedness and did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God. This ignorance is the product of a hard heart. *Hardening* was often used for a soft mass or tissue that had calcified or turned to stone.

Notice 4.19. What does the hardening process lead to?

- **Callousness.** The NIV refers to the loss of sensitivity. The idea is that a person can move beyond the point of feeling or care. See also 1 Timothy 4.2. Some had their consciences seared like an iron. The Gentiles reached a point where they no longer cared about the immorality that characterized their life.
- **Promiscuity.** This word is the strongest in Greek, denoting depravity, "indicating a total disregard for decency. It encompasses riotous and excessive living, frequently with unrestrained sexual behavior in view."
- **Impurity.** This is a work of the flesh, Galatians 5.19. It is summed up in "moral pollution."
- **A desire** to practice more and more. They coveted new ways to sin. Every different kind of sin was a new delicacy. They had an insatiable appetite for sin.

## ***The Contrast***

What is described in 4.17-19 directly contrasts with the Christian. As we study 4.20-24, these verses are more of a statement of fact than commands, although both are intertwined. Their lives had been made new by the work of Jesus on the cross. However, there was still the expectation to continue to put away the old thinking/actions and embrace the new.

In 4.20, Paul teaches that worldly thinking is not taught in Christ. Instead, we are made new in Christ. The mind and body are inseparably connected. We must change our thoughts if we want to eliminate our old behavior completely. We must conform those thoughts to the truth in Jesus, 4.21. Jesus said, *you shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free*, John 8.32.

## **4.22-24 - Three Essential Directives**

What is essential to living inside the new reality created for us?

We are to:

- Put off our old self.
- Be renewed in the spirit of our mind.
- Put on the new self.

This makes up what could be called a *purpose statement for the new life*. You have been created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Are you living inside this new reality?

### ***Put Off the Old Self***

The old self is the person who lived with sinful desires and was separated from God. Isaiah said:

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away, Isaiah 64.6.

Paul goes into specific detail in describing the old self in Ephesians 2.1-3:

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient. We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also.

That person was put off in baptism, Romans 6.1-6. Your old self has been crucified. It is no more. You have been made new by the blood of Christ, 2 Corinthians 5.17; Colossians 2.11-15. This old person is no longer who you are.

But we still must deal with the flesh. It is corrupted by deceitful desires that lead to sin and error. If we choose not to resist, it will lead us to destruction.

## ***Be Renewed in the Spirit of Your Mind***

Remember what Paul said in 4.17b. He said the Gentiles walked *in the futility of their thoughts*. “Futility” describes the emptiness of those who do not know God. But now look again at 4.23. This presents the most remarkable contrast. Christians are being made new in the attitude of their minds. The renewal in 4.23 is continuous. It is not instantaneous but, instead, a process. It is the internal transformation Paul spoke of in Romans 12.2. Success against conformity to this world begins in your mind.

## ***Put on the New Self***

Remember Isaiah 64.6? This old person **MUST** be put off. Remember, you put on the new self in the water of baptism. You have been recreated in Christ. The phrase *put on* is unique to Paul’s writing. He uses it in:

- Galatians 3.26-27 and Romans 13.14 *put on Christ*.
- Colossians 3.9-10: *put on the new self*.

The idea implies that we allow Jesus to rule in our lives. We live inside our new identity. This also involves present action. We must continue to resist the flesh. We must keep our righteous garments on and avoid the pitfalls that would lead us to stain them.

## ***Why Did God Recreate You?***

Did Paul have Genesis 1.26-27 in mind when he penned the words of Ephesians 4.24b? Notice that you have been created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. From the beginning, God intends us to be righteous and holy before Him, 1.4. Paul’s message is specific here. It urges our need to be consistent with what and who God is.

See the contrast between the *deceived* mind, 4.22c, and the *renewed* mind, 4.23. It’s all about perspective. Consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God, Romans 6.11. God has recreated you to be righteous and holy, as is He.

## **4.25-31 - The New Reality**

In 4.25-31, Paul discusses five things we can practice daily. These are visible demonstrations of what it means to live by our new family values.

### ***Speak the Truth***

In 4.25, Paul says that we need to put away speaking falsehoods. What sharper break could we make than to abandon this way of the world? Our world is full of lies and deceit. People lie all the time. Instead, we are to stand with God, who cannot lie, Hebrews 6.18. We can’t tell half-truths. We must be able to share an honest, close association. Telling lies rips the fabric of unity in the one body. Always be willing to tell the truth.

## **Control Your Anger**

In 4.26, Paul dealt with anger. This is a God-given emotion, but it must be held in check. Uncontrolled and sustained anger against a person is condemned in Scripture. Jesus said *anyone angry with his brother will be subject to judgment*, Matthew 5.22. James said that man's *anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires*, James 1.20.

