



**EPHESIANS: WEEK 3**

**Writer:** Mike Sheley

**Project Supervisor:** Nick Diliberto & Becky Forkel

**Artwork:** Ever Graphics

**Editor:** Gabrielle Lewis

**Created by Ministry to Youth**  
**[www.MinistrytoYouth.com](http://www.MinistrytoYouth.com)**

## WEEK 3: GROWING IN YOUR FAITH

**Bible:** *Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.* **Ephesians 4:14-16 (NLT)**

**Bottom Line:** We grow closer to each other as we grow closer to God.

### REVIEW OF WEEKS 1-2

We began this study by looking at Ephesians chapter 1.

Paul begins with a poem that praises God and points out how He has been working throughout history to make it possible for all people to be part of his unified yet diverse family under the leadership of Jesus.

The end of chapter one describes how Paul has been praying for these believers to know and experience the power and love of God.

Then, last week, we began by looking at chapter two where Paul points out the stark contrast between our lives without Jesus and then our lives with God's gift of grace through Jesus.

He spent the second half of that chapter pointing out the hope and peace that we can only find in Jesus.

We then moved into chapter three where Paul points out that this grace and love from Jesus breaks down barriers between those who were Jews and everyone else and unites us all into one diverse family.

We finished up last week reading Paul's prayer for the believers focused on the power and love of God in Jesus.

Today, we're moving into the second half of the letter with chapter four.

**Read Ephesians 4:1-16** - Relationships require patience and love, just as God has for us.

**1** *Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. 2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. 3 Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. 4 For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.*

**5** *There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism,*  
**6** *one God and Father of all,*  
*who is over all, in all, and living through all.*

**7** *However, he has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ.*  
**8** *That is why the Scriptures say,*

*“When he ascended to the heights,  
he led a crowd of captives  
and gave gifts to his people.”*

**9** *Notice that it says, “he ascended.” This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world. 10 And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.*

**11** *Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers.*

**12** *Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.*

**13** *This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.*

**14** *Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth.*

**15** *Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.*

**16** *He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.*

## TEACH

Paul starts this chapter with some very specific and practical instructions for this holy life in the unified family: be humble, gentle, patient, forgiving, and united.

Then he gets into this great passage focused on the oneness and unity in the family.

He says there is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God.

Paul points out that in the midst of unity, we don't have uniformity but diversity. There are many different gifts that God uses in us all together to build up the church.

This happens while we are "growing in every way, more and more like Christ."

Our holy living comes from reflecting the characteristics we see God show to us and lived out in Jesus' life!

### **Read Ephesians 4:17-32** - What is "holy living"?

*17 With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused.*

*18 Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him.*

*19 They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity.*

*20 But that isn't what you learned about Christ.*

*21 Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, 22 throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception.*

*23 Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. 24 Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.*

*25 So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. 26 And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 for anger gives a foothold to the devil.*

*28 If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need.*

**29** Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

**30** And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

**31** Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. **32** Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

## TEACH

In the second half of chapter four, Paul packs in a lot of specifics about how to live holy lives.

He starts with a metaphor about clothing. We are to "throw off" our old way of life, including lust, deception, lies, anger, stealing, foul language, bitterness, rage, and "evil behavior."

In contrast, we are to "put on" our new way of life, including purity, righteousness, truth, hard work, generosity, encouragement, kindness, and forgiveness.

And some of this contrast we will see spill over into chapter 5 (which makes sense since Paul wrote this letter without chapter or verse numbers).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Some people love getting new clothes. But most of us have a favorite pair of shoes or hoodie or some piece of clothing that we keep around for a long time. It's hard to get rid of.

Using that metaphor, what makes it difficult to "throw off" the characteristics described negatively in this chapter?

2. Paul several times addresses a specific sin and points out how to flip the behavior around so that the person can live a holy life.

Which of these examples connects with you or students your age?

3. We get several good suggestions for practical ways to live a holy life. But it's easy to walk out of this study and nod our heads in agreement without doing anything.

Pick one of these characteristics to work on this week. On a piece of paper or index card, write down your name, today's date, and that characteristic.

Trade papers with someone else. Pray for each other this week. Check in throughout the week if you can and definitely next weekend to see how you each did “putting on” this new characteristic.

**Read Ephesians 5:1-14** - Follow the example of Christ’s life.

*1 Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. 2 Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.*

*3 Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God’s people. 4 Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. 5 You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.*

*6 Don’t be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him. 7 Don’t participate in the things these people do. 8 For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! 9 For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.*

*10 Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. 11 Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them. 12 It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. 13 But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them, 14 for the light makes everything visible. This is why it is said,*

*“Awake, O sleeper,  
rise up from the dead,  
and Christ will give you light.”*

## **TEACH**

Back in chapter four, Paul said that we are “grow[ing] in every way more and more like Christ.” But the question is: How do we do that?

Paul goes practical again with another list of contrasts.

If we imitate Jesus, we need to get rid of or “throw off” sinful thoughts and behaviors. Paul includes some of the following in that list: sexual immorality, impurity, greed, obscene stories, coarse jokes, and darkness.

Instead, as we “follow the example of Christ,” we are to carefully determine what pleases the Lord and live as people of light! (He’ll unpack that more specifically in the next section, which we’ll cover next week in the last week of this study.)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Verse 1 alone can be daunting: “Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do.” To imitate someone, you must pay attention to that person.

To do this with Jesus, we need to be reading the four biographies of Jesus: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Look up a reading plan for one of these books on the Bible app and get as many group members as you can to join in the plan together for encouragement and accountability. (Ask how many have actually read at least one of these four all the way through.)

2. How can we in this group help each other to throw off the sinful thoughts and actions that distract us from following Jesus’ example?
3. We’re going to read some specifics next week, but without looking ahead, what do you think are some specific ways we could live “as people of light,” keeping in mind that we are imitating Jesus?