



## First Baptist Church Selmer

JESUS VS CULTURE: BUILDING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW • STOP! • EPHESIANS 4:17-24 •  
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### MAIN POINT

In order to truly think differently, our minds must be renewed daily by the Word of God.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**How much time do you spend daily reading God's Word? Be honest.**

**If you had to rate your discipline to read or study God's Word, what grade would you give yourself? (1 - Poor; 10- Excellent)**

As believers, we are called to be disciples of Jesus Christ. To be disciples, we must consistently sit under the teaching of the One discipling us or others who are pointing up to that One. Unfortunately, on most days we are influenced by worldly, ungodly wisdom significantly more than we are influenced by God's Word.

Sooner or later, we need to consider how to make changes in our minds that will shape the way we think. "It is impossible for any Christian who spends the bulk of his time, month after month, week upon week, day in and day out, consuming media to have a Christian mind" (R. Kent Hughes - *Disciplines of a Godly Man*).

We are going to look today at the importance of followers of Jesus to read, study, listen, and sit under the teaching of the Word of God.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

## HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 4:17-19.

*"17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.*

**What does Paul refer to that leads the Gentiles to walk in the ways of the world?**

**Have you ever heard the statement, "As one thinks, so he is"? What does it mean? Is it true?**

Our minds affect us even more than we may realize. Two things must be understood to realize the effects of sin on our minds.

First, *common grace* is the good kindness of God that he shows to all people regardless of whether they have experienced the salvation that comes through Jesus Christ alone. It is called common because it comes to all people - believers and unbelievers alike. We see this particular doctrine throughout Scripture but one of the clearest places is *Matthew 5:45b*, "...For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust." Scripture teaches that blessings can flow from certain types of worldly wisdom such as the production of useful information and wealth (1 Cor. 1:26).

Secondly, because we are sinners, our minds do not operate as they should. This doctrine is known as the *noetic effects of sin*. Paul speaks specifically to it in verse 18 stating we are "*darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.*" In simple terms, because we are sinners, we are not capable of thinking clearly and rightly.

Romans 1:18-23 teaches that God has revealed himself to humanity in the things that he has made, but human beings in their sin suppress that truth. (Heath Lambert - *A Theology of Biblical Counseling*)

**How sobering is it to think that you can't trust yourself to think clearly about things?**

**What standard of truth then should be used to lead and guide our thinking?**

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 4:20-24.

*20 But that is not the way you learned Christ! - 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, 22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness." (ESV)*

**What evidence could you point to as examples of Christ's sanctifying and cleansing work seen in how you think?**

**What areas of your thinking are still darkened and not submitted to Christ?**

Verse 20 points to a very important truth. It is one thing to learn about Christ, but knowledge alone does not lead to a changed life. It has been said that the greatest thing for a believer to realize in their walk with Christ is that true change is only 18 inches away, the distance between your head and your heart. A true follower of Christ will not only know Him but their actions will reflect Him.

Paul mentions then in verses 22-24 exactly what a believer must do to live in a way that reflects God's glory. It is "*to put off your old self... be renewed in the spirit of your minds... and to put on the new self...*" This sequence is more than just a bullet point way of getting right with the Lord but is rather a pattern for the life of the believer.

**Why is it important to "*put off the old self*"? What does this look like in your life?**

**How must someone's mind be renewed? Who do you think performs this action?**

**What things should "*be put on*" in the life of a believer?**

The complete renewing of our minds involves making the changes that accurately reflect a transformed life in Christ (Romans 12:1-2). The method of change in Scripture is the replacement of sinful behaviors with God-honoring actions... God challenges us to recognize who we are and who we were. The phrase "*be renewed in the spirit of your minds*" indicates that the Put off/Put on process is not something that can be done in the flesh, but requires God's renewal. As "*new creations*" in Christ we possess the power to live the sanctified life in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20). (John Babler - *Counseling by the Book*)

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What steps do you need to take to continue the process of changing the way you think by renewing your mind with God's Word?**

**How has your thinking changed since becoming a believer in Jesus?**

**What still needs to change in our life based on the put-off, renewing of your mind, and put-on process that we discussed today?**

## PRAYER

Take a few minutes with the group to pray for each other. Ask for God's help in the ongoing process of letting God change us into people who think differently.

## COMMENTARY

| EPHESIANS 4:17-24

4:17. Paul's word "therefore" could be paraphrased: "in light of your calling as a Christian." He typically used the verb "testify" to introduce a solemn pronouncement (see Acts 20:26; Gal. 5:3). Because the apostle lived in the Lord, he could urge others to live this way as well. The letter was written mainly to those who by background were Gentiles, but by grace, they had become different. They used to walk "according to this worldly age" (2:2); now they were to "walk worthy" (4:1). Their former identity was to be put aside now that they were in Christ.

4:18. The terms "understanding" and "ignorance" also highlight the intellectual issues involved with living contrary to God's standards. When people's minds have become darkened, they will deliberately reject the light of God's truth. Yet this mental darkness is preceded by a willful rejection of what people know as morally right. Unbelievers' hardness of heart (rejection of what their conscience tells them is moral) causes them to become increasingly blind to spiritual things.

4:19. The sad outcome of hardened spiritual blindness is often moral recklessness. To be callous is to be unfeeling, insensitive to right and wrong. Such people may lose self-control and give in to extreme forms of sexual immorality (promiscuity). They may give themselves over to every kind of impurity (such as violence). And when persons are occupied with sinful behaviors, they may end up with a desire for more and more sin.

4:20-21. If part of the problem nonbelievers have is intellectual, then part of the solution is for their minds to be enlightened with truth. Christian discipleship includes replacing bad information with the biblical teachings that you “learned ... heard ... and were taught.” The truth that the Ephesians had embraced was not abstract; it was personal. It focused on the Messiah.

4:22. Paul was describing changes that God brought about at the time of a believer’s conversion (you took off your former way of life ... “you are being renewed” ... “you put on the new man”). “The old man” refers to the sinful self that we were before we were saved. This is the behavior described in 2:1-3 and 4:17-19, summarized by the phrase “corrupted by deceitful desires.”

4:23. Saved persons have intentionally laid aside their old self and put on the new self. As a result, their minds are being renewed. This process is something God Himself accomplishes, for the renewal is done to us. Once we embrace that the truth is in Jesus (4:21), then we are in a position for the Spirit to give us an attitude (spirit) in our minds that will result in a lifestyle different than we had before.

4:24. If at conversion we deliberately took off our old way of living, then when we believed we also put on the “new man.” Paul was referring to the new creation that we became at conversion (2 Cor. 5:17). The only other place Paul used the exact phrase translated new man is Ephesians 2:15, a reference to the entire church as the “new man” that God has created from two formerly alienated groups—Jews and Gentiles. If it took a miracle for God to create the “new man,” the church, it also took a miracle for Him to take the old corrupted selves we used to be and make us brand new. The nature of the new man is according to God’s likeness. Mankind in the beginning was created in God’s image, which sin marred. Now in salvation, with new life created by God, we can grow in becoming like Him morally. Paul specified this by naming two such qualities: “righteousness” (acting right toward our fellow humans) and “purity” (holiness, acting right toward God).