

Ephesians 4:17-5:2

Relationships are not easy. They can be very difficult, messy, and confusing. They can be sources of some of our greatest highs and lows in life. These are often characteristics of relationships we choose. In Christ, we are called to do community, to be the family of God with people from all walks of life (socio-economic status, nationality, education, etc.). This can make relations incredibly more challenging. However, these relationships are worth fighting for. In fact, Jesus died for such a community to exist.

In the last half of Chapter 4, Paul continues to describe the sort of “walk” that is worthy of our calling, especially as a community of faith. Paul describes new life in Christ, which leaves the practices of the old life and takes on the character and practices of Christ. We are called to be “imitators of Christ,” as such our behaviors change as we relate towards others.

It truly is a glorious call to be a community of faith that is distinctively marked by God. A community marked by who it belongs to and what it’s for.

Reflect on the following questions: (as always, you may not get through all questions. That is okay! Please allow room for the Holy Spirit to dictate and guide the conversation)

1. Paul is very clear about the behaviors of a gentile, as described in vs. 17-19. Why do you think he paints such a dark picture of the heart and mind of people who engage in this type of behavior? (c.f. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Romans 1:21-23, Galatians 4:8. John 3:19-21)
2. How is living for the things of this world futile in our thought processes, cloud our judgment, and alienate us from the life that God has for us?
3. As believers, we live in the “already, not yet” tension. In Christ, we are a new creation with all things being made new, yet we still live with our old nature. How do you see these two personalities warring? Do you feel the battle between the old/new self? What “old self” habits do you struggle with since you became a believer?
4. Read Ephesians 4:20-24. What are some of the most remarkable truths that you have learned about Jesus in relation to you? What does it mean to put off your pre-Jesus conduct? (c.f. Romans 8:6-9)
5. In verse 25-32 the aspects of the new nature are described. We are called to no more falsehood (4:25), no more anger (v 26-27), no more stealing (4:28) no more unwholesome talk (4:29), no more grieving the Holy Spirit (4:30) no more malice (4:31). Unpack the stipulations of these as they relate to the life of a believer. Which one of these comes easy and which one is a struggle? Do you feel like these are absolutes or can there be grey areas?
6. How does having the perspective of God’s forgiveness and love towards us aid in helping us to be kind, tenderhearted, and able to forgive others when they have wronged us?