

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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God's Process of Renewal

Ephesians 4: 17-24

17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

20 That, however, is not the way of life you learned 21 when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Well good morning everyone. Happy New Year! So glad to be here with you. How about that big win this weekend? Yes! I didn't know you'd be as excited as I was about the big Wake Forest football win, right. We were supposed to play the Aggies. They chickened out and we ended up beating Rutgers. No I'm not talking about Wake. The Bears - it was awesome! It's a new year - a lot to be excited about. I'm getting my braces off in five days. Yeah, I'm so pumped! Anyway, it's a great new year. Excited to be here with you Harris Creek, whether you are online or in this room. Thankful to be together again this year.

Is there anything that you have in your possession that you have carried with you from life stage to life stage? From season to season? Maybe if you moved, if your family moves, if you go to college, this thing goes with you wherever you go? Maybe it's something you got when you were younger and it's always been like something that makes a move. I had something that went with me from my college years to my single young adult years and then marriage. And it's kind of a weird thing. It's a wooden paddle. And so this is no flex, no big deal, you know I was President of my fraternity at Wake Forest University. I'm just like the rest of you even though I was the President. But I have carried this paddle with me from place to place year after year after year. Brought it from college every time I moved, in between like freshman year, sophomore year. It made it to my single years. It made it into engagement. When I got married, moved in with my wife, you know I brought it with me in the marriage. And so this silly little paddle (shows picture) made it with me - I counted it out - fifteen different times. It looked a little bit like that. You put the pin of the fraternity at the top, and then everyone signs it when you go through pledghehood. And for some reason, this thing was the most valuable thing in my possession from all my years at school. More important than my degree. More important than

my memories. This little piece of wood went with me fifteen times. Now I wish I could say that paddle was the only thing that my wife inherited in marriage. It wasn't the only piece of baggage I brought with me. I brought a lot of stuff with me - some good, some not so good. But this thing, and the other things in my life, keep making moves with us.

We all have things that just go through life with us. And we're at the beginning of a new year. It's a natural time to think through what do I want to keep? What do I want to get rid of? What do I need to add to my life? It's the season of new year's resolutions. And so, you know, gym memberships are you know all up and to the right. And everyone's getting a Peloton. And you know, I don't know about you, but it's 2022, I see that everywhere, and you know this is the year I'm going to kick the old habit. And I'm going to write that book - 80% of people say they are going to write a book. This is the year I'm going to go write that book. And, you know, I'm going to go - these things are like contradict each other - I'm going to save a lot more money and pay off debt, but I'm going to go travel the world. Right, and I'm going to spend more time with friends and I'm going to spend more time at home, and like all these things. It's a new year, we make resolutions. But inevitably we all go through this time, and the things that we resolve to do, the goals that we have, they fall short for so many of us. And as I leave, and we leave 2021, and move forward to 2022, I'm thinking of things that I want to leave behind. And in many ways '21 was a great year for me personally. A lot of changes, a lot of new habits, a lot of things I am grateful for, but I also look back and go well there is that thing that I keep bringing with me. And now I am 48 years old and you know it just keeps going forward in life with me, and I am kind of confused. We're like why would I experience such great victory in some areas, but other areas of life I just kind of feel hopeless. And I know I'm not alone. I know we all have areas where we can celebrate and we are excited. And other areas where we are like, am I ever really going to change?

And today's message is for anyone who wants to become more like Jesus Christ and needs some hope. I want to talk about a new kind of resolution that I think we all need to corporately make if we are going to become more like Jesus Christ. We need some reminders that God can change us. Not in our power, but in His. We need the reminder that we don't have to bring the paddles of our life forward all the time. We don't have to bring all the baggage with us. We can leave some of it behind. And we can become new. In fact, we are going to talk about this idea of renewal. God's process for renewal.

Now that's a "churchy" word. What does it mean to be renewed? We hear that often. And I'm really going to define it very simply. It is leaving behind the things that are not of God, and putting on the things that are of God. And so we have some work to do. We're going to look at the book of Ephesians. Open up your Bibles, open up your phones, to Ephesians chapter four. It's towards the end of your New Testament. If you don't know where to find it, scroll down towards the bottom on your phone. The book of Ephesians is a short letter, a six chapter letter, written by the Apostle Paul. Paul wrote more than half of the New Testament, wrote a bunch of letters in the New Testament. Ephesians is an incredible book. And Paul wrote this book to a group of believers in Ephesus, a body of Christ. And he was essentially saying, "Here's the deal. Look you used to be separated from God, but now you know Jesus and you are richer than you ever realize. Not financially, but rich in truth". And he's saying the gospel of Jesus Christ can change you.

