

Ephesians 4:17-32

New English Translation Bible 2019

Fifth century or earlier manuscript variants: [inserted] [~replaced] [–omitted]

Suggestions for adult bible study leaders

- Invite others to read aloud the displayed text or verses.
- Provide historical, cultural or grammatical information about the passage that others may not know.
- Ask for other’s observations before you share your own.
- Ask questions that can be answered by looking at the current text, or from other well-known texts.
- Instead of correcting or contradicting others’ views, offer a better view as an alternative.
- If someone proves argumentative, thank him for his view and proceed to another text or query.

Working Outline of the Epistle to the Ephesians

I. Greeting 1:1-2	E Ephesus
II. Praise 1:3-14	P Praise
III. Prayer 1:15-23	H Hope
IV. Teaching 2:1 – 3:21	E Edification
V. Exhortation 4:1-32	S Spiritual life
VI. Warning 5:1-21	I Instruction
VII. Counsel 5:22 – 6:9	A Attitudes
VIII. Spiritual warfare 6:10-20	N Negotiation
IX. Closing 6:21-23	S Salutation

Structure of Ephesians 4:17-32

Application “So” 17

A. Stop living as Gentiles 17-19

They have futile thoughts 17

They remain alienated from life 18

They become increasingly lustful 19

B. Start living as Christians 20-24

Recall Jesus’ teaching 21

Repent of Gentile sins 22

Keep being renewed 23

Imitate God’s kindness 24

C. Help each other to overcome sins 25-32

Speak the truth 25

Correct wrong behaviour 26-27

Work to meet needs 28

Speak graciously 29-30

Show kindness 31-32

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Learning objectives

- Participants will understand that Jesus Christ has set moral standards for Christians.
- Participants will begin or continue practising a three-step method to overcome moral impurity.
- Participants will accept responsibility to correct Christians who have immoral behaviour.

A. Stop living as Gentiles 17-19

17 So I say this, and insist in the Lord, that you no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, being alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of their hearts.

Query: What is non-believers' main problem?

Query: What consequence comes from that problem?

Query: What makes non-believers prove so ignorant?

'as the Gentiles do'

Gentiles: Premarital sex, homosexual intercourse, idol worship, eating blood and strangled foods.

Jews: Sexual abstinence before marriage, male-female marital fidelity, One True God, eating clean foods.

Christians: If ethnically Gentile, then become ethically Jewish.

Query: What are your church's moral standards for members? For clergy?

Query: Do local folk know these standards?

19 Because they are callous [take pleasure], they have given themselves over to indecency for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

Indecency: 'Lack of self-constraint'. BDAG

Impurity: 'Sexual sins ... unnatural vices'. BDAG

Query: Who is responsible for their indecent behaviour?

Query: Did the devil make me do it?

Query: What is the connection with 'greediness'?

B. Start living as Christians 20-24

20 But you did not learn about Christ like this, 21 if indeed you heard about him and were taught in him, just as the truth is in Jesus.

Query: What did we learn about Christ? Matt 5:29-30; 13:41; 18:6; John 1:29

Query: What truth is in Jesus? See 4:22.

Query: What are some ways in which you changed after you learned about Christ?

Repent, be renewed, imitate God

22 You were taught with reference to your former way of life to lay aside the old man who is being corrupted in accordance with deceitful desires, 23 [-to] be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and [-to] put on the new man who has been created in God's image —in righteousness and holiness that comes from truth.

Query: What are the three 'steps' to change bad behaviour?

Query: Why are all these 'you' pronouns in the plural?

Teach these three steps to personal renewal

1. Lay aside your corrupt old self who is subject to deceitful desires. Pray: "Get off me!"
2. Invite the Holy Spirit to renew your mind with the truth you have learned from Jesus. "Help me!"
3. Put on your new self, whom God creates to be like Jesus, who remains righteous and holy. "Change me!"

Query: How often must we do so?

Query: How is this method different from self-help psychology?

C. Help each other to overcome sins 25-32

25 [-Therefore], having laid aside falsehood, each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, because we are members of one another.

Query: How is this exhortation similar to secular ethics?

Query: In this context, what truth does Paul have in mind? Theology? Or morality?

Query: How do my sins affect you?

Query: Why should you not stay out of my private life?

26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on the cause of your anger. 27 Do not give the devil an opportunity.

Psalm 4:4 (Heb). 'Tremble, and do not sin; Ponder in your heart upon your bed, and be still'.

LXX 4:5 (Grk). 'Be angry [*orgizō*]...'

Cause of your anger: *parorgismos* = "provoking to anger ... an action that calls forth anger in someone'.

Two interpretations

Personal issue: 'When you feel angry, be careful not to sin; get over it before bedtime, lest the devil tempt you.

'All night their anger smolders; in the morning it blazes like a flaming fire' Hosea 7:6.

Communal issue: When someone in the church commits moral sin, the rest of you should tremble with fear. Quickly go speak truth to him, lest the devil ruin his testimony and bring God's judgment on the church.

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Psalms of Solomon 8:8-9

‘God exposed their sins before the sun;
all the earth knew the righteous judgments of God.

‘In secret places under the earth were their transgressions of the law in provocation [*parorgizmos*]; they committed incest, son with mother and father with daughter’.

Originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic, in the 1st or 2nd century BCE against the Hasmonian dynasty (from c. 140 BCE to 37 BCE), preserved in Syriac and in 11th to 15th century manuscripts of the Greek Septuagint.

28 The one who steals must steal no longer; instead he must labor, doing good with his own hands, so that he will have something to share with the one who has need.

Query: In what ways does true repentance lead to change of behaviour?

Query: How should a call to change one’s ways be made part of Christian evangelism?

Query: What if ‘the one who has need’ is a flake who will not work?

Repentance

Definition: A radical change of spiritual allegiance leading to a change of behaviour, entailing:

- Worship of the God of the Bible.
- Obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Truthful, respectable speech.
- Sexual purity and marital faithfulness.
- Honesty with generosity.
- Peaceful relations with others.
- Kindness, compassion and forgiveness.

29 You must let no unwholesome word come out of your mouth, but only what is beneficial for the building up of the one in need, that it would give grace to those who hear.

Query: What if spicy language is my normal way of speaking?

Query: What if I cannot think of anything ‘beneficial’ to say?

Query: How could I make a strong point without the F word?

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 You must put away all bitterness, anger, wrath, quarreling, and slanderous talk—indeed all malice.

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Query: What grieves the Holy Spirit of God?

- Bitterness: animosity leading to harsh speech.
- Anger: intense displeasure.
- Wrath: strong indignation leading to retribution.
- Quarreling: shouting back and forth.
- Slander: denigrating or defaming.
- Malice: ill-will seeking to cause trouble.

'Be kind to one another'

32 Instead, be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you [~us].

Kind: 'Meeting a relatively high standard ... being morally good and benevolent.' BDAG

Query: Is my kindness strategic, or is it sincere?

Compassionate: 'Having tender feelings'. BDAG

Forgiving: 'To give freely ... to cancel money that is owed ... to show oneself gracious by forgiving wrong-doing'. BDAG

Conclusion

Query: What is one truth, insight, belief or action that you learned from Ephesians 4.17-32, this week?

For next time:

- Let us read a chapter of Ephesians each day in versions that we trust.
- Let us study Ephesians 6:10-20, preparing comments and queries to share, next session.