Anger will come. But when it does, we must not sin. "An action taken in the heat of anger is almost always wrong." And, when it comes, it must be dealt with before the day ends. Few things have higher priority than seeking reconciliation with a brother, Matthew 5.24. Hatred must not be harbored as a growing resentment. This is why Paul said, give no opportunity to the devil, 4.27. Satan will try to exploit the situation when emotions are out of control. Please don't give him room to operate.

## **Do Honest Work**

In 4.28, Paul speaks about the value of work. The idea of productiveness and providing for oneself is seen throughout Scripture. Those who stole (a continuing and habitual problem) were to steal no longer. Instead, they were to work hard for themselves and be on the lookout for others in need. Stealing is to be replaced by hard work—the *dignity of labor and the joy of sharing leave no room for the desire to steal*.

## **Speak for the Building Up**

In 4.29, "Corrupting talk" is an interesting expression. "Corrupting" comes from a word associated with *rotten fruit, decayed trees, and spoiled fish*. Let that imagery sink into your mind for a moment. Jesus said that what comes out of our mouths defiles us because they reveal what is in our hearts, Matthew 15.11, 18. "Corrupt" words are those which do not build up.

Instead of speaking these kinds of words, we are to speak for the building up of others. If we can't say something positive, we should not talk. We need to realize the power of our words and direct them into something that will benefit others.

How have the words of someone else torn at your heart?

How have the encouraging of someone else words built you up?

Why is this so important? Look at 4.30. We can grieve the Spirit by what we speak. See how personal this is. The Spirit speaks, 1 Timothy 4.1; teaches, John 14.26; and intercedes, Romans 8.27. This passage teaches the Spirit has feelings and can be grieved in a movingly personal way. See Isaiah 63.10.

## **Put Away Bitterness**

In 4.31, Paul speaks of bitterness. This is "the temper which cherishes resentful feelings." It is a feeling of hatred and spite. It can lead to wrath and anger. Wrath usually describes the initial explosion of a hot temper. Anger is a "more settled feeling of gnawing hostility." If these things are unchecked, they can lead to clamor and slander. Clamor is shouting out in anger. It usually is governed by the mindset that

the louder a person is, the stronger his point will be. Slander is the act of speaking against. It is “reviling and cursing,” including “ominous and obscene words.”

All of this is summed up in the word malice. This word takes in any attitude or action which intends to harm another person. This type of disposition has no place in the new person created in God's likeness.

## Conclusion

Reflecting on adoption—both in its tangible and spiritual forms—is an enriching experience for the Christian. The path from a sinner to a beloved child of God defines our existence and identity at its very core. Spiritual adoption should become the most intimate chapter of our story. It shows us the purest form of love—that reaches into the shadows and places us in the center of grace, a love that transforms the essence of who we are. God's act of choosing us through the gospel, changing us, and welcoming us into His divine family is a deeply personal testament to His boundless grace and mercy.

Our spiritual adoption reshapes our hearts, renews our minds, and redefines our futures. Through the waters of baptism, we put off our old selves and step into a new reality, clothed in righteousness and holiness, Galatians 3.26-27. This new identity compels us to live out God's values daily, seeking to embody love, forgiveness, and hope in a world thirsty for truth.

As we embrace our place in God's family, let us never forget the incredible gift of belonging we have received. Let this knowledge fuel our purpose, guide our steps, and inspire us to spread the gracious love and kindness we have been given.

## Thought Questions for Discussion

1. How does the concept or practice of adoption help us understand our relationship with God more deeply?
2. In what ways does spiritual adoption by God change our identity? How does this new identity affect our daily lives?
3. Reflecting on the transition from old family values to new ones in physical adoption, how does this compare to the spiritual renewing of our minds in Christ?
4. How does understanding our status as chosen and loved by God impact our sense of belonging and purpose?
5. Why is embracing our new values and identity in God's family necessary? Discuss the challenges that might prevent us from doing so.

6. How can the process of putting off the old self and putting on the new self, as mentioned in Ephesians 4:22-24, be applied in practical, everyday situations?
7. Consider the notion of the old self-being "crucified" in baptism (Romans 6:1-6). What does this signify about the depth of transformation expected in a believer's life?
8. How does the continuous renewal of our minds (Ephesians 4:23) play a crucial role in living out our Christian faith?
9. In the contrast between the Gentile's futility of thinking and the believer's renewal in the spirit of their mind, what does this tell us about the power of our thought patterns on our spiritual health?
10. Discuss the importance of living out the values of God's Kingdom, such as love, forgiveness, and hope, in community with others. How does spiritual adoption influence our relationships and interactions with fellow believers and the broader world?