And so he spends the first 3 chapters, as Paul often does, a lot of doctrine. Here's what you believe. Here's what's sure about you. Here's right. And now in light of that, here's how you live. And so chapter 4 is when he pivots from kind of doctrine to how we live it out. How we walk it out. And so we are going to be in verses 17 to 24 of chapter 4. I'm going to read those to you in a minute and I want you to see we've got 4 points this morning, not the traditional 3, four points. And 1 is that Paul wants us to stop living like a non-believer. He is going to tell us, number 2, to put off the old. Number 3 is to renew our minds with Christ. And then fourth is to put on the new. And so 4, 17 through 24. Paul writes **17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord.** So Paul is saying here's what I am telling you and God's got my back. He is saying the same thing. He insists on it **that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.** So Paul starts off right away. He doesn't just say you may leave it behind. You can. He says you **MUST** stop living as a non-believer. Living as a Gentile.

1. Stop Walking Like a Non-Believer

So he uses the word Gentile. The Gentile is somebody who is separated from God. They don't know the truth of the Gospel. They do whatever they want. They go wherever they want to go. They live however they want to live. They pleasure themselves however they want to find pleasure. He goes on to say: **18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.** They can't understand if everything's dark. They don't see. They can't understand. They are separated from God. They're ignorant. Their hearts are hard. And because of that they have lost all sensitivity. **19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.** So a non-believer does whatever they want to do. And Paul says you must no longer live that way.

I don't know about you but we need that reminder. I need that reminder because there are times when I just want to do whatever I want to do. I want to watch what I want to watch. Spend my money how I want to spend my money. Spend my time like I want to spend my time. I want to give into desires. I want to get frustrated. I want to, like we have this tendency in us that wants to continue to live like the old person. Like we are separated from God. And Paul says you've got to stop living that way. We are so rich in Christ, but we live like we're poor. We are free out of prison, but we act like we're in chains. And Paul is saying you must stop living in that way.

Throughout the book of Ephesians, I love the way that Paul does this, there are at least five different times when he uses the words "walk" and "live" interchangeably. And he says you used to walk and live this way, but now you walk and live this way. In Ephesians 2:1-2 it says: **1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.** But now in 4:1 **As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.** I want you to walk in a way that is worthy of being a follower of Jesus Christ. In 5:2 **and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.** 5:8 **For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.** Then 5:15 **Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise, but as wise.**

Repeatedly Paul tells the Ephesian believers to stop living in the way of the world. And he's got that word for us as well - that we need to stop. That we must stop living as non-believers. We've got to live as followers of Jesus Christ. He continues in verse 20 and 21: **20 That, however, is not the way of life you learned 21 when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.** So we have some good news. We no longer need to walk in the way of the world. We can walk as followers of Jesus Christ. And he says this is not just a cognitive exercise for Paul. He doesn't just say this is, here's what you need to know about Jesus. He says here's what you need to know about Jesus and then this is what it looks like to follow Him. We've got that same choice. Do we just want to know about Him? Or do we actually want to know Him?

So I'm the proud dad of four teenage sons. One is 13. One is 15, and then I have twins who are 17. I'm going to talk about my twins for a moment. That doesn't mean that I don't love all four equally. I love all four equally, but my twins are a little bit of an interesting case study in what this looks like. And so my twins - I can tell you a whole lot about them - so their names are Duncan and Drew. Duncan Nathaniel Kedersha. Andrew Dennis Kedersha. We call him Drew. My boys were born on May 26, 2004. That was the 147th day of the year in 2004. It was a Wednesday. They were born on Gaston Avenue. Not on the street, but they were born in Baylor Hospital on Gaston Avenue in Dallas, Texas. The doctors who delivered them, the primary doctor was Dr. Tracy Hayes. The other doctor was a resident at the time. Her name is Lori McGregor. Dr. Lori McGregor, a good friend of mine. They delivered the twins. Duncan was born at 12:22 p.m. A whole lot of black hair. I used to look the same way, but a lot of black hair on his head. He was 6 pounds 4 ounces. He was 20 inches long and his head was 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches around. Duncan used to like curl up on my chest. And so I would take Duncan as a baby and his head would be here and his feet would be here and he would be facing me. And he would just sit like for hours. His little butt, you know he had his diaper on, his little butt sticking out in the air. And so that's Duncan. He's in this room and is probably mortified right now.

