

Small Group Guide:

"How the Gospel Changes Us"

Week of May 17, 2026

Series: "The Purpose of the Gospel"

Text: Ephesians 4:17 – 5:21



Opening Icebreaker

Share one way you've seen yourself change since becoming a Christian. It can be big or small, recent or from years ago.

Sermon Overview

Ephesians 4 and 5 challenges us to move beyond simply defining the gospel to experiencing its transformative power in every area of our lives. The central question isn't just what we believe about the gospel, but how the gospel has changed us. We're reminded that the evidence of our conversion is transformation—not perfection, but genuine change in how we **think, speak, love, walk, and reach others**. The sermon walks us through Paul's progression from doctrine to practice, showing that our minds must be renewed daily by God's truth rather than conformed to worldly thinking. Our speech should become a vehicle of grace, building others up rather than tearing them down. Our love should mirror Christ's sacrificial love, not the self-serving counterfeits our culture offers. If there's been no change in our thinking, speaking, loving, or walking, we need to examine whether we've truly encountered the gospel's power.

Key Takeaways:

- **The evidence of our conversion is transformation, not perfection but visible change**

- The gospel changes our thinking by renewing our minds through God's Word daily
- The gospel changes our speaking, making our words vehicles of grace rather than destruction
- The gospel changes how we love, moving us toward sacrificial, Christ-like love rather than self-serving counterfeits
- The gospel changes how we walk, calling us to live carefully and wisely as children of light
- The gospel changes who we reach, compelling us to engage the darkness with the light of Christ
- Believers must daily "put off" the old self and "put on" the new self created in Christ's likeness
- Sanctification is a continuous, present-tense action requiring daily surrender to the Holy Spirit
- Gospel transformation makes us witnesses in the world, not through retreat but through engagement
- Our changed lives become the most powerful testimony to those still living in darkness

Discussion Questions

1. The gospel changes our thinking

(Ephesians 4:17-21)

What does it mean practically to be renewed in the spirit of your mind daily, and what voices or influences are competing with God's Word for control of your thinking?

Paul describes the "futility of their minds" and "darkened understanding" of those living apart from God. How would you describe your thinking before Christ? What specific thought patterns have changed since then?

Verse 23 says to "be renewed in the spirit of your mind." This is present tense—continuous action. What does daily mind renewal look like practically in your life?

The pastor mentioned we live in a world where we can't trust the news, media, politics, or social media. How does filling our minds with God's Word provide an anchor in confusing times?

What voices are currently shaping your understanding of yourself, others, and God? Are there any you need to turn down or turn off?

2.The gospel changes our speaking

(Ephesians 4: 25-32)

Paul says our words should "give grace to those who hear" (v. 29). When was the last time someone's words gave you grace? How did it feel? How can you be that person for someone else this week?

The sermon mentioned that "your words can be a vehicle of grace or a bulldozer to somebody's heart." Which recent conversations of yours were grace-giving? Which might have been bulldozing?

Look at verse 32: "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." How does remembering what Jesus did for us change how we speak to and about others?

Before speaking this week (including texts and social media), pause and ask: "Will this give grace to the hearer?"

3. The gospel changes our loving (Ephesians 5:1-7)

Paul says to "walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us" (v. 2). Christ's love was selfless, costly, and sacrificial. How is this different from the world's definition of love?

The pastor listed counterfeits to genuine love: sexual immorality, impurity, covetousness, crude joking. What do all these have in common? (Answer: they're self-serving, they take rather than give)

Instead of these counterfeits, Paul says "let there be thanksgiving" (v. 4). How is gratitude a weapon against lust and greed?

Are there any "cheap substitutes" you've been settling for instead of Christ-honoring love?

4. The gospel changes our walking (Ephesians 5:15-17)

Paul uses the word "walk" four times in this passage: walk worthy, walk in love, walk as children of light, walk carefully. Why do you think he uses "walk" instead of "run" or "stand"?

"Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil" (v. 15-16). What does it mean to "buy up the opportunity" each day?

Verse 18 says "be filled with the Spirit." This isn't a one-time event but a daily filling. How do we position ourselves to be filled daily?

5. The gospel changes who we reach (Ephesians 5: 8-14)

What does this mean for your Monday morning—your workplace, school, neighborhood?

Verse 11 says to "expose the works of darkness." The pastor clarified this doesn't mean moral denunciation from a safe distance but engagement through our transformed lives. How does a changed life expose darkness more effectively than arguments?

Practical Application

This Week's Challenge:

Choose 1-2 applications to focus on this week:

For Your Mind:

- **Start each day reading one chapter of Scripture before checking your phone**
- **Memorize Ephesians 4:23-24 this week**
- **Identify one lie you've been believing and replace it with biblical truth**

For Your Mouth:

- **Before speaking (or texting/posting), ask: "Will this give grace?"**
- **Speak a specific word of encouragement to three people this week**
- **If needed, have that hard conversation you've been avoiding—speak truth in love**

For Your Love:

- **Practice thanksgiving daily—write down 3 things you're grateful for**

- **Perform one sacrificial act of love that costs you something (time, money, comfort)**
- **Confess any area where you've settled for counterfeit love**

For Your Walk:

- **Set a daily time and place to be filled with the Spirit through prayer and Scripture**
- **Identify one area of careless walking and create a specific plan to walk carefully**
- **Ask a trusted friend to hold you accountable in one area of your walk**

For Your Reach:

- **Pray daily for your "one person" who doesn't know Jesus**
- **Invite someone to church, small group, or coffee to talk about faith**
- **Look for one opportunity this week to let your light shine in a dark place**

Closing Thought *"The gospel that changed you is the gospel that can reach them. And they're far more likely to be reached through a transformed life than through an argument."*

For Further Exploration

Read Ephesians 5:22-6:20 in preparation for next week's message on how the gospel sustains us