His twin brother, Drew, was born one minute later at 12:23 p.m. Drew was a little bit smaller - 5 pounds 10 ounces, 19 inches. Head was only 13 inches instead of 13 and $\frac{3}{4}$. Born one minute later. Drew did not have the magnificent full head of hair that Duncan had. Drew had just like two or three really long hairs. And Drew was a colicky baby. He screamed all the time. I always said he looked, if you remember Lord of the Rings, he looked a little bit like Gollum or Smeagol. Like with just writhing and screaming all the time. That's 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ years ago. They are now, will turn 18 in May, and I love my boys. I love them deeply. And I don't know just about them. I really know them now. Right there, I know what they're like. I know their wirings. I know that Drew now has a great set of hair thankfully. He doesn't cry and scream all the time. He is one of the most amazing kids, people I've met in my life. Same with his twin. Same like their brothers. Right, Drew is gifted and he's musical and he's creative and he's really smart. And you know he's got all these passions and desires. "I'm either going into commercial music or computer science." And like, so much smarter than me. And like an amazing kid. I know what drives him. I know his desires.

His twin brother, very, very gifted and intelligent, and like extroverted. Loves people as well as anyone I know. He's fun. He's really smart, wants to go to Baylor. He like leads the - you know he's all excited about being a bear in the Fall. I love both of my boys. They couldn't be anymore

different from one another. Duncan's whole break has revolved around the football game last night. Like could not wait for the Sugar Bowl. Drew you know jokingly said "What football game is tomorrow night - but was tonight?" Not too far from the truth. I mean they're so different from one another. And whereas in May 26th of 2004, I knew about them, now I really really know them and I love them. And I'm passionate to continue to build my relationship with them.

For many of us, it's like that with Jesus. Where we know about Him. Like we know the parables. We know the stories. We know the Scriptures. And we know about Him, but we really don't know Him. We don't love Him. We're not passionate about Him. We kind of care, but we kind of don't. And Paul is saying when we have the gospel of Jesus Christ - when we know Jesus - we don't just know about Him. We know Him. And Paul is exhorting the Ephesian believers, and exhorting us, to stop living like the non-believer. And not just to know Jesus, but to know and love and follow Jesus. When you do, everything in your life changes. When you know and love and follow Jesus Christ.

Now we are going to shift a little bit. And Paul is going to tell us what do we do about the fact that we're not supposed to live that way. And now that we really know - not just know Him but we know Him personally, we have a relationship with Him - what do we do? He's actually going to challenge us in the way that we dress and what we wear. So in verse 22 Paul says: **22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;**

2. Put Off the Old

Put off anything that is not of God. We're in this really strange tension now while we live on Earth, where we are made new in Christ but we're still in the same bodies. We still have the same desires and temptations. We're in this broken world that tries to pull us off sides. And Paul is saying I don't want you to just adjust your clothes. Don't just, you know, pull your zipper up and button your collar and, you know, tuck your shirt in and adjust your tie, tie your shoes. He is saying don't just make adjustments. You've got to put that stuff off. You need to cut it off. You need to remove it from your life. You need to get rid of it. The author of Hebrews writes in Hebrews 12:1 and 2: **1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** See, if we keep all this stuff on us, if we do not put it off, we're not going to be able to run the race that God has for us. This stuff holds us back and keeps us from pursuing Him. It keeps us locked in sin where we wallow in pity and shame. And Paul says stop living like a non-believer and put that stuff off. Take it off and get rid of it.

So I was thinking through what might that look like for you. What does it look like for me? And so a few examples of things that you might need to put off. Whereas if you think about your life, and baggage that you need to leave behind. There are some of us in this room, present company included, who struggle with pride. And pride often looks a few different ways. One is we think

we are pretty amazing, We think more highly of ourselves than we ought. That I'm the best at this. And I'm the greatest. And I am God's gift to this church. I'm God's gift to my spouse. I am God's gift to my parents. We think more highly of ourselves than we ought.

Some of us struggle with pride in a different way. Where we don't think about ourselves too highly, we just think about ourselves too often. And that's the form of pride that I struggle with. I come in here and, you know, what are they going to think of me? Well what's my message going to be like? I'm not like J.P. I'm not as good as J.P. What are they going to think? And instead of thinking of you, all I care about is what do people think of me. That is just theoretical. I don't think about that at all, but maybe it might look that way for some of you, right. We struggle with pride.

Some of us it might be greed. I just can never get enough. I need more. I need more. I need more. I need to hoard. It might look like lust, where you have inappropriate thoughts about somebody who is not your spouse. It might look like gossip, where you don't talk to people, you talk about them. It might look like grumbling. I did a lot of grumbling the last few days, if I'm honest. Like it's a privilege to get to teach God's word to you today. But to my shame, there are times the last couple days when I'm like man I wish I could just watch football. Instead I've got to study the Bible and preach. Like how dumb is that? I'm like just grumbling and whining instead of embracing the opportunity I get to teach the word of God to people I love and care about - the body of Christ - I'm grumbling. So maybe that's your issue. Maybe it's a selfishness, where you just put your needs above everyone else's.

And Paul's challenge to you, Paul's challenge to me, is that we don't just dance around it. We need to put that stuff off. And I'd love to not be a grumbler, or to be prideful, or to be greedy, or lustful, or a glutton. But Paul is saying put that stuff off. Let me be abundantly clear to you. The reason you do that is not to earn God's favor. It's not to say look what I've gotten rid of. Aren't I good enough? Look at my good deeds. Am I good enough for you now God? We can never be good enough. Friend, Isaiah says our good deeds and righteous acts are like filthy rags to God. Romans said that there is no one who is good apart from Christ. And so we don't do those things to show off to God and present to Him that we are good enough for Him. I want to make those changes because I want the fullness of life that comes from following Jesus. Right, I don't want to give my life to those things anymore. I want to trust when God tells us, through the Apostle Paul, to put that stuff away.

3. Renew Our Minds With Christ

Verse 23, after we stop living like a non-believer, after we put off the old, again we want to be remade. We want to be new again, renewed. Putting aside the things of the world and putting on God, Paul tells us in verse 23: **23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds.** So we need to renew our thinking. I love that short little verse. He says we need to be made new in the attitude of our minds. And so let's talk about the mind first. The way that we think, is the way that we live. Right, what we think determines the way that we act. And Paul is saying you need to renew your minds. Renew your thinking. And he uses the word the "attitude of your mind", which is a little bit of a like I think about our attitude - a bad attitude, a good attitude - but when he says the attitude of your mind that means what's the desire? What is your natural tendency of your

thinking? What's your inclination? What leaning do you typically have? And he says the natural leaning that you have needs to be changed. You need to renew the way that you think. And so a couple of different verses, I love that Paul addresses the way that we think throughout scripture. In Philippians 4:8, Paul says: **8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things.** That is not where my mind typically goes. And so Paul is saying you need to renew your thinking. You need to think in a different way.

One of the things that I'm most proud of with this church, and proud of in a good way, is our staff. And I'm the old person on our staff, and so I get the privilege of just seeing how God uses people who are younger than me, and younger than a lot of us. And, you know, a few people come to mind. Bree, a lot of you've not come to know her yet. But Bree is one of the most positive people I know. The way that she encourages other people and celebrates the gifts of others. And I think Bree is probably 19 or 20 years old. I go I need more of that kind of mentality in my life. Where I celebrate. Where I focus on the right and the positive.

Nate is another one. Nate's just not, he's not just an amazing communicator from up here. Nate is one of the most encouraging people I have ever met in my life. And I go there's something different about the way that those two think. They think about what's right and what's noble, what's true, what's excellent. And we need more of that. I need more of that.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:5: **5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.** So Paul was telling us in that passage we have these weird thoughts that enter us that aren't true. Like a thought comes into our head, and when it's not of Christ, you need to take that thought captive. I love the description in this verse. That you would take captive those thoughts that are not of Christ. He says, like, when a bad thought comes your way it's like, I picture it this way is I've got a hammer and I'm just going to town on those things. Like a bad thought comes in, I'm not going to entertain it. I'm going to crush it.

Not too long ago in the green room before the first service, and in my mind, I'm going I'm not good enough. I shouldn't preach. I'm like this is a waste of everyone's time. And those thoughts come in my head, and I go man I'm taking those thoughts captive. They're garbage and I'm going to beat them up. And so I take that hammer and I get rid of them. Romans 12:2, Paul again; **2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.** We need to renew our minds.

One thing that I am so thankful for about our church is all of the opportunities that we offer for you to renew your minds. I'm going to give you a couple of them, but there's a whole lot more. You can find all of them on our website. But every single Monday night here at Harris Creek, we offer a ministry called Regen. Joe just told you about it in the announcements. It is probably the safest place in this city to work on any habit, hurt, addiction. For you to be reminded of what's right and true about who you are in Christ. That's every single Monday night.

Some of you have been coming to Harris Creek but you are not plugged in. You are streaming from online but you haven't taken the step to jump in. You can renew your minds by becoming a member, by becoming a part of a life group here. That's coming up in January and February.

We have opportunity for men to gather with other men and learn the truth of God's word. To renew our minds with other men. For the ladies, we have opportunities for women in Sisterhood. There's a night coming up where you can learn more about some topics. There's a study coming up in February where you can renew your minds with other women. We offer classes for marriages, to help strengthen and renew marriages. Every Sunday, if you've got kids, during our kid's ministries right across the way, learning truth. Their minds are being renewed. Every Sunday night our youth gather either here, or all across this city in small groups, where their minds are renewed in truth.

And then if I can just tell you one thing to do, this one fits every single one of us, it's to renew our minds through God's word. We offer the Bible reading plan. And so biblereadingplan.org, I think. And so, but just Google it - Bible reading plan Harris Creek. We just started the book of Job yesterday. And so, here's the good news, you are only one chapter behind. And so you sign up for this. You get an email in your inbox with a chapter of the Bible, a devotional, and then some questions. And the good thing is we don't have a new one today. And so you can catch up today and then be on track with everyone else tomorrow. And so renew your mind with truth. And so Paul says stop living like a non-believer, put off the old, renew your mind with truth.

And then he's going to say this next in verse 24: **24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.** The old self is corrupted by deceitful desires, but we are created new in Christ, in righteousness and holiness.

4. Put On The New

So what does that look like? Paul has a similar passage in Colossians chapter 3. It says: **12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.** Bearing with one another. Forgiving one another. Loving one another. It's almost like you're getting in front of your wardrobe and you're saying what am I going to put on today. I intentionally get in front of my closet this morning and I go I'm going to wear my Nike shoes with the green swoosh in honor of Baylor. Like that was an intentional choice. And that's what I'm going to put on my feet today. Paul gives us this similar idea of you sit in front of these our tributes to God and you say what am I going to put on. And so we have a choice. Right, we either put on pride and greed and lust, or we do this, we do the opposite. We go, instead of putting on pride, I'm going to put on humility. Yeah, I'm going to ask God to make me humble. Say God I don't care what it takes, I just want to put the needs of others before myself. I want to think about you more than I want to think about me. And so God please make me humble. I know in Philippians 2: I want to do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility I want to make others more important than myself. I know that God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. He shows favor to the humble. And so God I don't want You opposing me. I want favor, I want grace from You. And so please help make me humble.

And then God, I'm tired of being lustful. Help me to be self-controlled. I'm tired of being greedy. And so, I'm going to just give. I'm going to give away money. I'm going to give away my time. I'm going to be generous. And I'm tired of grumbling. And so, God I want to be someone who is thankful, who lives a life of gratitude. And so every day I'm going to list out things that I'm grateful for. God, I need to get rid of this old, and I need Your help to put on the new. And then you invite others into that. That's the gift of community, of your life group, is you get to say I struggle in these areas and I need you to help me become more like Christ. What are the things I need to do? How can I put on more of Jesus? How can I put on the things of the Lord, so I can leave the other stuff behind? If we want to renew, and I know we do, it's a new year. It's a new opportunity for us to be made new. And so we need to stop living like a non-believer. We need to put off the old. We need to renew our minds with truth. And we need to put on the new.

That paddle, that I told you about in the beginning of the message, I wish I had it here with me so I could show it to you. But I've got some good news. I finally threw that thing away, right. We moved from Dallas to Waco July of 2020. And you know, I'm sitting in front of all my stuff. And what gets packed? And what gets left behind? And I go, this piece of wood is signed by a bunch of people I never really liked in the first place. They hazed me. They, you know, picked on me. They called me Chewbacca all the time, and so I had to make the Chewy noise. Every time they said make the noise, I had to make the noise. And haven't seen them in years and candidly it reminded me of the four hardest years of my life. And so, I'm like do I want to pack this thing with me? Bring it to Waco so that I can be reminded of the years when I hated my life? Then, no I'm leaving that garbage behind. And so I left it. I didn't leave it in the home for the new owners. I threw it away. Okay, and I got rid of that thing. That paddle is no longer with me. I know that's like something really small and insignificant. You're like it's just a little piece of wood. Why is that important? What I have come to realize is that it's really symbolic of the way that God works. It's that we've got to put off the old. We've got to get rid of it. So you get rid of that and you renew your mind of truth and you put on the new. And I'm so so grateful. You know my family moved here in July of 2020. I just shared that. And, I mean, God has been doing some incredible things. Like if we really do define renewal as leaving behind the things of the world and putting on the things of God. Leaving behind the things that don't honor Him. Renewing our minds and putting on God. This place has been an amazing place, for my family, for me personally, to become more like Jesus. We're so grateful for all that God is doing, the way that he has renewed us.

And here's my challenge is I want to invite you into that as well. For this is the perfect time to think through where do I need to be renewed in my life. Where are the things that I just need to leave behind? That I need to leave the old behind. I need to renew my mind and I need to put something new on. I need to become more like Christ. So I'm just going to give you a minute to reflect on your own. What's the thing that you need to put off this year? What do you need to cut out of your life? For most of us it's probably pretty obvious. Where do we need to renew our minds? Where am I believing things that just aren't true? What do I need to add on? What are the areas of my life where I'm lacking in being more and more like Jesus?

As I thought through this, you know, one thing immediately came to mind for me. So I've been married twenty years. Chris and I just celebrated twenty years, and I've been doing marriage ministry for a long time - for fifteen years. And we've got a really good marriage. I'm very thankful for it. And I've read a lot. And I've learned a lot about marriage, and so I can have a good marriage in my own power and strength. Like I know what the scriptures say, and I know what the best books say, and so I'm going to go do those things. I'm going to rely on my own power and knowledge to have a great marriage. Somewhere along the way recently I got that's just the wrong way to think, because I'm going to fail at some point. This is not about my own self-reliance. I need to be reminded of being dependent on the Lord. And then I've realized that if I'm going to have a great marriage, it's going to come by the Lord. Right, and so I've read this statistic. You know, we know that divorce rates are 50% for couples inside the church and outside the church. But if a married couple prays together out loud on a consistent basis, the divorce rate is less than 1%. So I want more of that in my life. And so I want to pray for my marriage every single day. And so a few months ago I set an alarm for 9:15 p.m. We got married on September 15th, and so 9:15 p.m. every single day. I've probably missed a few days in the last few months, but I'm praying consistently for my marriage. You know I'm not going to rely on my power to have a great marriage. I'm going to renew my mind and I'm going to lean and depend on the Lord and ask God to change me. Ask God to change my wife where she needs to change. Ask God to use our marriage for the good of others and for God's glory. I'm not going to rely on myself. I need to be renewed.

So what's it going to be for you? What is it this year where maybe you're relying on your own strength and your own power? Where you need to put off the old? You need to be reminded of what's new and what's right, and you need to put on the new. I suggest if you want a new year's resolution, it's to do exactly that. To follow God's process for change. We put off the things that are not of God. We consistently remind ourselves of the truth of the gospel, and we put on Jesus. And when we do those things, I'm like so excited to see what God can do. Right, what's He going to do in my marriage if I pray every single day for a year for my marriage? What's He going to do in your family, in your life group, with your roommates? What's He going to do in your workplace, in our community? What's He going to do in and through this church if we would be renewed the right way? So my suggestion, I am all for new year's resolution, it's I resolve to follow God's process for change. That I'm going to ask Him to get rid of the old. Get rid of the things that are not of Him. To renew my mind in truth, and to help me every single day to put on the new. Everything that honors God. Let me pray that I would, and that you would do that, in 2022.

God, I thank you for your word, and just the way that you inspired the Apostle Paul, through your Spirit, to capture these words. And how thousands of years later that we would sit in a room, or stream online, and we get to hear your words that instruct us and teach us and guide us. Thank you for saving and preserving this letter to the Ephesians. Thank you for the courage of the Apostle Paul to remind us of what is right and true. God, I pray that you would help us to repent. To walk away from our own efforts and our own way, and instead to rely and lean on you completely. I pray that in the times when we are tempted to follow the things of the world, to keep the old person on, that you would help us to remove it and cut it off, to remove it. And I pray when we're stuck in just bad thinking, and bad theology, and "stinking thinking", that you would help our minds be renewed by truth. That you would renew the attitude of our minds. And

God, that every single day that you would help us to put on the new. To not dress in the old way, but to dress in a way that honors you, that are things that are of you. And God, in that process I pray that you would use us for the good of others, for your glory. Thank you for the truth of the gospel. Thank you for a new year. All things are new in you, and so we thank you for it. In your name we pray. Amen.